NOTIONS OF IDENTITY, DIASPORA, AND GENDER IN CARIBBEAN WOMEN'S WRITING

BRINDA MEHTA

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dedicated to the memory of my beloved mother
Kunda Jagadish Mehta

my life, my world

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Contents

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INTRODUCTION

Diasporic Identities in Francophone Caribbean Women's Literature

Diaspora and the quest for identity represent defining tropes in the work of several Francophone women writers from Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Haiti, such as Maryse Condé, Gisèle Pineau, Dany Bébel-Gisler, Edwidge Danticat, and Ina Césaire, among others. These authors interrogate questions of migration, transnationalism, identity, intellectual production, and creolization through a diasporic lens. This perspective provides the necessary framework for their feminist contestations of patriarchy, political and social disenfranchisement, citizenship, exile, and cultural dystopia in their countries of origin, as well as the European and American diasporic metropolises of Paris, New York, and Miami. The diasporic trajectories of Haitian women writers differ from and collude with their Guadeloupean and Martinican counterparts given the differing migratory patterns and dissimilar histories of Haitian sovereignty versus French-Caribbean departmentalization in Martinique and Guadeloupe. However, all the writers discussed in this book demonstrate their common engagement with the problems of their specific diasporas by the production of transnational narratives reflecting the tensions of the colonial past and the ambiguities of the neocolonial present, especially in terms of identity and gender concerns.

Diaspora is not a homogenous concept, nor is it a one-dimensional experience. It is therefore more appropriate to position Caribbean geographical mappings in terms of distinctive yet intersecting diasporas. In the writings of Caribbean women, cross-cultural diasporas reveal their dynamism even though they underscore a primary diasporic wounding characterized by the physical movement of people through African slavery and East Indian indenture and the discursive praxis of creating new identities and creolized cultural possibilities. Physical and spiritual wounds reveal the primary traumas of these diasporas embedded in memory, forcible separation from family and country, human

rights abuses, and patriarchal violence. At the same time, open wounds also create new spaces for cultural reaffirmations, resistance, and marginalized identities that contest their subaltern status within colonial and neocolonial structures. These framings of diaspora establish more complex readings of the Francophone Caribbean, especially in terms of gender and minority cultures such as the East Indian presence in Martinique and Guadeloupe. Diaspora emerges as a mosaic of individualized and collective experiences in this literature reflecting the inherent historical and cultural fractures of the French-speaking Caribbean and the writer's search for a sense of belonging. Consequently, this study does not attempt to provide an essentialized discourse on a representative Francophone-Caribbean diaspora; on the contrary, it seeks to highlight the ways in which individual authors negotiate the geographical, cultural, and historical parameters of their own diasporic trajectories influenced by their particular locations at home and elsewhere.

Even though each writer "imagines" diaspora in her own unique way, there are connecting threads that link all the chapters in this book. These links are facilitated by the violent wounds of history (slavery and indenture) and the ways in which violence itself leads to different forms of resistance (physical, intellectual, cultural, spiritual) in an attempt to move beyond the strictures of coloniality and patriarchal power structures. All these writings focus on the body as a dialectical site of traumatic experience and knowledge, or *connaissance*, to demonstrate how diasporic bodies are complex entities in-formation. In this study, a variety of authors reveal their transnational and intergenerational points of view. The divergent and intersecting perspectives of established figures such as Maryse Condé, Ina Césaire, Dany Bébel-Gisler, and a new generation represented by Edwidge Danticat, Evelyne Trouillot, Myriam Chancy, and Laure Moutoussamy establish important literary dialogues across and within their introspective narratives. These interactions are instrumental in positioning more nuanced readings of Francophone-Caribbean identities across the boundaries of experience, geography, location, culture, and race.

* * *

The Caribbean has been described as a diaspora space par excellence by writers and scholars such as Stuart Hall, Antonio Benítez-Rojo, Edouard Glissant, and Maryse Condé. Positioned as a meta-archipelago with undetermined rhizomatic roots, the Caribbean has witnessed the primary migratory trajectories of African, European, East Indian, Chinese, Lebanese, and Syrian populations through colonization and conquest, slavery, indenture, and transnational commerce. The concept of the meta-archipelago has been credited to Cuban scholar

Benítez-Rojo for whom the Caribbean represents a site of simultaneous conflict, violence, and cultural accommodation in processes of "syncretism, acculturation, transculturation, assimilation, deculturation, indigenization, creolization, cultural *mestizaje*, cultural *cimarronaje*, cultural miscegenation, cultural resistance etc." (1992, 37). Resisting fixed definitions and immobility within confined geographical spaces, the Caribbean, according to Benítez-Rojo, constantly regenerates itself through fragmentation, dislocation, interruption, and instability, which are primary characteristics of the diasporic process. In turn, the Martinican theorist and writer Edouard Glissant frames the French Caribbean in terms of an indeterminate rhizome without a unitary center in his seminal work *Caribbean Discourse*.[1] The rhizome as a moveable center or as a multiplicity of concentric circles traces ex-centric migratory movements across geographical frontiers and within nationally determined borders. This form of transversal motion facilitates spatial mobility and eludes confinement within ideologically based paradigms of identity. Such a condition of spatial indeterminacy, according to Glissant, situates the Caribbean as "an intricate branching of communities, an infinite wandering across cultures, where triumphs are momentary, and where adaptation and *métissage* [creolization] are the prevailing forces" (Dash 1989, xxviii).

As a site of disruption, transformation, and exchange enabled by a relational process of cultural negotiation, the framing of diaspora, according to these scholars, follows the ebb and tide of the Caribbean Sea with its unpredictable fluxes, tenuous currents, and noninsular routings. A place of many repeated displacements and relocations, the Caribbean, according to Stuart Hall, "stands for the endless ways in which Caribbean people have been destined to 'migrate'; it is the signifier of migration itself—of traveling, voyage and return as fate, as destiny . . . the Antillean is the prototype of the modern or postmodern New World nomad, continuously moving between center and periphery" (1990, 234). While celebrating the nomadic or migratory subjectivity of Caribbean peoples who reconfigure notions of home and elsewhere through a particular transcontinental circularity,[2] several male critics nevertheless pay marginal attention to the gendering of diaspora as they articulate the ways in which diasporic configurations are problematized by the intersectional positionality of class, ethnicity, departmentalization, state violence, partial citizenship for French Caribbeans, and national belonging.[3]

An equally problematic issue is the manner in which the Caribbean has been imagined in explicitly sexualized terms within a male versus female, active versus passive reductive binary, despite the male scholars' best efforts to evoke the idea of a certain Caribbean expansiveness based on a disruptive state of opacity or resistance to facile categorization. If questions of gender migrations and

female subjectivity are assumed or implied in this diasporic theorizing, through the positing of a universal (i.e., male) Caribbean self, these theories fall short of explaining the complicated nuances of diaspora and the important variables of gendered difference by writing women out of the foundational scripts of Caribbean discourse. This omission has taken many forms: the suppression of women's voices; marginality in the French-Caribbean's masculinist discourses of creolization; and geopolitical feminizing of the Caribbean in graphically and "naturally" libidinous terms, conflating land and the female body in a "cannibalistic" economy of rape and male desire.

Benítez-Rojo's *The Repeating Island* is punctuated by references to the Caribbean as "the womb of darkness" kept afloat by "vaginal tides" engendered by "the copulation of Europe . . . with the Caribbean archipelago" (1992, 4–5; 15). This coupling represents a violent act of rape symbolized by European conquest and territorial aggressions that stretch the Caribbean vagina "between continental clamps" (4). The feminization and subsequent colonization of the land through sexualized tropes of male power have further confirmed the overdetermined link between the feminine and nature found in idyllic images of tropical paradises, virgin rainforests, sandy white beaches, and lush flora and fauna. As Polly Pattullo asserts in *Last Resorts*,

> It is the fortune, and the misfortune, of the Caribbean to conjure up the idea of "heaven on earth" or "a little bit of paradise" in the collective European imagination . . . the region, whatever the brutality of its history, kept its reputation as a Garden of Eden before the Fall. The idea of a tropical island was a further seductive image: small, a "jewel" in a necklace chain far from centres of industry and pollution, a simple place, straight out of *Robinson Crusoe*. Not only the place, but the people too, are required to conform to the stereotype. (1996, 142)

The Caribbean reconfigured-as-woman becomes an object of consumption and defilement because of its alluring and innate nativeness (i.e., primitiveness) in the Western imaginary. Reduced to the materiality of presence through immobilizing corporeal signifiers, the "Caribbean-as-woman" trope colludes with the representational absences found in male-centered Caribbean theory, an ontological erasure that Sylvia Wynter calls "the silenced ground of women" (1990, 363). Martinican author and critic Suzanne Dracius bemoans the invisibility of women in contemporary literary and theoretical movements in Martinique, critiquing these discourses for their overtly masculinist and phallocentric biases. She says, "these movements do not take into consideration our experiences as women . . . In Martinique, a woman writer is categorized as a special case or a lesbian, like Madeleine Carbet, or eclipsed, crushed by the shadow of a great man, like Suzanne Césaire, or stigmatized, treated like an alienated woman, like

Mayotte Capécia. I know there is a danger, but I am confronting it" (Piriou 2003, 1220; translation mine).[4]

At the same time, this silencing has also impacted men of color in terms of coloniality's inability to valorize racialized difference. In his groundbreaking book, *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy*, Paget Henry demonstrates how the indigenous Carib (indigenous Amerindian population of the Caribbean), later transformed into Caliban during slavery, was identified exclusively with the "non-rationality" of nature, "a cannibal, a child, a monster without language, and hence a potential slave to be subdued and domesticated along with nature and history" (2000, 4). The equating of racialized indigenous roots with savagery formed the basic credo of the European civilizing mission, which aimed to reshape the colonized native male into a colonial caricature, a lesser being devoid of rational thinking, ancestry, and language. As Henry states, "in the European tradition, rationality was a white trait that, by their exclusionary racial logic, blacks could not possess. Hence, the inability to see the African now reinvented as Caliban, in the role of sage, philosopher, or thinker . . . The 'Calibanization' of Africans could not but devour their rationality and hence their capacity for philosophical thinking" (2000, 12). Deprived of his humanity through the stripping away of his intellectual powers of reasoning and his mother tongue, Caliban was transformed into the ultimate colonial invention by European powers of discursiveness.

Caliban's marginalization in colonial scripts was further compounded by the erasure of his maternal genealogy. This is represented by the demonization of his mother Sycorax (to be discussed further in Chapter 5) and in the complete absence of "Caliban's woman, of Caliban's physiognomically complementary mate" (Wynter 1990, 360). The primal effacing of maternal or feminine affiliations in Caliban's text highlights the incomplete nature of colonial and patriarchal theorizing of racialized and sexualized difference. According to Wynter, "to the insufficiency of all existing theoretical interpretative models, both to 'voice' the hitherto silenced ground of the experience of 'native' Caribbean women . . . as well as to make thinkable the possibility of a new 'model' projected from a new 'native' standpoint" (363–64).

It has been the task of Caribbean women writers to assume the responsibility of filling the gaps in Caribbean discourse by inserting their feminist voices contesting nonrepresentation, silencing, and intellectual chauvinism. Without confining their literary and cultural discourse solely to the realm of facile victimhood and uncritical gendered solidarities, the writers in this book adopt a "contrapuntal consciousness" in their work to reframe the problems of diaspora in Francophone-Caribbean literature through an innovative four-dimensional perspective, which also provides the framework of this study. This book locates

diaspora within a unique perspective based on the divergent and interconnected modalities of *violence*, *trauma*, *resistance*, and *expanded notions of identity*. By claiming their space as agents of intellectual and cultural production within this four-tiered prism, the women complicate existing notions of identity, migration, survival, and spirituality through their gendered voices, which subvert and decenter the French-Caribbean's master discourses of Négritude, creoleness (*créolité*), and creolization. In so doing, they demonstrate a more complicated engagement with Francophone Caribbean diasporic subjectivities beyond dominant paradigms of Afro- or Creole-centeredness. These authors reveal the transcultural polyvalence of their work as they express diasporic preoccupations in terms of historicity, migration, engagements with state violence (as in the case of Haiti), and culture.

* * *

The traditional framing of the Caribbean within a reductive black and white binary has been particularly significant in the French Caribbean given Martinique and Guadeloupe's departmental status of economic and sociopolitical dependency on France since 1946. This dialectical enclosure defined and maintained by France has placed the French Caribbean in an overdetermined relationship with the "mother" country and has impeded a truly cross-cultural and synchronic negotiation of Caribbean cultural difference outside a metropolitan paradigm. Françoise Lionnet uses the term "transcolonial" to designate the departmental status of Martinique and Guadeloupe where questions of nationhood and postcoloniality are still being resolved. In "Narrating the Americas," Lionnet states, "I will use the term 'transcolonial.' I prefer it to the more commonly used 'transnational' or 'postcolonial' since my goal is to stress the spatial dimensions inherent in the history of colonialism. On the one hand, the increasing use of the term 'transnational' in literary and cultural studies is not useful within the framework of my study, since one cannot properly speak of the 'nation' in relation to the Francophone Caribbean" (2002, 69). This definition highlights the problem of naming the region and affirming its political subjectivity, a tension that is also felt in cultural theory and literature.

However, in an attempt to reclaim subjectivity by rescuing French Caribbeanness from what I call "subaltern nomenclature," Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé, and Raphaël Confiant, the founders of the Martinique-based Créolité movement, advocated the adoption of a uniform Creole identity as a response to the imposition of an indelible Frenchness on Caribbean markers of identity. Their rallying cry was "Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we

proclaim ourselves Creoles" (Bernabé 1990, 883). Opposing the universality of Frenchness with the universality of Creoleness, the Créolistes adopted the Creole language as the reactionary signifier of Caribbean difference. If the French language represented the ultimate marker of French identity, then Creole would perform a similar function for Martinicans in a self-replicating quid-pro-quo equation. Nevertheless, the reduction of identity to language in a French-versus-Creole binary has eclipsed the more liberating aspects of Créolité in terms of cultural, geographical, ethnic, and linguistic *métissage*, or mixing. Créolité has inadvertently undermined the cross-cultural poetics of Relation formulated by Glissant.[5] Confined to an ideological impasse by advocating a Creole essentialism through an unintentional sublimation of cultural specificity in terms of the Caribbean's diverse multicultural heritage, Créolité's linguistic absolutism has unwittingly become an inverted image of *francité*, or Frenchness, in "absolute" bonds of departmental affinity.

On the other hand, Maryse Condé remains very critical of the linguistic binaries promoted by Créolité. The angst of having to choose between Creole and French to express one's affiliation with, or disaffiliation from, an essentialized Creole authenticity leads to creative compromise according to Condé. The provocative Guadeloupean author states that she does not write in French or Creole per se but in a specific "Maryse Condé tongue" conditioned by social experience. She has often said, "J'aime à répéter que je n'écris ni en français ni en créole. Mais en Maryse Condé" (2007, 205). [I am fond of repeating that I do not write in French or Creole but in Maryse Condé.] Emphasizing the transnational dimensions of language and creative expression, the "Maryse Condé tongue" is a personalized language that nevertheless embraces and reflects the author's own transnational experiences across the American and African continents.[6]

More significantly, Créolité's mission of unilateral Creole solidarity has completely ignored Haiti, where the Kreyol language, or *Ayisyen*, remains a vibrant part of everyday life and does not represent a major source of anxiety for its writers or scholars. As stated by Evelyne Trouillot, Haiti lives its Kreyolness in language, art, music, religion, and food. Kreyol symbolizes Haiti's cosmovision, or *Weltanschauung*, wherein language is only one aspect of a person's holistic identity, and not a defining element.[7]

In addition, Créolité's eclipsing of gender has further limited its full potential by excluding the voices of female theorists, as stated earlier. Moreover, can a Creole identity be celebrated uncritically in the absence of a political *prise de conscience*, or consciousness? Consequently, the women writers in this study engage with the postmodern wounds of diaspora in their attempt to create politicized literary narratives. These wounds are evident in the long-term

consequences of departmentalization; the economic side effects experienced by overtly consumer-oriented societies such as Martinique and Guadeloupe, which are completely dependent on French imports; the regional impact of continued migration to the metropolis; and the disastrous social consequences of increasing unemployment, domestic violence, alcoholism, and drug abuse. Chamoiseau is cognizant of some of the theoretical and literary limitations of his own work. He asks if it is possible to write in a dominated country when the only forms of inspiration remain heavily mediated and corrupted by an onslaught of foreign impressions and influences (1997, 7).

If Chamoiseau experiences a sense of intellectual stagnation in Martinique, the women writers from the French departments living in their home countries or in other diasporas, together with their Haitian counterparts, demonstrate a certain "diasporic plenitude." They refuse to be limited by geographical, linguistic, or ideological borders when they use literature as a site of creative dissidence. They "see" diaspora differently by highlighting and contesting colonial and patriarchal timelines in their work. At the same time, these readings are never divorced from the discursive attempt to heal bleeding wounds. Consequently, these writers "imagine" more affirming sources of identification, such as those found in the maternal presence of Sycorax and the feminist genealogies of foremothers. In addition, Gisèle Pineau establishes diasporic solidarities in literature between French Caribbeans, or Antilleans, and North African Maghrebis in Paris through a relational framing of the African diaspora. This diaspora is united and splintered by the difficulties of migration, exile, French racism, and labor exploitation. The trope of food in novels, such as Pineau's *Un papillon dans la cité* and *L'Exil selon Julia*, creates trans-American associations between the Caribbean and Latin America through the migration of chocolate, corn, tomatoes, chilies, and other signifiers of a preconquest culinary historicity. The literary celebrations of culture and identity in women's writing are informed by the social locations of their texts to produce "relevant" and "irreverent" narratives.

Maryse Condé's "irreverent" diasporic imaginary traverses the globe to make unexpected affiliations and transnational identifications that reconfigure colonial cartographies and patriarchal mappings of identity, gender, and place. As Mary Gallagher states, "Condé is somewhat exceptional among contemporary writers from the French Antilles in her ceaseless exploration of the ways in which the French Caribbean subject relates to the archipelago as a whole, including Haiti, and also to spaces beyond, in particular Africa and the rest of the New World, especially the USA, and Central and South America" (2003, xxiv). This "poetics of dispersal" (ibid) does not necessarily indicate aimless wandering or a form of migratory anarchy. In fact, dislocation is a site of creativity for Condé,

whose characters constantly defy the limits of the acceptable by searching for new ontological paradigms. These journeys do not represent reality tours or cultural tourism; inscribed within the deep psychological wounds of exile and displacement, Condé's novels provide a penetrating analysis of the cultural and intellectual malaise of the postmodern French Caribbean self, of women in particular. Their nomadic trajectories often result in death, suicide, alienation as an ironic response to modernity's limited channels of affirmation in terms of race and gender.

More importantly, Condé, together with Martinican author Laure Moutoussamy, uses her unique style of textual nomadism to highlight other paradigms of identity through lateral creolizations from the global south; in this case, the positioning of East Indian identity in Martinique and Guadeloupe and its mixed-race Indian and African permutations in the form of *dougla* identity. In novels such as *La migration des coeurs* (Condé) and *Passerelle de vie* (Moutoussamy), the writers have addressed the neglect accorded to these disavowed identities in contemporary Caribbean theorizing. Both Edouard Glissant and Stuart Hall have neatly parceled the Caribbean into three distinctive contact zones—Mesoamerican, African, and European—with little or no mention of other Caribbean cultures such as East Indian, Chinese, Syrian, Lebanese, and their internal and external creolizations such as Indo-Chinese, Afro-Lebanese, and so forth. According to Hall, "It is possible, with this conception of 'difference,' to rethink the positioning and repositioning of Caribbean cultural identities in relation to at least three 'presences' . . . Présence Africaine, Présence Européenne, and the third, most ambiguous, presence of all—the sliding term, Présence Américaine. Of course, I am collapsing, for the moment, the many other cultural 'presences' that constitute the complexity of Caribbean identity" (1990, 240).

The assimilative "collapsing" of the Caribbean's "minor" cultures into an ontological void represents a serious flaw when applied to theories of French-Caribbean creolizations that assume a dominant cultural vantage point through disengagement with other ethnicities. I address this gap in my book by formulating the theory of a "*dougla* imaginary" as a way to further complicate the region's creolized imaginary through a relational African and Indian poetics. This positionality acknowledges the presence of two Caribbean Middle Passages, both African and Indian.[8] I demonstrate how Condé and Moutoussamy can be read through the lens of a *dougla* imaginary as the site of enabling cultural possibilities, which will be discussed further. In terms of a comparative Latin American context, critic Claudia Milian Arias formulates the theory of *Mulatinidad* as a grid to recover lost or negated identities within this cultural and political context. She argues, "Within Mulatinidad, overlapping forms of alienization are unraveled. Mulatinidad patterns the invisibilities of black and

brown mixtures . . . bringing hemispheric perspectives that work through and sustain the overlap between the creolized, mestiza, and mestizo Americas . . . Mulatinidad is not a settled discourse or practice grasped in absolute binaries of black and white or brown and white" (2004, 127). The *dougla* imaginary can be positioned as a form of Mulatinidad "with a difference," in that whiteness is completely dislodged from its position of dominance in the trajectories of creolization. At the same time, fixed notions of African blackness and Indian brownness are also destabilized or ruptured through lateral accommodations and contestations of identity.

Francophone-Caribbean women writers have consequently created disruptive and dynamic textualities in their movement from silence to voice. As Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Fido claim, "In a more balanced reconstruction of Caribbean literary history, we would find that women writers are critical to our redefined understanding of Caribbean literature. Out of this voicelessness and absence, contemporary Caribbean women writers are beginning some bold steps to creative expression" (1990, 2). The originality of these writers lies in their strategies of narrativizing the Caribbean through a gendered transnational lens. This perspective extends beyond and across the various diasporas of the Francophone Caribbean to create multiple spaces of intersecting affiliation and disaffiliation, belonging and rupture, alienation and creation, in these feminist revisionings of culture, identity, and diasporic subjectivities. Their paradigms of representation do not remain fixed in ideological closure; on the contrary, they are subject to the transformations and accommodations that become a part of the diasporic process and its repeated transmutations.

* * *

This book is divided into five distinct chapters that do not, however, represent a unified or essentialized "idea" of diaspora. Chapters 1 through 4 reflect the varied trajectories of diaspora in the Americas and France through migration, cultural accommodations, and resistance to marginalization. Chapter 5 offers a more synthesized reflection on the richness of Caribbean feminist reason exemplified by Caliban's forgotten mother, Sycorax. Sycorax provides the synergy to both highlight and heal the traumas of diaspora in the ultimate act of creative resistance found in literature and spirituality.

As stated earlier, diaspora results from acts of historical violence in the Caribbean. In Haitian literature, the violence of diasporic wounds is scripted in the compelling narratives of Evelyne Trouillot's *Rosalie l'infâme* (discussed in Chapter 1) and Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* (discussed in Chapter 2).

These novels resurrect the horror of the trans-Atlantic African Middle Passage and its subsequent *postmodern reenactment* across the Caribbean Sea to the United States; these past and present crossings inscribe the primary diasporic wounds within the trajectories of water and oceanic crossings. Water represents an archive of memory and traumatic experience to demonstrate how trauma becomes a complex site of abjection and resistance as the human will struggles to survive amid adversity, dehumanization, and death. I raise the following questions in my analysis of the two novels: How is trauma inscribed on the body as a "corporeal" text reflecting a tortured history of slavery, dictatorship, and exile? How does the body chart a graphic cartography of pain through physical markings of torture and psychological symptoms of alienation and madness? At same time, how does the body survive trauma through resistance, diasporic solidarity, and the refusal to accept the inhumanity of one's condition as enslaved people, refugees, and immigrants on foreign shores.[9]

Trouillot's novel frames the original diasporic configuration of the New World colony of Saint-Domingue in terms of slavery's historical wounds to demonstrate how all diasporic journeys are not voluntary, affirmative, or based on a quest for better socioeconomic or political prospects. The novel problematizes the scope and intentionality of history as an elitist male-centered narrative through female narrators and characters that relate the forgotten stories of women and the rural poor. By gendering history, the novel exposes the scars borne by women as a result of the history of slavery to establish a feminized version of Saint-Domingue's pre-1804 historicity. While Haitian women writers stress the urgency of claiming and redefining history through a feminist lens in order to contest their erasure in nationally ratified commemorations and patriarchal scripts, it is also important to highlight the ways in which trauma codifies its own subjective text as another way of reading history.

Both Trouillot and Danticat script the language of trauma in their respective work to uncover history's hidden traces and the maternal routes of diaspora contained in blocked impressions and sensorial closure. Trauma constitutes an important part of Haiti's "silent" histories represented by the story of women, a history that must be recovered by "reading" the corporeality of texts and their narrative scarifications. The link between trauma, history, and the diasporic process is a crucial one to expose the infamy of coloniality in the form of slavery, neocolonial dictatorship, U.S.-led invasions and occupations, environmental degradation, and other "natural" and man-made disasters. At the same time, these links initiate the process of healing through resistance and spiritual catharsis. As Lucia Suárez argues in *The Tears of Hispaniola: Haitian and Dominican Diaspora Memory*:

> Diaspora literature, I insist, refuses to let the violence of the past be buried. It tells the stories of those who might have been and perhaps indeed did exist. Readers are reminded of the pain of violence and, as I interpret it, are asked to dream of possibility, to change the tears of oppression and powerlessness into a deep body—an ocean—of (re)constructive human rights work. While physical monuments have not yet been erected to commemorate the abuse and/or death of thousands, enacted during different repressive regimes, different military occupations, and/or from continuing violence throughout the Caribbean . . . diaspora writing offers a venue for rethinking the ways to remember and memorialize Caribbean transatlantic experience and history. (2006, 11)

For Haitian women writers in particular, diaspora writing becomes a commemorative act to remember the horror of slavery and other diasporic passages. In Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*, the protagonists confront the traumas and violence of diaspora as unwelcome immigrants in the United States and tortured victims of state violence in Haiti. *Rosalie l'infâme* and *The Dew Breaker* mirror the colonial and neocolonial wounds of diaspora borne by Haitians in the Americas, even though the timelines of both novels are separated by almost two centuries.

However, despite the trauma engendered by these crossings, both novelists are careful to complicate the subjectivity of their protagonists who are located in intermediary spaces beyond complete victimhood or absolute heroism. Their writing focuses on the experiences of the under-represented peripheral voices of the racially, sexually, and economically dispossessed people who are reduced to statistical anonymity in colonial logs and immigration ledgers. At the same time, this work also chronicles the historicity of the Haitian diaspora through complicated timelines that simultaneously mirror and refract memorable dates in Haitian history that represent signs of glory and infamy.

The trauma of slavery also leads to a fight for subjectivity by the colonized. Chapter 1 focuses particularly on the historical subjectivity of Haitian women who suffer a dual eclipsing in male-centered colonial and national narratives. Through their resistance and "radical" acts of subversion, such as poisoning and infanticide, the female characters in Trouillot's novel embrace a new, decolonized identity as a blueprint for future Haitian feminisms. Resistance, as discussed in Chapter 2, takes on a more symbolic form in terms of art, memory, and even epilepsy, as the expressive language of the unconscious. Danticat uses the symbolic language of the unconscious to affirm the identity of the survivors of abuse and torture in Haiti and diaspora, and to contest these human rights violations in a transnational context.

Haitian diaspora writing provides a platform for the resolution of human rights issues (in the form of immigrant rights for diasporic Haitians subjected to the violence of racist immigration laws in the United States) and the call for

reparation from Europe and North America for having profited from the trade in enslaved Africans. Trouillot's revisiting of slavery in *Rosalie l'infâme* reminds the reader of the prevailing politics of torture practiced in the name of Western democracy, homeland security interests, and the fight against terror.(e.g., Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib). It also highlights the persistence of human and economic slavery in the form of sexual trafficking, the abjection of *restavèks* (child slaves) in Haiti,[10] and the inhuman conditions of Haitian plantation labor in the Dominican Republic, among other violations. In fact, Evelyne Trouillot collaborates frequently with the members of *Haiti Solidarité Internationale* (Haiti International Solidarity), a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization based in Port-au-Prince comprised of writers, lawyers, teachers, community activists, and journalists. This group fights for the legal and civil rights of all Haitian citizens through political action and the power of the pen.

In the United States, Edwidge Danticat has used her very visible stature as a successful writer to denounce police brutality against Haitians, as demonstrated by the New York police department's horrific treatment of legal Haitian immigrant Abner Louima. Danticat has also protested human rights abuses in Haiti and the Dominican Republic and has spoken out in favor of immigration reform and bilingual education. A board member of the National Coalition for Haitian Rights, Danticat has participated in community outreach and cultural awareness programs to create a sense of identity and belonging among diasporic communities in the United States (Wucker 2000). In addition, she has fostered a feeling of diasporic affiliation among Haitian and Haitian-American writers through the publication of anthologies such as *The Butterfly's Way*. This publication has exposed the richness and diversity of Haitian diasporic writing in North America and Europe. It has also energized the scope of contemporary American literature, immigrant or otherwise. Describing the power of this new writing, Danticat admits to Wucker, "What makes the newly arrived immigrant writing so strong is that it embodies the immediate meeting of two worlds. It is full of grief in some cases, grief for a very recent loss of a homeland. It is full of anger sometimes, full of laughter too. But the emotions are still very raw, very strong. The wounds are still deep. The jokes are still remembered in their entirety. The memories are still not too fragmented, so that makes for strong writing" (2000, 3). The added dimension of gender articulates the experiences of dyasporic women caught between migrating gender roles in transition but nevertheless proud to affirm their Haitianness in *dyaspora*. As Myriam Chancy asserts in an essay from *The Butterfly's Way*, "I am claiming my Haitianness in the United States, an identity made especially suspect in this country by racism and xenophobia" (2001, 237). It could be stated that these writers create transnational political

solidarities between Haiti and North America to collectively "write for justice" in the name of Haitian humanity.

Haitian writers express the distinctiveness of their experiences in *dyaspora* as a conduit to negotiate identity and the parameters of belonging. They affirm this particularity by retaining the Kreyol spelling of *dyaspora* as a unique experience conditioned by the trajectory of history. Radio journalist and writer Jean Dominique makes the following statement to Danticat: "The *Dyaspora* are people with their feet planted in both worlds . . . There is no reason to be ashamed of being *Dyaspora*. There are more than a million of you. You are not alone" (2001, xv). While focusing on the communal nature of the Haitian dyasporic experience that includes "exiles, émigrés, refugees, migrants, naturalized citizens, half-generation, first-generation, American, Haitian, Haitian-American men, women, and children" (Danticat 2001, xv), Jean Dominique's comments also highlight the ways in which dyaspora reconfigures national boundaries by creating a liminal spatiality between nation (*nanchon*) and diaspora (*dyaspora*) through a transnational geopolitical framing.

In Trouillot's novel, dyaspora is positioned through collective recollections of the African past and rupture found in the oral narratives of the Middle Passage stories of resistance and abjection. These stories of horror are preserved in memory by female elders such as Man Augustine and Man Charlotte and are later passed on to a younger generation of women like Lisette. Jana Evans Braziel highlights the indeterminate boundaries and timelines of the Haitian *dyaspora* as follows: "Danticat's literary texts rethink national boundaries, specifically Haiti's border of nanchon and *dyaspora*, and her narratives suggest transnational flows across the Atlantic and the Caribbean in which Haiti's *dyaspora* informs its nanchon. Danticat intimates that citizenship needs to be thought of as diasporic and transnational rather than merely as a national category of identification . . . In her migratory texts, Danticat explores the ambivalent diasporizations that annihilate definitive national belonging, noting how the parameters of the national persist and are refigured in the diasporic" (2004, 77). In this age of transnational "diasporic citizenship,"[11] the nomenclature dyaspora includes the earlier experiences of the educated elite fleeing the tyranny of three decades of Duvalierist dictatorship: the agents of this dictatorship such as the secret police (the infamous *Tonton Macoutes*) and the paramilitary forces (FRAPH); disenfranchised rural and urban working class people escaping the desolation of economic and social oppression; separated families brought together in dyaspora, as in the case of Danticat herself; and students, political activists, filmmakers, among other constituencies.[12]

Transnationality has created a reciprocal engagement between the fluid boundaries of nanchon (or nation) and dyaspora represented by the creation

of the "tenth department" or Dizyèm Depatman. As Danticat explains, "The tenth department is not concrete land. It is not a specific place, but an idea to which Haitians can belong, no matter where we are in the world. We of the Haitian *dyaspora* maintain a very long umbilical cord with our homeland" (2000, 42). As an "imagined community," this umbilical affiliation has taken the form of nostalgic recollections of the homeland and, more importantly, facilitated vital economic ties in the form of transnational cash flows to support family members at "home." The creation of the Ministry of Haitians Living Abroad (Ministère des Haïtiens Vivant à l'Etranger), also known as the Ministry of the Diaspora, established under the presidency of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1994, has further consolidated and strengthened these links between home and diaspora. Referring to these transnational economic "migrations," Renée Larrier suggests, "Such activities not only demonstrate a strong obligation to family in Haiti and a desire to invest in a better future, but can involve thousands of people controlling millions of dollars. The economic power of the combined Haitian population in New York, Miami, and Boston . . . has not been lost on high government officials" (2006, 214).

The term dyaspora has special resonance for Haitian women writers as it has created the space for transnational feminist solidarities to address gender-related concerns dealing with sexualized violence, state oppression, patriarchy, economic exploitation in Haiti and abroad, and other wounds. As Chancy states, "it becomes necessary to define the novelistic literary tradition of Haitian women as one that transgresses nationalistic ideologies and reformulates nation and identity through the lens of personal and communal exile" (1997, 10). Chancy indicates the feminist need to reterritorialize the fixed ideological boundaries of identity, location, language, national affiliation, and narrative intent by reconfiguring personal space through the exilic process. Diasporic movements create feminist communities motivated by the common goal to "sex the national," while giving narrative presence to the women of dyaspora and their particular shaping of the diasporic mosaic. For this reason, the transnational textualities of Haitian women favor a certain resistance to essentialized identity politics by refusing to fit into predetermined labels of linguistic authenticity or nationality. For example, the Haitian-born Danticat writes in English to accommodate the practicality of her Anglophone location in Miami, even though her creative imaginary is strongly influenced by "her Haitian literary ancestors as well as contemporary African American writers" (Larrier 2006, 216). Deconstructing facile categorizations in terms of relating to an exclusive Francophone-Haitian or Anglophone Haitian-American identity, Danticat and her work transcend binaries through a transcultural, polyglot sensibility in which her characters repeatedly "travel, migrate, and renegotiate their identities" (Larrier 2006, 216).

A member of the "AHA generation," an acronym for "African, Haitian, American," Danticat professes her "diasporic citizenship" by embracing her African, American, and Haitian experiences as a way of transcending truncation and stereotypical misrepresentation. The AHA generation represents "a new way for young Haitians who had been in the United States for a while to define themselves, partly to combat the negative labels they were bombarded with, among them 'boat people' and the 'AIDS people'" (Danticat 2000, 39–40.) Similarly, Micheline Dussek lives in Spain and writes in Spanish to further complicate the permeable borders of Haitian transnationality, without renouncing her Kreyol/Francophone Haitianness. Marie-Hélène Laforest, a creative writer and professor of postcolonial literature at the Instituto Universitario Orientale in Naples, has made Italy her permanent home for the last thirty years and has recently started to write in Italian. Dyaspora consequently creates fluid, permeable spaces to embrace multiple intersecting identities both shaped and unmade by transnationality's multiple locations. As Larrier concludes,

> Haitian literature is produced in multiple sites. Its authors span the globe, have their choice of languages, and yet do not relinquish their identity as Haitian writers. One would have expected that these border crossings would have resulted in a problematized or contested identity. On the contrary, it is renegotiated, an issue explored in any number of texts. The writers who remained in Haiti, those long exiled, those who returned, and the younger generation raised overseas justify Depestre's "multiple ailleurs d'Haïti," [the multiple elsewheres of Haiti] which, I believe, is a more proper perspective than the traditional inside/outside binary. (2006, 218)

Dyaspora renegotiates the particular and the universal in transnational bonds of shared intimacy to both affirm and confirm Haitianness in dyaspora.

At the same time, not all aspects of transnationality include dyasporic celebrations and migrating subjectivities. The free flow of capital and transnational commercialization does not always accompany the free circulation of people in an age of increased militarization and border control. Free access in a supposedly global economy is not a democratic ideal but a selected function of race, class, gender, and skin color. The realization of the "American dream" for many economically disadvantaged Haitians has also revealed the impermeability of borders through U.S. coast guard and immigration interceptions leading to deportation or indefinite incarceration in detention centers. The only "crimes" committed by these individuals betray their search for a better life for self and family in dyaspora. Trouillot and Danticat produce humanitarian texts to reveal this despair, while reserving their most intimate passions for the diverse and widespread members of dyaspora. As Danticat states, "I want to serve in whatever way I can and I always will. I think you have to at least try and be part of

something larger than yourself and that's what I try to do with the things I have been part of in the community" (Wucker 3, 2000).

* * *

Franco-Afro-Guadeloupean author Gisèle Pineau's work explores the particularly vexing positioning of French-Caribbean departmental identity in Martinique and Guadeloupe. Chapter 3 focuses on another aspect of diasporic movement and historical violence in terms of the marginalization of French Caribbean citizens in the Parisian *metropole*. This population is subjected to the ambivalent laws of departmentalization and partial citizenship in France despite their French and European Community passports. As H. Adlai Murdoch states, "For the population of the French Caribbean although the departmental law of 1946 had bestowed the same rights and privileges upon them as on any other French citizen, the material realities of geographical distance, ethnic and cultural difference, and colonial history mean that these territories resemble colonies of France rather than constituting equal political entities" (2001b, 132). These French citizens "with a difference" can only claim partial citizenship on account of French colonial history, geography, and race, as they are situated outside normative paradigms of Frenchness conceived uniquely in purist terms of whiteness and linguistic "authenticity." Sandwiched between oppositional ideologies of Frenchness and Antilleanness, "the French Antilleans must continually renegotiate their place in relation to the totalizing French 'nous' (we) in order to be able to assert their own complex specificity within the larger context of subjection to the metropole" (ibid). Treated as migrants, foreigners, or immigrants rather than as legitimate French citizens, these diasporic subjects experience the tensions of diaspora in tenuous bonds of unbelonging between the *metropole* and Caribbean colony, even as they creolize national space through cultural interventions, labor production, and their physical presence.

French by birthright, Pineau describes her alienation as a young girl in the French school system; she was subjected to the racism of her teachers and peers in the form of racial insults and threats to be sent back to where she came from. This incident highlights the particularity of Frenchness and the irreconcilable differences between a "universally" positioned French ideal and a dislocated "departmental" blackness, a sign of "otherness" further complicated by gender. As Maxim Silverman argues, "people from the French overseas departments . . . are not foreigners . . . neither are those of Algerian parents who were born in Algeria before 1962 . . . However, although they do not appear statistically as foreigners they are frequently classified popularly as immigrants due to the contemporary racialized association between immigration, those of North African

origin, and blacks" (1992, 37). Race, ethnicity, religion, and color become defining markers of alterity precluding "acceptable" citizenship in favor of immigrant or outsider status for people of color born in France or in French territories and departments. It is therefore no coincidence that Pineau chooses to highlight the close personal and cultural connections between a Maghrebi boy, Mohammed, and a Guadeloupean girl, Félicie, in *Un papillon dans la cité* through the sharing of each other's cuisine. Pineau's novels demonstrate how otherness can paradoxically create a sense of national belonging and spatial reclaiming among the diasporically dispossessed. These groups creolize mainland space through the cultural signifiers of orality, food, music, language, and the maternal historicities of strong grandmothers such as Man Ya and Madame Fathia in *Un papillon dans la cité*.

For Francophone Antilleans, these contrapuntal affiliations are a strategy to reconfigure the boundaries between the metropolitan center and the diasporic periphery located both within France and elsewhere by creating "an extra-departmental identity," or what Murdoch calls an "extra-metropolitan Frenchness," through migrating notions of French subjectivity (2005, 105). This identity is problematized by the very existence of the DOMS [*Département d'Outre Mer*] or overseas departments. As Murdoch explains, "The origins of this departmental creolization of the metropole . . . were instantiated in the wake of departmentalization in 1946 which, given large-scale labor shortages on the mainland, eventually generated a massive wave of migration to the metropole" (2005, 104). The establishment of the state agency BUMIDOM (Bureau pour le Dévéloppement des Migrations des Départements d'Outre Mer [Office for the Development of Migrations from the Overseas Departments]) to facilitate these migrations brought over 100,000 Antilleans to Paris during the twenty-five-year functioning of the agency (Murdoch 2005, 104); the Bureau was ultimately abolished in 1982.

The BUMIDOM's recruitment policies lead to an unwitting (and creative) Caribbean creolization of the Seine as most of the "immigrants" stayed on in France to establish permanent residence in Paris while maintaining close ties to their island homes. It is estimated that there are over 600,000 French Antilleans living in France today; they claim a dual French and Antillean identity and comprise nearly one percent of the national population (Murdoch 2005). Over three-quarters of this population lives in Paris and the suburbs of the *région parisienne* in areas such as Château Rouge, Kremlin Bicêtre, Bobigny, Belleville, and Aulnay-sous-Bois. They have transformed the *metropole* into a "third island" diaspora in this historic confluence of the Caribbean Sea and the River Seine (Anselin 1999, 110). According to Anselin, this diaspora no longer migrates or returns "home" (1990, 266); it circulates within an

undifferentiated spatiality established between France and the islands, which further complicates notions of home, diaspora, and nation through circular reroutings. As Richard D. E. Burton asserts, "almost all French West Indian families have members living in France . . . The constant crossing of the Atlantic tends to undermine the distinction between 'France' and the West Indies" (1995, 12).

In other words, this diaspora experiences an innate doubleness in the form of an insider and outsider positionality expressing "denaturalized" citizenship and transformative potential simultaneously. Writers such as Pineau see this in-between space as a site of possibility allowing her to claim two homeland spaces and a biracial identity as a Franco-Antillean Creole woman. As Lucia Suárez indicates, "Pineau's work unveils the dichotomies of the French Caribbean subject for whom home is a dually informed place . . . being bicultural and binational is a modern phenomenon of the *Métropole*" (2001, 11). At the same time, Pineau highlights the precarious position of the women of departmentalization through the figure of Grandmother Julia in *L'exil Selon Julia*. For Julia, residence in the *metropole* resembles a form of cultural death and profound alienation in the absence of a familiar landscape. If the grandmother's relocation to France to avoid the violence of an abusive husband in Guadeloupe supposedly represents an escape from patriarchy, her subsequent isolation in Paris and harassment by a racist French police force immobilize her within confining racist and sexist paradigms in both countries. By portraying the complicated links between gender, diaspora, and migration, Pineau adds an important dimension to theories of creolization from the "minority" perspective of women and girls who engage in class-based solidarities across the lines of gender, food, and race. The women look for alternative affiliations in transnational cultural negotiations within and beyond France as a more affirming locus of identity and placement.[13] As Suárez concludes, "in this pursuit of collective history and personal integrity . . . Pineau exposes both the much-ignored situation of women and the experience of life in the Métropole through an individual writing project that interpolates the collective memory" (2001, 11).

By feminizing the process of migration and departmental positionality, Pineau further broadens the scope of French-Caribbean diaspora theorizing by giving her female characters cultural agency in their role as active agents of diasporic production amid difficult circumstances of social marginality revealed in *Un papillon dans la cité* and *L'exil selon Julia*. The women are not passive players in the diasporic process as they are engaged in hard work at home (food production) and in the public sphere (assembly line production), thereby contributing equally to France's economic and social productivity.[14] Through the women's cultural production, Pineau reconfigures the traditional framing of the

Francophone Afro-Antillean diaspora through intersecting culinary routes and the historicity of spices traversing India, North Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. These culinary imaginings regroup India, Africa, and the Caribbean into a transnational culinary symbiosis as evidence of another marginalized aspect of Caribbean cultural theory.

Pineau's novels create a transnational culinary diaspora space through the semiotics of food, whereby North African and Caribbean cuisines become an important link between France and the French-speaking diasporas amid the dispersal of exile and immigration. While these texts do focus on the anguish of diaspora, the pain of misguided loyalties, the difficulties of assimilation and adaptation, and the impact of globalization on the lives of disenfranchised constituencies, they also celebrate the importance of orality, memory, and cultural resistance through the dynamics of food in the urban Parisian ghetto. In this diasporic locale, food becomes the language of diasporic *métissage*, or creolization, and provides the locus of self-conception and identity.

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Pineau's work opens the space for a relational exchange between India and Africa in the Caribbean through the trope of food, and writers such as Maryse Condé and Laure Moutoussamy extend this relationship through a serious engagement with the Indian presence and its *dougla* identifications in Guadeloupe and Martinique respectively. Chapter 4 further elaborates on the theme of racialized historical trauma through the figure of the mixed race *dougla* man and woman to highlight the internalized tensions that are an integral part of colonization. This chapter expands the notion of Caribbean diaspora identities by demonstrating how the *dougla* is the product of a traumatic confluence between two historicities in the Caribbean. The *dougla* determines his or her own positionality in the Caribbean as another aspect of these diasporic framings revealing the traumatic wounds of the past and the possibility or impossibility of reconciliation in the future in novels such as *La migration des coeurs* (Condé) and *Passerelle de vie* (Moutoussamy).

As mentioned earlier, the call for French Caribbean pluri-centeredness has paid marginal attention to Indo-Caribeanness articulated in terms of *indianité* by the Guadeloupean writer and politician Ernest Moutoussamy. As a discourse aimed at transcending prejudice, marginalization, and racialized antagonisms, indianité calls for the insertion of Indianness within a broader spectrum of Guadeloupean identity to overcome cultural parochialism and engage in a truly transformational deliberation of French Caribbean identity. In other words, indianité provides the text for a revised creolization in which

Indianness is not assumed or imagined but actively demonstrated in everyday praxis. At the same time, indianité highlights the historical and cultural exclusion of Indians who constituted the very antithesis of "acceptable" Caribbeanness due to their racial, cultural, and sexual alterity within colonial and Afro-centered ideologies. Chronicling the *kala pani*[15] trajectory across the black waters of the Atlantic that brought over 70,000 Indian indentured workers to the islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe to replace a newly liberated African plantation force in 1848, indianité subscribes to a more expansive reconciliation with society.[16] One wonders why indianité and Créolité did not mutually influence each other in any significant way across the narrow island divide.

Moreover, the marginalization or negation of the Indo-Caribbean literary presence in the French Caribbean continues to remain a problem. At the First International Conference of Caribbean Writers in Guadeloupe (November 25–28, 2008), a host of prominent authors and scholars from different Anglophone, Francophone, and Spanish-speaking locations discussed questions of identity and creativity with the intention of forging literary alliances across the Caribbean's geographical borders through the establishment of transnational literary and cultural spaces. The glaring absence of Indo-Caribbean writers in these important discussions highlights the continued "othering" of the Indo-Caribbean experience in these spaces and the persistent refusal to support and sustain the development of an Indo-Caribbean intellectual tradition in the French islands. This disengagement seems particularly striking given the popular acceptance of *colombo* (Indian curry) as a regional staple in both Martinique and Guadeloupe, and the use of Indian plaid (*madras)* as the fabric of traditional Creole dresses and head scarves (*foulards)*. There is certainly much more research to be done in this area.

Sociologist Juliette Sméralda-Amon highlights the major historical void that surrounds the history of Indians in Martinique. She gives several reasons for this ambivalence: the relatively fewer number of Indian indentured workers who were brought to the island to work on the sugar plantations after the abolition of slavery in 1848;[17] their rapid assimilation into dominant Creole culture through marriage with black women; the greater cruelty demonstrated by the French colonizers toward their colonial subjects in terms of cultural erasure; the eclectic selection of Indians from the Southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu; high mortality rates; economic, territorial, and political disenfranchisement through minority status; and a lack of diasporic solidarity due to the fragmentation of family and communal life as a result of dispersal on remote and disparate estates.[18] This history of separation was further complicated by the negative perception of Indians as colonial pawns; they were used as scapegoats of colonial treachery and black resentment in their tertiary position as a newly recruited foreign labor force.

Indenture was seen as an obstacle to the emancipation struggles and democratic ideals of the recently freed blacks and people of color who lost their negotiating power with the colonials once the Indians were brought to Martinique as an easily replaceable workforce. Ostracized for their racial and cultural difference and the ambiguous status they occupied within the colonial machinery, Indians were further relegated to marginal representation through a denial of civil and legal status. The activism of an Indo-Martinican community leader Govindin and the efforts of an Indo-Guadeloupean judge Henri Sidambarom later reversed the existing laws of naturalization in favor of Indians on February 9, 1914.

Sméralda-Amon's work demonstrates how Indians were excluded from all spheres of public life when they were scorned and rejected for their "exotic" ways. Systematically placed on the fringes by a society that refused to acknowledge their presence as co-workers and fellow citizens, they were stigmatized for their allegedly favored status with the *béké*, or local whites and the elite of color. The ambiguity of indenture corresponded with the ambiguity of the representative value of Indians, wherein Indian alterity was both a source of marginalization and a paradoxical ground for miscegenation in the absence of Indian women. The fewer numbers of Indian males together with their rapid assimilation into the dominant creolized framework through marriage resulted in a further eclipsing of Indian culture negated by dominant paradigms of "acceptable" Caribbean cultural authority. Fragments of the Indian past were either geographically dispersed and confined to isolated rural pockets on the estates or obfuscated by Creole cultural dominance. This marginalization produced a culture alienated from its own truncated roots and a constituency of Indo-Martinican Creoles with its mixed-race *dougla* offspring.

Faced with a similar trajectory of isolation, mutual disregard between Indians and Africans, and social ostracism, Indians in Guadeloupe were also brought into a well-constituted racialized society at the height of tensions between white planters and newly emancipated Africans. Obliged to learn Creole and accept creolization as a way of life in order to survive and adapt to a new environment, Indians were nevertheless able to acquire a greater sense of selfhood in Guadeloupe for several reasons: their larger numbers as compared to Martinique; a more tenacious resistance to complete assimilation that both complemented and mirrored Guadeloupe's stronger resistance to French departmentalization; and enhanced possibilities of social mobility in the agricultural sector, among other factors. The accommodation of the Indian problematic nevertheless leads to the following questions: Do negotiations of Indianness intervene in dominant Afro-Caribbean discourses to create a more politicized "*dougla* textuality" as a site of discursive claiming in literature? Does this cross-cultural poetics provide the foundation for a dynamic *dougla* imaginary in the literary and

cultural ethos of the Antilles, thereby expanding further the limits of Créolité and the dynamism of creolization? Are Maryse Condé and Laure Moutoussamy inspired by a *dougla imaginary* in their writing as they search for new paradigms of identity in terms of race and gender?

* * *

The *dougla* imaginary frames questions of Indian and African identity in a relational mode rather than in terms of racial exclusivity. Displacing the verticality of the North–South divide and the specter of French dominance in theories of creolization, the *dougla* imaginary emerges from within the framework of a subaltern textuality to contest and disrupt existing paradigms of Antillean race theory and their disengagement with gender and "other" Caribbean identities. At the same time, the *dougla* imaginary also draws attention to a marginalized constituency of the South Asian diaspora by focusing on the experiences of French-speaking South Indian Tamilians, thereby negating any misperceptions about the *kala pani* being an exclusively Anglophone, North Indian, Hindu, and male-centered experience. As another way of mapping the Caribbean's diasporic subjectivity, the *dougla* imaginary represents a primordial fracture or epistemological rupture in Antillean thought by exposing the archipelago's lateral routes as a point of convergence and disjunction between Africa and India in the Caribbean. The intersecting and divergent routes of slavery and indenture reveal the tensions and dissonance inherent in the diasporic process; at the same time, these routes create the necessary "intersecting intimacy" between Indianness and Africanness to produce a unique French-Caribbean polycentrism that resists assimilation to a prescribed cultural norm.

This theory reconfigures existing cultural, geographical, and biological mappings through a discursive spatiality favoring creativity and open-ended lateral engagements with (mixed) race in women's writing in particular. This horizontal perspective of discursive and geographical spatiality between India and Africa displaces the vertical hegemony characterizing North–South movement between the French department and the Parisian *metropole*, revealing "the coexistence of territorial representations that have been and are concealed by official geographical descriptions, either in verbal discourses or in map forms" (Mignolo 1994, 16). This vision of indigenous spatiality "imagines" cultural contact and historical symbiosis independently of French determined routes, maps, and cultural collisions, thereby permitting East and West Indians to engage and disengage without colonial mediation.

The *dougla* imaginary articulates and contests alterity within these fractured spaces of subaltern subjectivity. Consequently, Indianness and Africanness can

no longer adopt mutually exclusive or assimilating positionalities as the French Caribbean continues to experience refracted and relational encounters with difference in everyday praxis. In a similar scope, does the framing of the *dougla* imaginary in Condé's and Moutoussamy's novels enable this textuality to realize its disruptive and transformative potential in a colonial (Condé) and transcolonial context (Moutoussamy) of racial ambiguity, anxiety, and nervous dislocation, even though the time period of Condé's novel predates the articulation of Créolité and creolization by nearly one century?[19] Chapter 4 addresses this question.

* * *

In Chapter 5, diasporic violence takes the form of the gendered aggressions against women in the figure of Sycorax, the much-maligned mother of Caliban. This violence is also aimed at the destruction of maternal knowledge found in the woman-centered philosophies of religion, food, and healing. This chapter focuses on how women writers inscribe themselves within the Caribbean's intellectual history on their own terms when they identify with more enabling diasporic ancestral referents. These primal connections are important to rethink the Caribbean as a gendered intellectual space enabling women to establish their authority as vibrant cultural agents instead of becoming the passive objects of colonized historiographies. Sycorax's liminality in the Shakespearean play *The Tempest* thereby provides the basis to convert the marginality of nonrepresentation into an empowered space of decolonization for certain Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean writers such as Kamau Brathwaite, Myriam Chancy, Marlene NourbeSe Philip, and others who resurrect the M(other)'s text in postcolonial literature. By claiming the importance of Sycorax in their empowering narratives, these authors reclaim her subjectivity through diasporic interventions in literature, theory, and cultural praxis. They establish what I call *Sycorax historicity* as the site of multiple Caribbean feminist epistemologies that defy vilification in racist and sexist ideologies. As an archepresence[20] in contemporary Caribbean writing, the voice of Sycorax animates a transformative maternal sensibility in these works, wherein "witchcraft" is reinstated sacred ancestral knowledge, and "witches" reposition themselves as healers, storytellers, herbalists, shamans, goddesses, and priestesses to establish a woman-identified heritage of cultural, spiritual, and intellectual production. This legacy provides evidence of a trans-Caribbean feminist pantheism finding its source and inspiration in Brathwaite's "forgotten mother."[21] The Mother is transformed into an enabling cross-cultural matrix of creative faith and feminist cultural authority—an inspiring trope for future generations of writers.

This chapter positions Sycorax as the source of a gendered diasporic reasoning and maternal sensibility. By centralizing the importance of Sycorax in their resuscitating narratives, writers such as Myriam Chancy, Dany Bébel-Gisler, and Lilas Desquiron claim her as a symbolic muse, a maternal archetype, and an "embodied presence" in the form of wise grandmothers, mambos (Vodou priestesses), goddesses such as Ayida-wèdo and Maliémin, and female healers. They embrace *Sycorax historicity* in text as the site of *konesans* or transcendental reason located in orality, ancestral memory, animism, serpent worship, as well as in cultural production such as carnival, food, and dance.

Sycorax represents the attempts to decolonize and feminize Caribbean reason through epistemological ruptures found in postcolonial revisions of colonial thought. Postcolonial rewritings of Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* provide an important starting point to reevaluate questions of Caribbean subjectivity and contest Eurocentric paradigms of racialized alterity. Caribbean scholars such as Paget Henry and Roberto Fernández Retamar have reconfigured the subalternity of Caliban in terms of Afro-Caribbean reason and Caribbean resistance to colonial domination; in turn, Caribbean feminists have positioned themselves as the daughters and women of Caliban laying claim to a trans-Caribbean feminist poetics.[22] Feminist readings of the play have consequently critiqued the omission of gender in the male-configured Prospero and Caliban, master and slave dialectic symbolized by the Duke of Milan and his colonized subject. They have also questioned the legitimacy behind the unilateral framing of white female subjectivity represented by Prospero's daughter Miranda as an exclusive identity based on the erasure of black gendered difference.[23] However, the most "visible" eclipsing of female blackness assumes the form of Sycorax, the learned mother of Caliban, portrayed negatively by Shakespeare as a "damned witch" (1.2.264), "hag" (1.2.269), and "wicked dam" (1.2.320). She is banished from the island of "Argier"[24] for practicing "sorcery," while pregnant with her son Caliban. Consequently, the trauma and violence of exile characterize the diasporic process wherein, "Sycorax has inherited and inscribed in her very flesh the whole history of the slave trade on West African soil and of slavery on West Indian plantations" (Zebus 2002, 61). She supposedly dies from old age roughly twelve years before the arrival of the colonizing Duke of Milan and his daughter. However, Chantal Zebus affirms that the circumstances surrounding the death of Sycorax remain ambiguous and even suggest her possible murder at the hands of Prospero. Zebus says, "Not only does Sycorax conveniently die, leaving behind her son Caliban and her servant Ariel, but we do not know the circumstances of her death, and the source of all accounts of her past life is Prospero, for Caliban never evokes memories of his mother" (147). The simultaneous death of the mother and the obliteration of the maternal imaginary provide

a blank slate for paternal inscriptions that erase the mother's traces through the brutality of exile, loss, diasporic rupture, and colonial appropriations.

However, I argue that even though Sycorax is already dead at the commencement of Shakespeare's play, she can nevertheless be reconceived as the *voice* of Caliban's reason on account of the important knowledge she gives him during his most formative stages of development in the womb. French feminist Hélène Cixous highlights the preeminence of voice in the articulation of decolonized feminist subjectivities. She states, "In feminine speech, as in writing, there never stops reverberating something that, having once passed through us, having imperceptibly and deeply touched us, still has the power to affect us—song, the first music of the voice of love, which every woman keeps alive. The Voice sings from a time before law, before the Symbolic took one's breath away and reappropriated it into language under its authority of separation" (1986, 93). Situating itself in a space and time before the symbolic imprint of patriarchal law and discursiveness represented by colonial history, the Voice represents an *arche-text* of love as the mother's defining quality. In other words, Sycorax's love for her son takes the form of his first lessons in a philosophy of resistance as a key to future Caribbean subjectivity. This love inspired knowledge, discredited by colonialists as magic and sorcery, represents a prenatal maternal consciousness as a feminist pretext—the very locus of memory, decolonization, survival skills, and creative agency expressed in the cultures of orality and performative practice. In other words, Sycorax's physical absence in the play does not impede her *presymbolic audibility*. Her "absent presence" (Lara 2005, 3) unconsciously mediates the plot in active interrogations of heterophobia, the anxiety generated by otherness, and the fear of the unknown (Gyssels 2001, 212). In addition, Sycorax symbolically extends the spatiality of diaspora through her North African roots by personifying the very trope of transnationality across and within the French-speaking Caribbean.

Pineau openly acknowledges her debt to her grandmother Man Julia as the inspiration behind her literary consciousness. Myriam Chancy and Lilas Desquiron highlight the power of female healers such as Mami Celeste in *The Scorpion's Claw* and Mme Chavannes in *Les chemins de Loco-Miroir*. The transcendental roles of these healers are complemented by female historians such as Dany Bébel-Gisler's *Léonora*, a conteuse in her own right. In addition, Condé's recent book, *Victoire les saveurs et les mots*, is a moving homage to her maternal grandmother who sensitizes the (mother) tongue through her impressive cooking skills, representing a form of embodied knowledge. Similarly, Edwidge Danticat evokes the ancestors as her literary and spiritual muses when she says, "I write to communicate with my ancestors, to explore the truth of their lives and to link it to my own" (1996a, 101). Sycorax provides a relational Caribbean prototype that revives the repressed female imaginary in women's writing. She subverts the male *conteur*'s

position as the sole ancestor of Créolité by resurrecting the feminine roots of creolization to confirm Heather Smyth's claim that "Caribbean women's work on diversity in the Caribbean, taking into account social marginalization in its many forms, must be viewed as truly interventionist in the field of creolization theories, for it expresses creolization, often, through a feminist politics of difference that has social change or critique of the status quo as one of its primary goals" (2002, 2). In these writings, Sycorax "links the generations beyond blood ti(d)es, across time and space" (Zebus 2002, 151).

Sycorax historicity represents the act of reclaiming feminist genealogies and politicizing identity. This trope provides the medium to reconnect with an otherwise "threatened utterance" (Shelton 1990, 346) undermined by the conflicted variables of gender, race, class, and skin color. The repressed mother tongue finds a new articulation in these writings, wherein the spiritual reconnection with the African, indigenous, and East Indian ancestral traditions of the French-speaking Caribbean becomes a mobilizing force to contest under representation, transform and reimagine the past through a certain discursive dynamism, and critique the inequities inherent in male-dominated social configurations. As Stuart Hall argues, "Hidden histories have played a critical role in the emergence of many of the most important social movements of our time—feminist, anti-colonial, and anti-racist. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (1990, 235–36). In a polyvalent mother tongue that speaks the language(s) of Caribbean diasporic consciousness, Sycorax historicity translates the multiple epistemologies of decolonization that "rebuke historical amnesia regarding exile, slavery, rape, colonialism" (Lara 2005, 4); in so doing, this trope affirms the revolutionary voice of maternal reason.

* * *

Francophone Caribbean women writers have inscribed their diverse perspectives on the literary landscape, thereby relieving French Caribbean literature from its theoretical and ideological impasses. These writings fracture geographical and ideological boundaries in the search for new paradigms of expression and subjectivity across diaspora's wide expanse in a never-ending process of redefinition and rearticulation. New theories such as the *dougla imaginary* and *Sycorax historicity* energize and rethink existing discourses on race and identity positioning women writers as enabling theorists, engaging writers, committed activists, and dynamic cultural agents in the Caribbean's "repeating" identity. The women writers in this study create politicized, healing narratives that testify to the traumas and triumphs of diaspora as they negotiate the parameters of the acceptable and the unacceptable in their impassioned narratives.

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CHAPTER 1

Diasporic Ruptures in Colonial Saint Domingue

From Enslavement to Resistance in Evelyne Trouillot's *Rosalie l'infâme*

> The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility;
> the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots.
>
> Michel Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*

Evelyne Trouillot's first novel, *Rosalie l'infâme*, frames the original diasporic configuration of the New World colony of Saint-Domingue in terms of slavery's historical wounds. Over ten million enslaved Africans were brought to the New World as chattel to be exploited as field and domestic labor on white plantations. Approximately one-and-a-half million of them were sent to the French colonies in the Caribbean. Saint-Domingue—renamed Haiti after independence in 1804—received nearly half this number. Slave labor transformed the island into one of the richest and most productive colonies in the Americas through the cultivation of sugar, coffee, and tobacco, thereby making France one of the richest slave-holding nations in Europe (Moitt 1995, 155). However, France's acknowledgment of its nefarious colonial past has remained rather tentative despite increased pressure exerted both from within the country and the international community. These human rights groups have demanded France's accountability for perpetuating and profiting from the slave trade. As a result of the growing tension between the French nation and its citizens, who also include the descendants of formerly enslaved people, the government established a special commemoration committee titled, *Comité pour la mémoire de l'esclavage* (Committee to Commemorate Slavery) "in accordance with the statutory order of 5 January 2004, which applies the law of 10 May 2001 qualifying slavery and the slave trade as crimes against humanity" (Reinhardt 2006, 158).

The Taubira law of 2001 recognized the enslavement of Amerindians, Africans, Malagasys, and Indians as a violation and criminalization of human rights (Larrier 2007, 1). In addition, the ten year long (1994–2004) UNESCO project *La Route de l'esclave* (Slave Routes) culminated in the observance of the United Nation's International Year for the Commemoration of the Struggle against Slavery and of its Abolition (*L'Année Internationale de Commémoration de la Lutte Contre L'Esclavage et de son Abolition*) in 2004. This year coincided with the bicentennial celebration of Haiti's independence from French rule. In France itself, former President Jacques Chirac was slow to accept the recommendations put forth by the Commemoration Committee in April 2005. The Committee called for the inclusion of French colonial history in the school curriculum and the creation of cultural and research institutions to "integrate these hitherto marginalized issues into the national memory" (Reinhardt 2006, 158). Chirac finally accepted the Committee's agenda on January 30, 2006, declaring May 10 as a national day of remembrance for the victims of slavery.

The relative silence surrounding Haiti's former history of slavery also reverberates in contemporary Haitian literature as evidence of the shame associated with this horrific past and the taboos surrounding the painful evocation of human degradation in text.[1] This literature nevertheless celebrates the Haitian Revolution as a primary event, while marginally acknowledging the country's pre-Revolution historicity as the very foundation of decolonization. Within this context of erasure and omission, *Rosalie l'infâme* is an attempt to break these heavy silences by representing the resistance and survival of ordinary men, women, and children who braved the perilous Middle Passage and its aftermath of labor exploitation and colonial brutality in the French settlement of Saint-Domingue. The author memorializes history in the name of the enslaved by framing her characters as dynamic agents of history instead of as one-dimensional victims. Trouillot felt impelled to write a "humanizing text" about the fortitude of the spirit and its refusal to accept subjugation amid the most violent circumstances of torture, rape, immolation, and degrading working conditions. Set within the historical period of the 1750s—roughly fifty years before the first slave-organized revolution to create an independent black nation in 1804[2]—the novel unveils the anonymous faces of history. As Trouillot explains, "For me, it was vital that I lift the anonymous mask from the figures of the slaves. The silence is justified by their anonymity. Anonymity also wards off a guilty conscience" (2005, 2).

Trouillot's comments highlight the skewered nature of historical narratives that for the most part focus on the activism and political agency of elitist male heroes. Those who play a "supporting," albeit vital, role in the lives of these men, namely women and the rural poor, are relegated to the historical periphery

on account of their allegedly "marginal" contributions to the nation's glory. As Trouillot affirms, "If we accept history as we are told it, women appear to have played a very small part in the Haitian Revolution" (2005, 1). Accounts of the Haitian Revolution abound with the names of legendary men such as Makandal, Boukman, and the revered trinity of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Henri Christophe, and Jean Jacques Dessalines, who are represented as the venerable father(s) of the nation. While celebrating the extraordinary achievements of these figures, Haitian women writers such as Trouillot and Myriam Chancy also question the invisibility of the mothers of the revolution and contest the masculinist biases of nationalist narratives. As Trouillot claims, "Apart from the few women mentioned—Claire-Heureuse, 'Dessaline's woman'; the quateroon Henriette St. Marc who spied on French soldiers for the indigenous troops; and Catherine Flon, who made the flag conceived by Dessalines in 1803, the great majority of women have been totally forgotten" (2005, 1). Similarly, Chancy disputes the eclipsing of women in Haitian history by arguing thus, "Traditionally, Haitian women have been subsumed under an overtly male-identified national identity. What Haitian women writers demonstrate is that the project of recovering Haitian women's lives must begin with the re-composition of history and nationality" (1997, 13).

While Chancy refers more specifically to the erasure of women in the post-revolutionary national imaginary, she nevertheless underscores the responsibility of Haitian women writers to reclaim history by composing their own revolutionary narratives that give voice to historical silences. These narrative reframings engender the scripting of multilayered texts that reposition history to include the perspectives of the marginalized. Trouillot asserts, "I felt it was important to not only speak about slavery but to ensure that the slaves'—all categories of slaves—voices were heard. The invisible members of history—the women, the men, and the children whose lives were traded through some dishonorable deal" (2005, 1). Trouillot's novel is an attempt to rescue history from its partiality by putting a human face to the invisible suffering and ignominy experienced by the enslaved ancestors, the resilient women of Saint-Domingue in particular. The author thereby restitutes the honor and dignity of a violated community by bringing it to life in narrative memory.[3] This testimonial narrative bears witness to the trials and tribulations of an entire community under enslavement rather than privileging the trajectories of a particular individual. The communal nature of the novel is thereby revealed in its very title, which refers to the name of an infamous slave ship, *Rosalie*, and the collective experiences of slavery. Trouillot says, "writing *Rosalie l'infâme* was like stepping back into history through the side door, the less-frequently-used door, the door that scares people because it provides an unavoidable reminder of horrors that should

remain silent" (2005, 1). The journey into the past as an important attempt to heal a wounded historical imaginary provides the key to future subjectivity.

This chapter positions *Rosalie l'infâme* as an unavoidable text, the enduring "pretext" or preamble of the Haitian Revolution representing the necessary guide to liberation charted by the invisible non-elitist masses. These individuals demonstrate another kind of heroism inscribed within a complex abjection and resistance dialectic that also uncovers the maternal roots of history at the same time. The novel raises many questions that provide the conceptual framework for my analysis. How does an author articulate a silent history by exposing the birth pangs of revolution? How does she memorialize these invisible heroes and heroines by unveiling the shroud of secrecy surrounding the history of slavery in colonial Saint-Domingue? What is the link between horror and the female body in the scripting of this history? How does the language of abjection frame the female text through the trauma of memory? While men, women, and children experienced slavery's debilitating impact, what were the particular gendered and sexualized forms of violence leveled against women? How did slavery graft a cartography of pain on the female body through the politics of rape and torture? What were the different modes of subaltern resistance used to dislocate the colonial geography of pain from the bodies of women? At what point did maternal genealogies emerge from the confines of death and bloody violence? *Rosalie l'infâme* stresses the urgency of recovering these feminine historicities to restore the overall humanity of Haiti's past through a creative writing against oblivion. In an interview with Edwidge Danticat, Trouillot concludes, "I would like to see an equivalent of the 'marron inconnu' (the unknown runaway slave) to symbolize the enslaved women who fought against slavery" (Danticat 2004, 2). In so doing, Trouillot rescues an important part of Haitian history from the void of amnesia as she attempts to suture the bleeding wounds of Haiti's violent history.

Rosalie l'infâme was inspired by the true-life account of an Arada midwife brought to Saint-Domingue from West Africa. She achieved notoriety by using her medical skills to stop the chain of slavery through infanticide, thereby sparing these newly born babies from an infernal life of human degradation. Trouillot finds a brief mention of this woman in a quotation cited in *La révolution aux Caraïbes* (Abenon, Cauna, and Chauleau 1989): "Descourtilz cites the case of an Arada mid-wife. When she was tried, the woman showed a rope necklace that she was wearing. Each knot represented one of the seventy children she had killed. I stuck a pin into their brain via the fontanel to save these young beings from degrading slavery" (Trouillot 2005, 1). Deeply impacted by this woman's unapologetic admission of her efforts to destabilize the future of slavery through an individual act of resistance, Trouillot was driven to reflect

upon the humanity and courage behind this act of protest. Without passing judgment on the moral value of the woman's actions, the novel raises the question of choice in debilitating circumstances, while revealing the anguish of maternity in such situations. How are maternal love, death, and resistance part of a self-defining equation of subjectivity under slavery? How is choice or lack of choice conditioned by history and circumstance? Is tough love configured as infanticide the expression of an inconsolable maternal grief or a "crime" punishable by law? Is infanticide considered an act of criminality in the eyes of the colonial court precisely because it represents an act of autonomy by an enslaved woman who makes her own decisions? As Trouillot herself asks, "How far will a mother's love stretch before she turns into a monstrous machine?" (2005, 2). Who becomes the ultimate criminal in this system? The enslaved who fight for freedom at all costs or the colonialists who enforce a dehumanizing politics of death in the form of slavery? These universal questions further complicate our reading of the novel from a gendered and human perspective. As Renée Larrier states, "Caribbean women authors in particular examine gender-related survival strategies not only to imagine how enslaved women negotiated their daily lives, but to challenge the silences surrounding slavery's brutality as well" (2007, 1).

While a midwife's specific role is to facilitate the birthing process in the name of creation, the Arada midwife reconfigures death as the protection of innocent life from the living death of slavery. Tried for her "monstrous" acts, the Arada woman's alleged monstrosity is a form of maternal protest. Her gendered resistance exposes the painful evocation of a woman's anguish and the refusal to fuel the colonial machinery with young blood. She subverts the colonial stereotype equating enslaved people with barbarity and inhumanity by reversing the equation; instead, she demonstrates how the savagery of the colonial psyche gives "birth" to a corresponding impulsion for liberation on the part of the colonized as an affirmation of their identity. As Frantz Fanon claims, "the colonized 'object' becomes human through the very process of self-liberation" (1991, 67). An individual attempt to contest the functional and exploitative value of the word "slave" becomes a lesson in subjective autonomy instead. This act reveals the human effort to deconstruct the objectifying nomenclature of slavery defined exclusively in colonial terms. "It was the challenge of portraying the slave woman, man and child with human feelings and emotions that drove me to pursue my journey . . . The adventurous act of writing made my foray into hell possible, making it vital. Writing had transcended the infamy," admits Trouillot (2005, 1). This foray into the humanity of a degraded people provides the structure and driving force behind Trouillot's novel that exposes the gaping wounds of diaspora in Saint-Domingue.

Rosalie l'infâme is the coming-of-age story of a young domestic slave, Lisette, who works for the Fayot household. The novel highlights the maternal timelines that provide Lisette with a sense of historicity as she "grows to understand the difficult choices enslaved people are forced to make, especially women who struggle to control their own bodies and protect their children" (Larrier 2007, 3). Inspired by the strong maternal figures in her life, such as her grandmother, Gram Charlotte, godmother, Gram Augustine, and the mythical figure of her Great-Aunt Brigitte (who is modeled after the Arada woman mentioned in *La révolution aux Caraïbes*), Lisette's story is also a narrative of agency demonstrating how women, in particular, are simultaneously embodied and disembodied by history. These women link their daily resistance and survival to what I call the "consciousness of reason" and calculated strategy; in so doing, they position themselves as the founding mothers of Haitian feminism united by an umbilical lifeline. This sacred genealogy nevertheless carries the imprint of death in the form of Brigitte's "infamous" cordon, "cette corde de toile écrue et rapiécée" [this rope of patched up unbleached linen] (Trouillot 2003, 312). The rope becomes a powerful metaphor for an intergenerational connection (through life) and disconnection (by death) between the women of the African Middle Passage (Augustine, Charlotte, Ayouba [Lisette's mother, who dies in childbirth], and Brigitte) and the creolized generation (Lisette) born in the Caribbean. The seventy notches on the rope, which commemorate the many lives spared from enslavement, symbolize the disrupted genealogies of the Middle Passage in the form of constricted knots. The rope also represents the efforts to piece together these fragmented identities through a diasporic weave. As Larrier argues, "That the most important relationships in the novel skip a generation reflects separation from the motherland, Africa, yet at the same time, represents a link to the continent as well as the construction of new identities in the Caribbean" (2007, 4).

The presence of this vital life support, represented physically by the rope and symbolically by the female communion existing among the women closest to Lisette, subverts colonial authority through two "violations" of the infamous *Code Noir*, or Black Code. Louis XIV instituted the Black Code in 1685 to regulate and define the institution of slavery. Article 44 of the Code dictated that enslaved people could not own property since they were considered communal property themselves.[4] A violation of this edict was punishable by death or flogging. Secondly, the very idea of community building was against slavery's ethos of social, familial, and geographical dispersal and the interdiction of communal gatherings. Consequently, the female characters are obliged to maintain their "illegal" affiliations and possessions in secret to avoid punishment for subversive resistance, a powerful response to disenfranchisement. As Man Augustine

states, "Seuls nos gestes de révolte sont réellement à nous" (Trouillot 2003, 90) [Only our acts of resistance truly belong to us]. These acts of belonging and repossession are nevertheless located within a larger diasporic configuration mapped by the Middle Passage's treacherous trans-Atlantic routes "as a space of in-betweenness with its links to the origin, its reversibilities, its ambivalences" (Diedrich, Gates, and Pedersen 1999, 20). This liminal space reveals its interstitial positioning between life and death, abjection and recovery, memory and experience as a "borderline" (20) positionality to represent the horrors of the unimaginable expressed in terms of slavery's "global hurt" (20). The primordial wounding of diaspora characterizes the very epistemology of the African experience in the Americas grafting a transcontinental geography of pain across and beyond the Atlantic. The novel reinforces the idea of a bleeding and wounded history: "Toute cette histoire est comme une immense plaie. Certaines parties saignent plus que les autres. Il y a des cicatrices plus récentes, moins mortelles. Il y a de vieilles blessures qui ont arrêté de saigner mais qui ont inflitré dans tout le corps une odeur de charogne" (Trouillot 2003, 85) [This entire history is like an immense wound. Certain parts bleed more than others. There are more recent and less fatal scars. There are old wounds that have stopped bleeding but have infused the entire body with an odor of carrion].

Bodies in Pain

The novel begins in a climate of fear and suspicion among the white planters occasioned by subversive acts of rebellion on the part of the enslaved. As Arthur and Dash explain, "The most widespread act of rebellion, and the most feared by the white colonists, was the use of poison against livestock, other slaves and the slave masters themselves" (1999, 18). These acts of autonomy against the colonial state were a form of guerilla warfare to intimidate those in power by subjecting them to the uncertainty of death by poisoning in circumstances beyond their control. These actions were nevertheless punished by the most extreme methods of torture, evidenced by brutal whippings, burning flesh, and corporeal mutilations. As a result, the scepter of death maintains its ominous presence throughout the text in the form of decay, festering wounds, bloody scars, and rotting flesh to position the history of slavery as one of the most wounded narratives in the chronicles of diaspora. The tormented bodies and aggressed souls of the enslaved "speak" their tortured texts in the language of scars and other forcible corporeal markings. In so doing, they expose colonial acts of villainy committed in the name of French civilization. Torture[5] disguised as punishment becomes an "acceptable" form of colonial accommodation and a legitimized outlet for structural violence and racism to regulate "otherness." In colonial logic, the "aberrant" black body represents this alterity; the black

female body suffers a dual alterity through the intersecting variables of racialization and sexualization, thereby becoming the target of added sexual injury. As Barbara Christian claims, "In America, the enslaved African woman became the basis for the definition of our society's Other" (1985, 160). The association of blackness with the non-normative provides the "just" cause for enslavement; female blackness represents the ultimate deviance demonstrated by the female body's power to make or break the system of slavery through productive and reproductive labor. As Jennifer Morgan argues, "Women's work and women's bodies are inseparable from the landscape of colonial slavery" (2004, 3).

The grafting of the colonial landscape onto the female body highlights the corporeal alterations required to mold and refashion the body into an amenable commodity; the body's perceived threat is thereby minimized by regulatory bodily controls in the form of torture and arbitrary punishment. Torture represents a form of expression, the very language of sugar as an authoritative colonial tongue articulating the violability of enslavement in a twisted vocabulary. This language authenticates the absolute power of the colonials and the perverse regimentation of the enslaved. The world of colonial torture contains an arbitrary internal logic obscuring the limits of reason as revealed by the narrator of the novel: "L'obscurité me réduit à une ombre de plus en plus dans un monde de pénombres" (Trouillot 2003, 60). [Darkness reduces me to a shadow in an increasingly obscure world.] The strategy of using torture for torture's sake is an integral part of the system of slavery sustained by the objectification and demonization of the "other." As Carla Peterson affirms, "As dominant ideologies devalued the African soul, spirit, and inner being, they came to emphasize the body construed as a sign of racial difference that justified the perpetuation of slavery. Within both economic systems of slavery and free labor, the black body was made to perform as a laboring body, as a working machine dissociated from the mind that invents or operates the machine" (2001, x). For the colonials, slavery provided the moral validation for torture since both slavery and torture's dehumanizing scope were based on acts of human degradation and humiliation. According to torture's perverse logic, absolute power over an individual or group gives the torturer unlimited physical recourse to the victim with the express intention of shaping a submissive object. The victim is vilified for his or her supposedly inherent racial, sexual, or religious difference.

The black female body was even more problematic for the colonialists due to its work-induced masculinization by hard labor and its feminization through reproductive labor. Peterson suggests, "In slavery in particular, the black woman not only carried out the physical labor demanded by the plantation economy, she also performed the sex work that satisfied the slaveholder's lust as well as the reproductive labor of breeding that ensured the replenishment of his slave

stock" (2001, x–xi). These transgendered role ambiguities were a source of angst for the colonialists who were consequently unable to fix the representation of the black body in any satisfactory way despite their rigid racial classifications. According to Peterson, "Nowhere is the body's subjectivity more evident than in the instability of representations of the black body—an instability that gave rise to irresolvable tensions and contradictions" (xi). Consequently, torture became a medium to fix blackness and "translate" its unreadability in colonial terms. The prerogative to burn, flog, and mutilate signifies the impulsion to "eliminate" these signs of ambivalence from the bodies of the colonized to create an "acceptable" colonial prototype. For the colonizer, blackness and Africanness represent the ultimate crime punishable by law under the aegis of the *Code Noir*. Article III states, "We forbid any religion other than the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith from being practiced in public. We desire that offenders be punished as rebels disobedient of our orders."

The Code sanctifies the criminality of difference in the name of the Christian faith as a God-given right to usurp and pervert the authority of the Divine in man-made racist legislation. Equating torture with the most barbaric and morally reprehensible form of state repression, Michel Foucault demonstrates how the machinery of torture is designed to create a docile body "that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (1975, 136) for purposes of capitalist profit and commercial trading. In other words, the body can be beaten into submission if it refuses to comply with the "universal" French ideal of economic profiteering and moral sanctioning as a legitimate component of France's civilizing mission, wherein the black body is "caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions" (Foucault 1975, 11). The body's inscription within a series of economic, political, and religious restrictions indicates its alleged susceptibility and malleability to manipulative control dictated by the geopolitics of colonial might and its blatant infringement of human rights.

This infraction is sustained by the semantic complicity between the language of the Code Noir and the French civilizing credo revealed in duplicitous linguistic euphemisms that obscure torture's intentionality. It is interesting to note the complete avoidance of the word "torture" to characterize inhuman acts of cruelty by the so-called first-world in hegemonic Euro-American political discourses and foreign policy throughout history. In these discourses, the connection between torture and the Euro-American imaginary remains unimaginable, beyond the limits of reason. At the same time, Western politicians and lawmakers do not hesitate to unilaterally state that "undemocratic" third-world countries such as Haiti utilize torture as an acceptable medium of political control. In these one-sided discourses, torture remains irreconcilable with Western

"civilization" and represents the deciding qualifier between civilization and savagery. According to their self-fabricated and hypocritical standards of righteousness, Western governments assert that they do not indulge in torture but only "punish" infractions of the law as evidence of just cause and in the interests of civil society. Similarly, the moral and religious biases of the *Code Noir* in collusion with the zealotry of the *mission civilisatrice* betray a corresponding ideology of (self-selecting) French ethical superiority in the nation's founding narratives.

The elimination of the word "torture" from the national vocabulary does not, however, erase the deliberate intent and practice of infamy from the French colonial imaginary. Torture remains disguised under the ambiguous and power-inflected legality of punishment. If punishment is an acceptable system of rational order in colonial eyes or some other kind of perverted justification of righteous cause, torture exceeds the limits of justification as an invisible strategy of coercive discipline. As Article XLII of the Code stipulates, "The masters may also, when they believe that their slaves so deserve, chain them and have them beaten with rods or straps. They shall be forbidden however from torturing them or mutilating any limb, at the risk of having the slaves confiscated and having extraordinary charges brought against them." The subjective interpretation of the Code creates a certain discursive license to translate its terms in the most arbitrary manner. The reference to torture as an extraordinary act places it beyond human accountability, expectation, or control. With the negation of an enslaved person's legal rights and his or her inaccessibility to judicial process the limits of punishment can be extended infinitely without ever entering the realm of torture, according to the colonial judicial system. In this case, power is also based on the undisputed authority to interpret and execute the law indiscriminately in the absence of a "human" plaintiff. As Peterson affirms, "At the extreme, slaveholding ideology came to deny the very existence of an African soul in order to legitimate the enslavement of beings who, if soulless, could not be considered human" (2001, x). As an unimaginable act in Western consciousness, torture nevertheless becomes an unspoken truth in European praxis, as demonstrated by the willful acts of violence committed repeatedly against the enslaved African characters in the novel. These acts represent a total refutation of their identity and freedom.

At the same time, torture institutes its own system of checks and controls. A tortured body must, for all intents and purposes, remain a producing body under the dictates of colonial capitalism. For this reason, the torturer is invested with the power of controlling the life expectancy of the tortured by determining the ultimate point to which the body can be disfigured without losing its value as capital. The disfigured body supposedly remembers itself through productive work in an inverted cycle of historical regression symbolized by slavery. As the

novel indicates, "la peau témoigne des années d'esclavage" (Trouillot 2003, 36). [The skin bears witness to years of enslavement.] The branding of the body, signifying its ultimate possession by coloniality, establishes France's exclusive proprietary rights over African bodies and labor in Saint-Domingue through the "intimacy" of the whip. The indiscriminate use of the whip is nevertheless legitimized by the Code despite its statutory limit of twenty-nine lashes.

> De dix à vingt coups pour arriver à la cinquantaine dans les cas graves, le fouet et moi avons dévéloppé une longue histoire de chocs et de dérobades, de heurts et d'escapades. Des pleurs aux cris, de gémissements aux silences, ma voix a maîtrisé la danse des signes pour ménager ma peau. Les traces qu'elle porte ne sont pas visibles. Elles ont pris racine au creux de ma main et parfois il me semble que je traîne mes entrailles sous mes pieds et que nul ne peut les voir. [From ten to twenty lashes to reach fifty in extreme cases, the whip and I have developed a long history of shocks and evasions, of clashes and escapes. From tears to cries, from moans to silence, my voice has mastered the dance of signs to spare my skin. The marks it carries are invisible. They have taken root in the hollow of my hand and sometimes it seems as if I am dragging my entrails under my feet and that no one can see them.] (12–13)

The phallic whip enforces a relationship of perverted familiarity with the body of the enslaved woman specifically to expose the silent horror associated with crimes committed against women. These crimes remain unacknowledged within a patriarchal culture of "abject seduction." The reference to the hanging entrails could also include the violation of the womb as a distinct form of womb-driven torture, the ultimate sign of patriarchal disgrace.

While both men and women suffered from the indignities of the whip, the politics of the whip are nevertheless inscribed in a gender inflected power dynamic controlled by colonial men and their intermediaries such as the character Michaud. Michaud himself remains subjected to the psychological politics of the whip in his role as a slave foreman or commander: "Moi qui chaque jour battais, fouettais, punissais" (Trouillot 2003, 27). [I am the one who beat, whipped, and punished every day.] It was common practice for the colonialists to mediate torture through a black or mulatto commander who was used as a pawn in a white-washed disciplinary scheme. This plan was designed to maintain the respectability and nonaccountability of whiteness, symbolized by untainted colonial hands. On the one hand, the commander could delude himself with fantasies of sexual agency over the "fesses nues en l'air" (26) [raised naked buttocks] of the female body as a way of retrieving his own castrated humanity through the penetrating power of the whip. On the other hand, he was both a casualty and an accomplice in this divisive history in which enslaved men and women were manipulated to betray and victimize each other in the hope of gaining their freedom from the collective chains of bondage. The

commander's internalization of the politics of torture as a strategy of survival nevertheless reveals the psychological brainwashing that constitutes an integral part of the machinery of torture. Psychic alterations in the form of self-hatred and shame are evidence of the colonial stains that contaminate the psychology of the oppressed, making them willing accomplices in a nefarious ideology.[6]

The novel demonstrates how Michaud receives divine retribution for his actions when he is moved to commit an act of self-immolation by amputating his offending wrist before beating a pregnant woman (Trouillot 2003, 26–27). While his amputated hand symbolizes slavery's amputating historicity, Michaud is also permitted to reclaim his lost humanity represented by the intervention of his good angel: "Ne me demande pas comment je pus le faire, car, même aujourd'hui au moment où je te parle, je me demande si ce n'est pas mon bon ange qui a frappé le coup" (26). [Do not ask me how I could have done it because even today as I am talking to you, I ask myself if it wasn't my good angel who struck the blow.] The pain of self-inflicted torture provides the only path to exoneration for infamous deeds; at the same time, the amputated wrist prevents total redemption by bearing witness in a very visible way to Michaud's past cruelty and his manipulation by the colonial polity. Nevertheless, the novel further complicates the characterization of Michaud by highlighting his pivotal role in organized rebellion against the colonial machinery as a form of personal and political atonement. His past complicity with the colonials is later replaced by his political complicity with the maroons to overthrown colonial rule, thereby demonstrating a personal struggle from assimilation to self-awareness. In addition, Michaud's self-amputation complements Brigitte's acts of infanticide, thereby revealing gender determined and personalized efforts to destabilize slavery and the system of torture.

In the novel, the sexual torture inflicted on women in the form of rape, corporeal disfiguration, and other bodily damage becomes a fetishized spectacle inscribed in an attraction-repulsion paradigm. As Susan Sontag comments, "The torture is more attractive when it has a sexual component . . . Rape and pain inflicted on the genitals are among the most common forms of torture" (2004). Torture grafts a patriarchal map on the female body in the form of visible scars, lacerations, and ripped flesh to indicate how codes of torture reveal an active-passive gender dialectic. Within this structure, men do the whipping for the most part[7] and women carry the permanent imprint of these masculinist markings. For this reason, a slave commander can repeatedly flog a pregnant woman by desensitizing himself to the suffering that he does not share with her. In other words, the inability to empathize with the tortured person's suffering renews the sadist's pleasure in enforcing it as a result of the absolute subjectivity of pain. He can extricate himself from any further accountability for his

misdeeds by using an animal to impose the colonial state's defining print on the female body: "Elle portait les marques des dogues sur ses mollets" (Trouillot 2003, 26). [She carried the imprint of dog bites on her calves.] The perversion of an "aristocratic" leisure activity of hunting for game reduces the enslaved to the level of fair prey through their perceived bestiality. The interchangeability between a deer hunt and a manhunt in the colonial psyche consequently highlights coloniality's unrestricted power to deform nature through twisted classifications and unnatural inversions in the chain of being.

These indelible wounds serve as a permanent reminder of the enslaved woman's vulnerability and susceptibility to state violence. Man Augustine says, "Il y a des marques qui te suivent et te défigurent" (Trouillot 2003, 40). [There are marks that follow you and disfigure you.] These scars reveal the particular gender inflicted wounds born by women in patriarchal slave societies, wherein "one person's physical pain is understood as another person's power . . . because the torturer and the prisoner each experience them as opposite" (Scarry 1985, 29; 37). Torture represents the most abject form of noncommunication between the male torturer and female victim. The inability to feel or understand the pain of the tortured makes it an objectifying action for the perpetrator; on the other hand, the victim remains permanently traumatized by a personalized experience, as stated earlier. The language of pain remains inexpressible, as "something that cannot be denied and that which cannot be confirmed. Whatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability" (Scarry 1985, 4). As an experience that cannot be measured in finite terms, pain becomes an outer-body feeling outside the scope of signification and human articulation. The novel describes the frenzied scream as the preverbal language of pain (Trouillot 2003, 33), a cry of abjection that is unable to translate the full scale of slavery's infamy. The torturer's inability to empathize with the other's pain symbolizes his access to the institutionalized language of unrestrained power, a hegemonic language that cannot be shared with the enslaved despite its transparency.

The most blatant symbols of this pellucid script are inscribed on the bodies of Man Augustine and Grandmother Charlotte in the shape of two letters. The narrator remarks, "J'avais aperçu plusieurs fois l'étampe de Grann Charlotte et celle de Man Augustine, un L.R. sur le sein droit. *La Rosalie*. Ce lien où l'innommable a pris forme" (Trouillot 2003, 36). [I had seen the stamp on Grandma Charlotte and Man Augustine several times, a L.R. on the right breast. *The Rosalie*. The site where the unspeakable took shape.] The body is branded with the name of a slave ship as evidence of the ways in which the female body absorbs the unspeakable pain of an entire diasporic experience inscribed on the maternal breast. The scarring of the breast represents a primary infraction in terms of the maternal wounding of diaspora, the original site of trauma

and future resistance. As Larrier claims, "Charlotte and Augustine's left breast were branded with the initials L.R. for 'La Rosalie,' the ship that transported them to Saint-Domingue. Dubbed 'Rosalie L'Infâme' by the captives to reflect its perverted mission, this site of rupture, dispossession, and indignity has an oxymoronic nickname that juxtaposes *rose*—a beautiful flower, color, and the Christian name Lisette's mother Ayouba refuses—with *infâme*, an adjective used to describe a loathsome occupation, unspeakable act or disgusting odor, all of which are entirely appropriate in this context" (2007). The nourishing and life-sustaining properties of the breast are nevertheless contaminated by the etchings of death found in defiling brands symbolizing depersonalization, economic exploitation, and the indignity of diaspora. These signifiers of colonial ownership rights position the female body as sexualized merchandise to be bartered within a patriarchal system of exchange. The novel offers several examples of the female body's commoditization: "Fontilus m'a dit que le cocher lui a confié que le maître avait gagné Jeannine lors d'une partie de poker avec un habitant de Petit-Gôave qui a ce vice dans le sang" (Trouillot 2003, 42). [Fontilus told me the coachman confided in him that the master had won Jeannine in a game of poker with an inhabitant from Petit Gôave who has this vice in his blood.] The master's vice nourishes itself by his insatiable desire to devour money and sex as tokenized items of his prestige. The source of this wealth remains inscribed on the maternal breast to demonstrate how "slave owners' images and beliefs about race and savagery were indelibly marked on women's bodies . . . Images of black women's reproductive potential, as well as images of their voracious sexuality, were crucial to slave owners faced with female laborers" (Morgan 2004, 7). In other words, the master ironically projects his voracious appetite for riches and sex onto the female body through his insatiable suckling of the breast. The novel establishes the intimate connection between gender functions, race, and the (re)production of labor described as the female body's burden: "La douleur qui courbe le dos de Marie-Pierre et les brûlures qui déforment ses doigts" (Trouillot 2003, 96). [The pain that bends Marie Pierre's back and the burns that deform her fingers.] The power-driven equation between male pleasure and female labor finds its sustaining force in the politics of torture; the inability to service the master's economic and sexual needs gives him the rational justification to burn a woman's most vulnerable sensory points, located in the finger tips, and break her back through ritualistic flogging. A strong back to perform hard labor and nimble fingers to feed the colonialist's sadistic desire provide a woman's life support in the plantation economy. The damaging of these lifelines reinforces a woman's vulnerability to future violence when she becomes a readily visible target branded by the master. In addition, traumatic memories of the master's primary aggression against the body constantly resurrect themselves

in successive bouts of excruciating pain, whenever sensitive nerve endings are aggravated by hard work and further punishment.

A marked body loses its resale value in the money market as spoiled goods. The commercialization of the body subjects it to the caprices of mercantilism, as a floating commodity to be inspected and altered at will by the highest bidder. The novel describes the degrading inspection of the auctioned body treated as livestock: "On demandait aux nègres d'ouvrir la bouche et on inspectait leur corps presque nu. Le maître allait jusqua'à tâter les fesses des femmes en échangeant des plaisanteries avec l'habitant Malary" (Trouillot 2003, 54). [The Negroes were asked to open their mouths and their near naked bodies were inspected. The master went so far as to fondle the women's buttocks, while exchanging pleasantries with the planter Malary.] Horses and mares are judged for their pedigree value by the quality of their teeth and the firmness of their buttocks. Thus, enslaved women are compared with mares when they are bestialized by the master's "deformed" mercantile values. The power to prod, fondle, and pry apart or expose the partially veiled body is tantamount to the act of rape and sodomy, a forced rupturing of the hymen or anus symbolizing an irreversible loss of innocence by slavery's corrupted morality.

However, the search for the "virgin" female body becomes the colonialist's ultimate obsession; he inscribes his imposing insignia on the unblemished body just as colonialism indiscriminately carved its territorial routes on virgin soil. The colonization of the Caribbean land thereby goes hand-in-hand with the conquest of the female body in an attempt to map the wounds of diaspora on the "other's" space. Misguided colonial voyages of "discovery" to usurp foreign territory complement the indiscriminate public raping of African women in an open demonstration of coloniality's rule over land and body. Even though men were subjected to rape given their vulnerability under slavery, black women suffered the permanent consequences of rape (unwanted pregnancies and Creole progeny), which further consolidated the master's unrivalled and visible rule of authority. At the same time, the novel also demonstrates how the body resists forced creolization through infanticide, abortions, and an intimate knowledge of herbal medicine (which will be analyzed in the third section of this chapter).

Gideon Long describes the maneuver of female corporeal colonization or rape as a tactic of war when he states, "Women are raped and sexually tortured during war because they are viewed as 'the reproductive machinery of the enemy,' and the embodiment of a community's honor . . . It becomes a military strategy—if you attack women you attack the morale of the enemy and humiliate not only the women themselves but also their men, who feel they have failed to uphold their honour" (2004). Acts of militarization are carried out against the female body; women in particular bear the brunt of these

externalized manifestations of power through patriarchal inscriptions of blood, semen, and colonial maps in complementing strategies of conquest and rape. The body on display becomes a fetish once again to reveal the ways in which "black women's bodies are captured, sold, deported, exploited, and violated in the process. Potential buyers inspect, poke, and prod them, while planters abuse and exhibit them in public: Fayot orders fifty lashes (more than the amount stipulated in the Code noir) on the naked, pregnant body of Arcine, who is caught after her second escape; Madame Fayot, relishes the opportunity to parade her well-dressed servants behind her, signaling her complicity in the colonial and patriarchal systems that place high value on public displays of wealth" (Larrier 2007). The novel also exposes the complicity of colonial dames in slavery's patriarchal credo of objectification when Madame Fayot parades her domestic slaves in all their finery during public outings. Dressed as colonial caricatures in a grotesque mimicking of French gentility, the enslaved servants are similarly organized according to a definite hierarchy of preference based on appearance and skin color. Their colonial hand-me-downs are nevertheless destined to camouflage the scars of domestic abuse resulting from the mistress's whip-wielding authority within the privacy of home space. The protagonist Lisette describes the wounds she receives when she is raped and flogged for unsatisfactory service: "Je porte le poids des mains de son fils dans mon sexe, et celui du fouet sur mon dos et sur mes cuisses" (Trouillot 2003, 59). [I carry the weight of her son's hands on my sex and the weight of the whip on my back and thighs.]

Colonial dames were capable of cruelty equal to that of the men due to the peripheral position they occupied in the colonizing passion plays. Floggings and verbal taunting represented an "invisible" outlet for jealousy and sexual marginality, a strategy for reclaiming social and gender agency in the colonial household at the expense of other women. Lisette recounts the daily acts of violence in the plantation household that contributed to its terrifying ambiance: "les punitions de Madame donnent à tous les esclaves de la grande case, un air morose et grincheux . . . L'atmosphère s'alourdit de terreurs non formulées" (Trouillot 2003, 57). [Madam's punishments give a morose and grumpy look to all the slaves of the big plantation house . . . The atmosphere is heavy with unarticulated terror.] The enslaved domestics reveal the demeanor of the morally dissipated in an oppressive, anxiety-ridden environment of unspeakable abjection. Though the colonial women may not have whipped their slaves personally, they did not shy away from ordering male slaves to brutalize the women within the confines of private space. These private infractions remained concealed within the intimacy of the home as an internal affair, thereby relieving the colonial dame

from public accountability for her deeds. Torture, through its silent execution, becomes coloniality's unspeakable rule of law on the plantation.

Consider the implications of a private letter written by the Marquise of Rouvray to her daughter in August 1793:

> Because of the inhabitants' conduct, we cannot count on the return of any prosperity for Saint-Domingue, since the terrible lesson the men have received has not been corrected. Everyone has their *mulâtresse* that they have brought up or just found, and with whom they are going to produce a new generation of mulattoes and quarteroons destined to butcher our children. Here is what must happen . . . prescribe the destruction or the deportation of every free man and woman of color, after branding them on their two cheeks with an "L" which will mean Libre. (Dayan 1995a, 283)

The Marquise's letter reveals the private and self-justified authorization of a public commemoration of torture as part of the liberating process. Fearful of miscegenation and its life-threatening consequences on the future of white colonial subjectivity, Rouvray recommends ethnic cleansing and branding as essential components of freedom. In other words, speech and actions betray their hypocritical and contradictory intent. Consequently, even though the role of colonial women as agents of torture during slavery has yet to be fully acknowledged because of torture's overtly masculinist politics, it should come as no surprise that colonial women were equally responsible for supporting slavery's tortured legacy.[8]

The Trauma of History

In the novel, the primal diasporic ruptures created by the Middle Passage and the institutionalization of slavery situate the history of Saint-Domingue within a colonial fault line of traumatic experience. Trauma represents the symptomatic scope of slavery in a series of inassimilable occurrences. As Cathy Caruth states, "The traumatized . . . carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess" (1995, 5). The novel engages in existential reflections on the narrative scope of trauma. What does it mean to be possessed by history and denied historicity at the same time? How does trauma as the original wound create dramatic tensions in the novel as enslaved Africans attempt to re-member this impossible history? Does the very impossibility of articulation provide the basis for revolution on the one hand, and mnemonic scarring on the other? How do the characters mediate these liminalities as they struggle to achieve total emancipation from colonial dispossession? How does trauma represent a paradoxical site of narrative subjectivity and aphasia or the temporary loss of speech at the same time? The novel exposes these critical junctions between trauma, memory,

the body, and the historical process, wherein the characters try to comprehend this "senseless" history by "reading" their physical and psychological scars as traumatic evidence. These corporeal hieroglyphs provide the necessary clues to actualize trauma's absent-presence each time the body remembers its initial violation in and by history. The novel describes trauma's paradoxical positionality as a shadowy presence. This presence nevertheless imposes its defining imprint in acts of involuntary remembering that are beyond the body's sensory control (Caruth 1995, 64).

The novel compares the origin of trauma to an interminable nightmare symbolized by the Atlantic crossings. When Lisette asks her grandmother Charlotte to narrate her experiences during the Middle Passage, Charlotte relives her initial pain impeding articulation in words: "Un jour, où ton besoin sera plus fort que ma peur de retourner là-bas, dans ma mémoire. Pas aujourd'hui . . . Dans le bateau, j'ai découvert une nuit inconnue" (Trouillot 2003, 33). [One day, when your need is greater than my fear of returning there in memory. Not today . . . I discovered an unknown night on the boat.] For the grandmother, memory represents an inescapable journey into the void of the unknown, the very site of an undefined trauma described ambiguously as "là-bas" ("out there"), a point of regression to be avoided at all costs. As an unnamable internal landscape, trauma associates itself with the inescapable horror of abjection. The grandmother exclaims, "Je sens que je ne pourrai plus longtemps échapper aux souvenirs de l'horreur, ces souvenirs qui sont devenus les miens" (82–83). [I feel I will no longer be able to escape from the memories of horror, these memories that have become my own.] The impossibility of cathartic release through the ingestion of trauma's infamy, and the inability to translate thought into words provide the root cause of the grandmother's traumatic memory. Memory represents the very site of the body's multiple aggressions in an undecipherable history of horrific loss and absence. Lisette wonders, "Pourquoi ce silence qui m'intrigue et que je n'arrive pas à percer?" (38). [Why this silence that intrigues me, a silence I am not able to decipher?]

Linking trauma with the psychic wounding of the body and soul, Caruth argues, "Trauma . . . is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (1996, 4). If torture represents the body's physical wounds, trauma's psychological wounds maintain their resistance to healing. Representing these jagged shards of memory as a constant source of pain, trauma scripts an unbearable personal text lodged within the interstitial spaces of erasure and recuperation in an attempt to give public voice to a painful personal story. The novel describes godmother Augustine's face as a seasoned text; each folded wrinkle symbolizes a partially written chapter of personal historicity. As discursive registers or

historical ledgers, the wrinkles record the traumatic markings of history as well as the body's defiance to physical and psychological objectification: "Je regarde le visage de ma marraine qui, même en repos, me dit clairement que la vie l'a marqué de mille blessures et qu'elle y a répondu, coup pour coup. Chaque ride et chaque gerçure me racontent un défi, une injure, un conflit. Aucune prière, aucune pardon" (Trouillot 2003, 36–37). [I look at my godmother's face that, even in peace, clearly tells me that life had marked her with thousand wounds and that she had responded measure for measure. Each wrinkle and each crack related to me a challenge, an insult, a conflict. No prayer, no pardon.] As a conflicted impulse conditioned by the past, trauma inevitably eludes resolution in its refusal to be claimed by the present, thereby supporting Caruth's claim that "to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (1995, 4–5).

As an act of (dis)possession, trauma engenders the repetitive enactment of a primary scene associated with death; this scene remains indelibly engraved on the body's mindscape. The claustrophobic hold of the slave ship represents the unavoidable confines of trauma determined by death's penetrability enclosure. Grandmother Charlotte describes this abject space thus:

> Imagine une nuit dont tu ne peux pas compter les lunes car au-dessus de toi, il n'y a qu'un plafond de bois. Pour fenêtres, tu as les panneaux . . . La nuit, nos corps et nos esprits ne se reposent pas, les ténèbres renforcent cette impression de tumulte des chairs pressées les unes contre les autres. [Imagine a night whose moons you cannot count because all you have above you is a wooden ceiling. Instead of windows, you have panels . . . At night, our bodies and spirits do not rest, the darkness reinforces this impression of an agitation of bodies/flesh squeezed against each other.] (Trouillot 2003, 33)

Trauma ensconces itself in the anonymous *horror-vacui* of abject bodies piled against each other like merchandise on a floating container of capitalist greed. The confining walls of the slave ship create a suffocating atmosphere of distress comparable to the obscured recesses of a torture chamber, where victimized bodies convulse in waves of uncontrollable pain; the sight and site of infamy must nevertheless remain concealed from public eyes to simultaneously hide a prized human cargo from piracy and to relegate the violence of this "unwitnessed" infamy to the forgotten depths of the unconscious.

The hidden limits of torture and violence also seek to disassociate mind from body in an annihilating Western binary. This splitting negates an integral African view of the body's interconnectedness with the mind and spirit. The physical burying of the body in a subterranean enclosure that limits movement, respiration, and spatial transgression symbolizes a primary rupture as the body is wrested from its spirit and the mother continent through acts of depersonalization. The brutal severance from the mother spirit initiates the process of

trauma and nonsubjectivity when the captive body's imposed docility in confinement reveals the partial success of the colonial project. At the same time, the colonial unfamiliarity with African religions and belief systems ironically creates a nonconquerable space of "indigenous reason" from which the agitated spirit can also resist subjugation through ancestral commemorations—the only way to give meaning to a death-defined life of enslavement. As Geneviève Fabre states, "For the captives who identified with the roaming and restless spirits of the dead, beliefs about death and the journey to the other world could help them negotiate this unfamiliar voyage to unknown shores . . . This 'journey back' could be ceremonially performed or physically accomplished" (1999, 38).

As a form of indigenous knowledge, dance in Africa symbolizes a sociocultural and religious cosmovision, and a mediating balance between gods and humans, the living, and the dead (Fabre 1999, 33). Also representing a community's social and ethical consciousness, dance provides the ultimate form of communication with the ancestral spirits looked upon as divine intercessors and guiding forces of wisdom and judgement. The perverse distortion of a sacred dance into an economics-driven slave-ship dance demonstrates how the celebration of the spirit becomes an act of religious desecration in racist ideology. As Fabre asserts, "Strict control or even violence were exerted to prevent any carryover of indigenous practices . . . 'Dancing the slave' was part of a deliberate scheme to ensure subordination by destroying former practices, to curb any attempt at recovering freedom of movement, action or thought" (1999, 36). Periodically released from captivity on board, enslaved men and women were forced to dance to maintain their physical fitness for plantation labor, entertain the crew, and fatigue themselves to the point of submissive exhaustion. The replacement of pulsating drum beats with the cacophony of gunshots and cracking whips in a nonrhythmic colonial cadence corrupts the original intent of the dance. Originally celebrating the expansiveness of the soul as its fuses with the divine, the altered dance now reflects the supposed submission of the spirit as it dances to the colonialist's tune.

Trouillot's novel recreates the slave ship dance to represent the trajectories of traumatic memory in the frenzied and overlapping movements of forgetfulness, desperation, and liberation. The novel describes the final movements of a young couple who dance their way to freedom in the afterlife: "La musique devenait plus violente et les deux corps se heurtaient, s'effleuraient, s'évitaient, avec les mêmes mouvements de rage et de peine. Les Blancs riaient . . . Puis le tambour s'arrêta net. Du même élan, l'homme et la femme s'élancèrent et se jetèrent dans la mer" (2003, 34–35). [The music became more violent and the two bodies collided with each other, brushed against each other, avoided each other with the same movements of anger and pain. The Whites laughed . . . Then the

drum stopped short. With the same momentum, the man and woman leaped up and threw themselves into the water.] The couple's body movements provide a prediscursive script of trauma's supposedly untranslatable language, which is nevertheless articulated in expressive gestures and facial expressions of grief and anger. The dance exhibits the body's traumatizing by a horrifying event (slavery) that exceeds human comprehension, as well as its resistance to trauma's stasis through the redemptive action of death. Trauma negotiates the interstitial spaces between the passivity of subjugation and the agency of death by communicating its intent in a preverbal language also seen as "a ceremonial performance, the symbolic enactment of a system of beliefs and a secret rite that seeks to give expression and meaning to the journey and to the suffering . . . The dance is also the prelude to action and insurgency, an experiment with all possible forms of escape, including freedom" (Diedrich, Gates, and Pedersen 1999, 18). As a three-part movement, the dance commences with a prelude symbolizing separation from Africa, repeated and re-enacted on the slave ship in the second movement; the dance reaches its climax in the dramatic tensions between death and rebirth symbolized by the return to water and the ancestral world. The dance demonstrates the possibility of "reading" trauma in a nondiscursive context by privileging other forms of narration beyond the law of the letter.

Trauma and the subsequent efforts to give voice to traumatic experience locate themselves within a trans-Atlantic seascape as memory's primary archive documenting three intersecting moments of historical infamy: the Middle Passage, detainment in slave depots, and the brutality of plantation life. In *Caribbean Discourse*, Edouard Glissant describes slavery as a struggle without witnesses (1981, 231). He refers both to the historical silences surrounding slavery in the French Caribbean as well as the discrediting of the first-person accounts of slave or testimonial narratives in colonial historiography. This disembodiment of experience in text cannot, however, minimize the importance of the "monumental" vestiges of slavery, these *lieux de mémoire*, or realms of memory, evoked by Pierre Nora, bearing silent witness to this period of infamy despite the manipulation of historical evidence in colonial texts. Trouillot mentions one such attempt to doctor colonial versions of history through the suppression of incriminating evidence. She states, "I had trouble finding the word 'barracons' in the Grande Larousse and several other French encyclopaedias that I consulted. In the end I found it in the *Trésors des mots exotiques*, in the 'Le Français retrouvé' collection published by Editions Belin, with the following definition: 'From the Spanish barracon, word from the Upper Volta (19th century), place of confinement or large hut where the black prisoners were kept; now refers to a warehouse or hangar.' To my mind, the fact this word is eclipsed in French dictionaries is symbolic of the silence surrounding slavery" (2005,

2). The characterization of "barracon" as an exotic word outside the purview of standard French makes it impossible to identify this horrendous experience with French colonial history in the absence of descriptive signifiers. The foreignness or absence of the word in conventional dictionaries designates a non-French event conveniently projected onto a foreign context, thereby absolving France of any complicity with human rights abuses. Moreover, the reconfiguration of enslaved Africans as prisoners provides the moral and legal justification needed for the construction and preservation of these hangars of human degradation.

The novel describes the slave depot as a site of horrific inhumanity comparable to the abjection experienced in the ship hold. Doubly traumatized by their confinement on land and sea, the enslaved are obliged to relive their anguish through the violence of memory and the perverse "intimacy" of captivity. Trauma inscribes itself on the body though a process of corporeal mnemonics to reveal primal scars symbolizing an inescapable experience of pain, horror, and suffering, an experience carved in permanence on weary bones. Grandma Charlotte chooses her words carefully when she finally narrates her torment as if words themselves were inadequate to convey the depths of her suffering. She exclaims, "Le temps des barracons, c'est la douleur à vif, dans les os, c'est la honte à pleine vue. Quand on a vécu cela, la déchéance peut à tout moment murmurer votre nom et vous faire trébucher sur votre mémoire" (Trouillot 2003, 85). [The time of the slave depots was a time of intense pain in the bones, of shame in full sight. When you have lived this experience, degeneration can murmur your name at any moment and make you stumble over your memory.] If horror transcends articulation in words, can the nonexpression of this moral and physical degeneration in and by language further silence the "speaking-out" of infamy? How do we read bones and their graphic scripting of a muted experience?[9] Do the bloody traces of infamy provide another form of ink to rescue the historicity of slavery from erasure in the colonial archives? Can the body represent its own remembered narrative in alternative epistemologies?

Pierre Nora describes *lieux de mémoire* as "moments of history torn away from the movements of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded" (1994, 289). These historical fragments situate themselves in a space beyond history within interstitial mnemonic traces also found in bloody imprints. As a form of embodied memory, these traces establish their own liminal positionalities by surviving the trajectories of history through deep wounds that nevertheless leave permanent psychological scars. Haunted by the memory of the slave depot whose recurring image represents a nightmarish source of torment, Grandma Charlotte painfully remembers the experience of incarceration in these sites of infamy: "Mais pour moi, le temps des barracons demeure la

plaie qui saignera toujours au fond de moi. C'est à ce moment que j'eus la certitude qu'une grande partie de moi avait été enterrée" (Trouillot 2003, 86). [But for me, the time of the slave depots remains the wound that will always bleed within the depths of my being. It is at this moment that I realized a large part of me had been buried.] As the return of the repressed consciousness, these mnemonic fragments expose the objective and alternate truths about slavery for the enslaved, truths that elude the colonial history books. Trauma lodges itself within these ontological impasses leading to the body's dissoluteness in time and space, a state of suspension vacillating between life and death like the infamous slave ship's endless and precarious journey on the turbulent waters of the Atlantic. On the one hand, this psychic splitting represents the body's defenses to avoid complete annihilation in and by a discombobulating history of inhumanity and anonymity. As Charlotte states, "Les barracons, c'est pour moi le début de la nuit, la fin de la liberté . . . Même mon corps n'était plus à moi, je ne le reconnaissais plus dans cette chair endolorie" (88). [For me, the slave depots symbolize the beginning of darkness, the end of freedom . . . Even my body didn't belong to me anymore, I no longer recognized it in this aching flesh.] At the same time, disfiguring pain exposes memory's unrelenting hold on the body through corporeal estrangement and desensitized emotions, an extreme state of alienation within the darkness of abjection.

The novel also highlights the more positive sides of memory whose resuscitative power provides an important genealogical link between lost generations. Lisette commemorates her grandmother and great aunt Brigitte by carefully guarding their possessions: a notched cordon and a protective amulet or *garde-corps* to brave the hardships of slavery. A *garde-corps* was a kind of talisman usually worn by rebelling slaves who believed it made them invincible and fearless (Trouillot 2003, 18). Memory as talisman reveals a double-edged subjectivity in text through its reconstructing scope. Mary Chamberlain argues, "Memories are imaginative recountings, representative of a set of meanings by which and through which lives are interpreted and transmitted, constructed and changed" (1995, 108–9). If the machinations of slavery were destined to disrupt the genealogies of the enslaved, memory also served as a conduit to reclaim lost maternal historicities through invaluable mnemonic timelines binding generations of women across and beyond the Middle Passage, as stated earlier. These invisible timelines highlight a preslavery subjectivity as a more affirming locus of identity in the absence of colonial and patriarchal framings. Lisette affirms, "Je porte en moi tous les mouvements de la race arada, la race de ma mère" (Trouillot 2003, 16). [I carry in me all the movements of the Arada race, the race of my mother.] By claiming her lineage through self-representation, Lisette contests her functional or depersonalized value as a domestic slave when she reveals the

matrilineal roots of a family history dominated by strong Arada women. The memory of the foremothers provides Lisette with an enabling matrix to resist enslavement by becoming a female maroon at the end of the novel; she claims her place as an active agent of history by helping to seal the fate of French colonial history in Saint-Domingue. This subjectivity nevertheless stems from the simultaneous wounding and resistance of the maternal diaspora represented by the knotted rope, a symbol of the twisted legacy of slavery.

The Resisting Body

The novel highlights the interconnectedness between torture, trauma, and resistance to position the complex negotiations of identity and selfhood within the disenfranchising conditions of slavery. As Julia Kristeva argues, "There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable . . . And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master. Without a sign . . . it beseeches a discharge, a convulsion, a crying out" (1982, 1–2). The humanity of the enslaved being affirms itself by its very resistance to the colonial politics of inhumanity, as a sign of subjective agency. Abjection provides its own foundational basis of revolt to deny and decry White authoritarianism as a means of undermining the confining hold of slavery. The unthinkable act of slavery generates thinkable acts of protest to redefine the meaning of life for the enslaved and shift the geography of historicity from French domination to the perspectives of the African subalterns. Resistance thereby becomes a form of subaltern diasporic consciousness to dislodge the prevailing geopolitics of rationality from negating French universalisms to the complexity of Afro-Caribbean thought in which resistance is linked to the power of reason. The intersections between resistance and reason consolidate the quest for freedom and dignity, thereby positioning the enslaved as acting subjects who "in order to declare their rights, must declare war" (Foucault 1997, 64).

In the novel, Lisette reaches a point of epiphany when she finally realizes that organized rebellion constitutes the only form of resistance to repeated acts of colonial violence. She understands that fighting for one's humanity represents a constitutional right for the subaltern; the declaration of war against coloniality becomes an affirming act of freedom. The novel describes Lisette's coming to consciousness:

> Ils peuvent nous brûler à petit feux, nous faire flamber comme une torche, nous faire sauter comme une chaudière. Ils en ont le pouvoir. Nous sommes à leur merci et les choses ne changeront pas sans que nous fassions quelque chose. L'idée me tranche l'esprit comme un coup de machette sur le dos de la main." [They

> can burn us slowly, ignite us like a torch, start us up like a boiler. They have the power. We are at their mercy and things will not change unless we do something. The idea stands out clearly in my mind like a machete blow on the back of the hand.] (Trouillot 2003, 121)

In Lisette's newly acquired awareness, torched bodies metamorphose into the burning flames of insurrection as the only viable response to enslavement.

The opening climate of war in the novel stems from a prevailing reign of terror occasioned by the indiscriminate poisoning of white planters by an invisible enemy. The very idea of an omniscient adversary who launches an unexpected attack within the confines of home space reveals the undifferentiated borders of guerilla warfare in which public/private spatial dichotomies are invalidated. The imposing walls of the plantation house do not offer protection against the infiltrating power of poison that makes its way to the colonial belly under the guise of Creole delicacies. The novel describes this atmosphere of fear engendered by the wary anticipation of an unexpected death as follows:

> Nous sommes au beau milieu de l'époque de terreur qui secoue sauvagement le nord de la Grande Ile. Blancs et Noirs, les esclaves tout comme les maîtres, tous tremblent de frayeur et osent à pein toucher aux aliments qu'on leur sert. Les hommes épient leurs femmes et leurs maîtresses. Les mères jettent des regards soupçonneux à leurs amants, aux voisins. La grande peur du poison a envahi toutes les demeures, jetant désarroi et suspicion." [We are right in the middle of a reign of terror that savagely shakes the north of the Big Island. Whites and Black, slaves and their masters, everyone trembles with fright and hardly dares to touch the food served to them. Men spy on their wives and mistresses. Mothers give suspicious looks to their lovers and neighbors. The great fear of poison has invaded all the habitations, instilling confusion and suspicion.] (Trouillot 2003, 13)

Confusion and suspicion are effective guerilla strategies to disorient and disarm entire populations of white masters and their black slaves. This "nondiscriminating" policy targets colonial oppressors and suspected collaborators or intermediaries equally. Such an environment of mutual distrust among family members and close associates displaces the successful tactic of "divide and conquer" from colonial to revolutionary hands in a symbolic inversion of power.

Poison sets up an important relationship between food, cooking, and resistance, whereby "food was a powerful weapon in the hands of slaves" (Moitt 1995, 168). The master's wealth and prestige were also based on the copiousness of the meals served at his table, thereby placing "a high premium on cooks, whose estimated value was higher than that of most other slaves" (168). Cooks were responsible for preserving the colonial culinary ethic and experimenting with creolized adaptations to demonstrate the versatility and adaptability of French cooking styles. In other words, cooks had to familiarize themselves with traditional French seasonings and recipes to recreate the familiar ambiance and

odors of the metropolitan home in the colony. They also had to demonstrate their skills in blending these ingredients with indigenous herbs and spices to create a distinctive style of French-Creole cuisine. Cooks possessed the wisdom of indigenous herbalists in their ability to distinguish between flavoring herbs and noxious counterparts. Their intimate understanding of tropical geography as a way of familiarizing themselves with local flora and fauna led to the manipulation of the colonial appetite through tantalizing feasts or lethal treats. The colonial inability to distinguish between a life affirming meal and a death inducing indictment represented the cook's greatest ingenuity residing in camouflage and subversive dissent. This terror-inspiring cooking symbolized a form of "occupational sabotage," wherein "they used their positions to interfere with the productivity of the plantation and the work completed there" (Weaver 2006, 3). In this way, cooks could creatively season and destroy the colonial underbelly through gut wrenching dishes and potently toxic potables. They could thereby establish their memorable culinary authority over the colonial stomach in acts of subversive cooking, fearful eating, and "creative" feeding.

Native herbalists complemented the subversive ingenuity of cooks to alter and redefine the power dynamics of coloniality in a quid-pro-quo response to colonial determinations over life and death. In other words, if the colonials could control the life expectancy of the enslaved through torture and labor exploitation, herbalists could also exercise a similar authority over the colonials through indigenous herbal knowledge inscribed in ancient African cosmology reinvented in diaspora. Their wisdom was rooted in a deep connection with the earth together with an intimate familiarity with local topography. As Weaver states, "What is more significant, the enslaved healers of eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue created an ideology and system of resistance that included sabotage, the taking of both human and non-human life, and terrorism. This ideology and system of resistance inspired some of the most important figures of the Haitian Revolution" (2006, 2). Herbal knowledge was a form of creative resistance and healing to cure ailing bodies and wounded souls by inspiring acts of revolution against the colonial state. While physical wounds were treated with medicinal herbs, curative baths, and healing potions created from local plants and flowers, psychological scars were healed by the spirit of resistance to continued subjugation. These homeopathic doctors used natural remedies to rectify the unnatural maladies of colonialism by devising their own systems of mastery over humans and the environment; this indigenous pharmacology could either sustain or suspend life depending upon the ailment of the patient. In addition, the herbalists' intrinsic familiarity with the land enabled them to chart escape routes unknown to the colonials, thereby making them indispensable guides or leaders among maroon communities of runaway slaves. The every

survival of these groups depended upon their ability to hide and mobilize in remote mountainous spaces as sites of concealment and defense.

Healing herbs enabled the enslaved to survive the brutality of slavery, while deadly poisons were destined to eliminate the source of suffering by "curing" the very root of the problem. These remedies had a complementary physical and spiritual component to provide an integral cure based on African cultural practices, local Caribbean healing techniques, and some aspects of Western medicine "in order to formulate medical systems more closely attuned to the health needs of a population that struggled under the physical and psychological burdens of slavery" (Weaver 2006, 2). It could be stated that herbal practitioners were important diasporic philosophers of curative thought who believed in the transcendental powers of indigenous medicine as a form of self-definition and empowerment. In *Caliban's Reason*, Paget Henry stresses the importance of crediting these culturally devised systems of thought that reclaim and renegotiate negated black subjectivity through symbolic praxis. Particularly under slavery, "devalued ego-genetic African symbols have been reproducing devalued or illegitimate black existences. An intellectually honest revalorizing of these symbols is thus an urgent task, as the self-worth of many African peoples depend upon it" (Henry 2000, 164). These critical revalorizations of cultural identities and their symbolic systems "will be contributing to increases in the value of the lives that depend on these symbols. This is an important form of personal empowerment that enhances the courage to resist invisibility, discrimination, sexual abuse, and other forms of domination" (Henry 2000, 164.)

The novel makes several references to Makandal as one such revolutionary herbalist feared for his terror-inspiring agenda of eliminating the colonial presence from Saint-Domingue. Such acts of "occupational terrorism," as a form of subaltern resistance, were punished by unimaginable brutality before a live audience: "Un mois ne se passe pas sans qu'on brûle quatre à cinq hommes ou femmes, accusés d'avoir empoisonné nègres ou Blancs. Le nègre Palladin n'est qu'un numéro sur une longue liste" (Trouillot 2003, 14). [Not even one month goes by without the burning of four or five men or women, accused of poisoning Blacks or Whites. The Negro Palladin was only one number on a long list.] The burning of black flesh represented the ultimate response to the colonial fear of extermination. Ironically, this punishment did not slow down the mechanics of occupational terror; on the contrary, it increased the intensity of the freedom struggle commemorated in burning ashes, the indelible trademark of revolution and resurrection in the afterlife: "Devant moi, la forme humaine se transformait en cendres" (10). [Before my eyes, the human form was transformed into ashes.] The inscription of resistance within the African and Afro-Caribbean spiritual faith in the continuum of life and death cycles strengthened the belief

that the spirit could transcend its temporality when the burning fires of revolution broke the bonds of servitude permanently.

The novel highlights the crucial link between gender and insurrection by inscribing women within an important politics of healing, also revealed in the chapter on Sycorax. The Arada women such as Brigitte find their autonomy and identity in their role as healing midwives who create and control their own historicity in colonial Saint-Domingue. As an eminent healer, Brigitte commands the respect of many women: "Brigitte était la sage-femme de la zone, reprend Man Augustine. Sa réputation de guérisseuse avait conduit à elle des dizaines de femmes souffrant au mauvais moment du mois" (Trouillot 2003, 125). [Brigitte was the midwife of the region, continues Man Augustine. Her reputation as a healer brought scores of women suffering at the bad time of the month.] Midwives occupied an important position in the colonial hierarchy of the enslaved because they controlled the future of slavery through successful or unsuccessful births. As mentioned earlier, they could manipulate the chains of slavery by facilitating births or inducing miscarriages through "natural" strategies of resistance found in a local pharmacopoeia. As Weaver indicates, "The story of resistance by enslaved healers also places enslaved women in more central roles than prior histories, which have focused on the roles of slave drivers in revolt, and in so doing expands our understanding of women's roles in plantation life and slave resistance" (2006, 7). The midwife's organized resistance depended on the regularity or irregularity of the monthly cycle, the flow of which could be regulated by natural substances found in avocado leaves, cassava, Barbados pride, and wild passion flower, among other aborting agents (Bush 1996, 206). These primary gynecologists were intimately familiar with the workings of the female body and its subjection to a production and reproduction dynamic within slavery. By performing an abortion or inducing a miscarriage, the midwife could register a gendered protest against the very institution of slavery through the female body's refusal to submit to the necrology of cane. The knowledge of these basic survival skills was often passed down through the generations to ensure an enduring communal ethic of self-preservation and resistance. A survivor of several abortions herself, Brigitte chooses infanticide and abortion as her own form of occupational subversion, the body's best and only protection against its repeated corporeal colonization by slavery. As Brereton, Bush, and Shepherd assert, "Infanticide was not only an act of self-justification, but almost one of emancipation, by which the mother in the absence of a support system sought to determine her own future" (1995, xxi). Brigitte provides a self-supporting system of control in which she charts her own access to freedom.

In a similar fashion, the character Gracieuse controls her own body politics through her indifference to the master's advances. The novel highlights

her resistance to the master's authoritarian possession of her body in the form of his unchecked caresses and feverish embraces: "Indifférente et mystérieuse, Gracieuse ne repousse aucune caresse; quand la main du maître, impérieuse et fébrile, l'arrête et enlace sa taille, elle s'immobilise jusqu'à ce que d'eux-mêmes les doigts se jugent futiles et se figent" (Trouillot 2003, 56–57). [Indifferent and mysterious, Gracieuse does not push away any caress; when the master's imperious and feverish hand stops her and circles her waist, she remains motionless to the point where the fingers judge themselves futile and freeze.] Gracieuse's immobile body provides a protective armor to repel the master's advances. His groping hands are unable to penetrate her private space when the body's inner strength reduces the lust infused fingers of the master to a state of flaccidity. The master's threatened masculinity and negated control over the female body are further revealed in the woman's refusal to carry an unwanted pregnancy to its full term, the body's only defense against rape and other forms of sexual defilement. In fact, Gracieuse undergoes seven abortions to indicate her repeated refusal to submit to the infamy of sexual slavery and enforced reproduction, defining features of the libidinous colonial power play. The novel highlights her self-asserting stance: "Elle ne voulait pas d'enfants, de quiconque d'ailleurs, mais surtout pas de Fayot ni d'aucun autre Blanc. 'Pas d'enfants ni noirs ni mulâtres, les chaînes n'ont pas de couleur,' m'a-t-elle dit un jour. Sept fois, elle a vu son sang couler, sept fois j'ai vu son corps protester contre les abus et demander grâce" (101–2). [She did not want children, nobody's children, especially not Fayot's nor that of any other White man. "No black or mulatto children, chains do not have a color," she said to me one day. She saw her blood flow seven times, I saw her body protest abuse and ask for pardon seven times.] Seven abortions represent the body's various attempts to halt the lineage of slavery by its refusal to become a prisoner of sexual bondage; in so doing, the body compromises the system's guaranteed supply of bonded labor in the future.

While the indiscriminate raping of enslaved women was an acceptable and integral part of slavery used "as a weapon of domination, a weapon of repression, whose covert goal was to extinguish slave women's will to resist," (Davis 1981, 23), it is also important to note how enslaved women mediated their sexuality to obtain favors for themselves and their children. They were also able to manipulate the dynamics of colonial sexual desire. If rape represented the ultimate definition of male colonial power over the black female body as a means of reinforcing patriarchal hierarchies of race, class, and gender, attention must be paid to the ways in which enslaved women attempted to subvert these paradigms of discrimination through a conscious "corporeal awareness," as another form of intellectual thought. As Carolle Charles explains, "Slave women were clearly aware of the value of their reproductive capacity as a source of relief

from the oppressive slave system, and they did use that knowledge. Childbearing was a way to obtain protection and to guarantee material privileges" (2003, 179). Patterns of female rebellion were located within a paradoxical life and death dialectic, whereby reproduction and the resistance to procreation through abortion and infanticide highlighted women's dual negotiations of servitude through "interstitial praxis." Interstitiality was a way to both contest and accommodate abjection by simultaneously exposing and exploiting fractures in the system, an effective method to destabilize slavery's perceived inviolability over the black body. In the novel, characters such as Clarisse, Louise, and Brigitte enter into sexual contracts with white masters in exchange for the future emancipation of their children or, as in the case of Brigitte, to spare the lives of her sister and niece. Her compromised sexuality nevertheless inspires later acts of activism to reclaim self and body through sexual dissidence symbolized by the notched rope. As Larrier claims, "Having power over the reproductive process and maternity was a goal in itself" (2007, 4).

The novel demonstrates how multiple oppressions generate pluralistic modes of opposition, thereby contesting any unified or essentialized notion of Haitian women's resistance. While survival itself was an important act of resistance, diverse contestations of slavery revealed the creative resourcefulness of the enslaved in their daily fight for freedom. The novel underscores the overt and covert forms of rebellion used as acts of self-definition, wherein the adoption of a dual consciousness was both a necessity and a calculated strategy. As the narrator states, "Je suis protégée par mes années de subterfuge" (Trouillot 2003, 107). [I am protected by my years of subterfuge.] Feminists such as Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, and Patricia Hill Collins have indicated how black women have had to be "watchers" in order to survive racial and sexual oppression. This stance has lead to a double vision in which they have simultaneously familiarized themselves with the language and mannerisms of the oppressor and adopted these very same patterns of behavior as a defensive mechanism. This protective mask of "behavioral conformity" represents a technique of subterfuge to both maintain one's humanity and dissimulate individual and collective acts of nonconformity. In the novel, Lisette adopts an existential mask to mediate a resisting inner consciousness and an external social facade of subjection. She affirms, "Je suis passée experte en l'art de regarder ailleurs . . . mon corps joue la comédie de la docilité pour éviter tout ennui" (11). [I became an expert in the art of looking elsewhere . . . my body adopts the façade of docility to avoid all problems.] Like an actress, Lisette plays a defining role of outward conformity or subservience expected from a domestic slave; at the same time, she trains her mind to "look elsewhere," to a future beyond slavery. The creation of a future-inspired timeline invalidating slavery's oppressive hold on the present represents

an act of historicity, wherein "out of invisibility and marginality, a culture can be articulated . . . It is through the consciousness of absence, then, that identity is recovered and preciously defended" (Chancy 1997a, 16; 19).

The refusal to surrender her inner being to slavery motivates Lisette to become a female maroon in her own right. The enslaved body becomes a mobile body when it joins a community of resisters who occupy an insider-outsider spatiality. These revolutionaries are able to live autonomously on the fringes of plantations and infiltrate colonial spaces through subversive guerilla warfare. According to Richard Burton, maroons represent the opposite side of assimilation by establishing counter communities of insurrection and liberation (1997, 23–25). Similarly, Alain Yacou highlights the self-determining value of these communities when he asserts, "In Cuba, as in other countries of plantation America, these maroon societies have through their very existence constituted an important factor of subversion of colonial order by offering a sure refuge and a sanctuary of liberty to fugitive slaves. They constituted a basis for collective military, political, socioeconomic, and cultural resistance to the oppression of the slave regime" (1984, 92). Marooning represented a political and economy strategy reminiscent of certain communal forms of African social organization (Fischer 2004, 14), as well as a form of subaltern consciousness reclaiming dignity and sovereignty from colonial rule. In fact, the success of the Haitian Revolution depended on these acts of subversion against the oppressiveness of colonialism. The novel highlights the importance of female maroons in resistance struggles by inscribing their forgotten activism in the historical imaginary of colonial Saint-Domingue and postcolonial Haiti. While the male maroon has received much attention as a founding agent of decolonization in popular Caribbean discourse[10], there has been less focus on women fighters who have been relegated to peripheral roles or anonymity. Women represented over one-fifth of the entire maroon population and contributed significantly to the nationalistic movement (Reinhardt 2006, 62). The novel problematizes the gendered scope of resistance through a form of textual marooning to fill in the gaps found in the Caribbean's history of resistance. This history nevertheless remains inscribed within the parameters of loss and death as evidence of the primordial wounds of diaspora.

Lisette becomes a self-identified maroon after the death of a female domestic slave, Gracieuse, and the disappearance of her own maroon lover, Vincent. She affirms, "Depuis la mort de Gracieuse et le départ de Vincent, je joue le rôle d'intermédiaire entre Michaud et les parents des esclaves marrons. Parfois, je transmets aussi des instructions assez compliquées quand les marrons veulent qu'un parent les rejoigne dans les mornes" (Trouillot 2003, 103). [Since the death of Gracieuse and the departure of Vincent, I am playing the role of

an intermediary between Michaud and the relatives of the runaway slaves. At times, I also relay quite complicated instructions when the maroons want a relative to join them in the hills.] The intermediary's role reveals the importance of interstitiality, and the ability to negotiate private versus public, forbidden versus accessible spaces through the "invisible" mobility of thought and action. Interstitiality represents a technique to occupy the colonizer's space through the dissemination of forbidden information, such as the attempts to consolidate the power base of the maroons by secretly recruiting other family members. The private distribution of vital intelligence information parallels the secret mobilization of resisting bodies. The success of this operation relies on the strategic positioning of the intermediary who fuels the resistance effort by spying for information within the privacy of the colonial house, and then disseminating it to a wider community of insurgents. The intermediary's trans-spatial mobility requires the stealth and acuity of a commando; a single false move guarantees physical death by torture and spiritual death through a failed revolution. As Lisette admits,

> Des nègres et des négresses seront punis et torturés si jamais l'habitant Fayot se doute qu'ils sont en contact avec les marrons. Sans parler de ce qu'il me ferait à moi, l'intermédiaire. Aussi, pour ne pas forcer les choses, je contrôle mon impatience et ma fièvre, et j'attends le moment propice." [The Negroes and Negresses will be punished and tortured if the planter Fayot ever found out that they were in contact with the maroons. Without talking of what they would do to me, the intermediary. Also, in order not to overdo things, I control my impatience and fever, and I wait for the right moment.] (108)

At the same time, the novel suggests that Lisette's secret activism is indicative of the legacy of female resistance that initiated and sustained the Haitian Revolution. Her actions as a female revolutionary are not isolated from an enduring (albeit unrecognized) tradition of Haitian feminism uniting women across timelines in a genealogy of resistance, as stated earlier (Trouillot 2003, 136). This opposition complements the narrative activism of Haitian women writers who contest marginality through the power of narrativity as a means of establishing a more politicized and gendered reading of women's historiographies: "Since a codified history of Haitian women has yet to be written, the project of recovering the roots of Haitian women's self-definition is made possible only through the evaluation of narrative forms. Haitian women writers have . . . created a vision of Haitian women in fictional form that corresponds to a feminized reading of the history of our country. The fictional is therefore a conduit for a historical narrative that is elsewhere denied existence" (Chancy 1997a, 6). Speaking to her unborn daughter at the end of the novel, Lisette stresses the urgency of preserving this maternal heritage, the very key to reclaiming a confiscated

identity and decolonized subjectivity: "Enfant créole qui vis encore en moi, tu naîtras libre et rebelle, ou tu ne naîtras pas" (Trouillot 2003, 137). [Unborn Creole child, you will be born free and rebellious or you will not be born.] The novel concludes on a note of resolution—a life of freedom over the death of subjugation—thereby bringing the foremother Brigitte's fight against human bondage to a commemorative conclusion.

Rosalie l'infâme is a powerful narrative that humanizes the distressed faces of colonial history in Saint-Domingue and serves as an authoritative indictment of slavery and the brutal mechanics of torture. The novel calls for the celebration of subaltern historicities and urges the recognition of gendered ideologies of resistance found in the stories of the enslaved women of Saint-Domingue. By focusing on the violence of memory and the permanence of traumatic scarring, the author subverts France's civilizing credo by exposing the inhumanity behind the colonizer's nefarious politics of enslavement and indiscriminate economic profiteering. At the same time, she shows how the oppressed will always fight their oppression in decisive acts of self-affirmation to contest and overturn colonial stereotypes of African cultural, racial, and gendered alterity.

Rosalie l'infâme is a memorable text offering narrative documentation of past crimes against humanity. At the same time, the text reveals its present-day applicability at a time when coloniality's indiscriminate politics of torture continue to be enforced in Guantanamo (Cuba), Abu Ghraib (Iraq), and other "third world" locations. Evelyne Trouillot's novel is a gut-wrenching cry against colonial infamy; it nevertheless foreshadows the postcolonial disgrace of Haitian neocoloniality supported by the very same Euro-American political powers that believe in their "divine" right to conquer, humiliate, and subjugate entire populations. "One must escape every embargo on the imagination to question the world" (Trouillot 2004, 6). *Rosalie l'infâme* creates the necessary narrative space to interrogate the ignominy of history by lifting the political, racial, religious, and cultural embargoes that impede the celebration and valorization of life.

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CHAPTER 2

Dyasporic Trauma, Memory, and Migration in Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*

Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* (2004) recreates the diasporic violence experienced by Trouillot's enslaved characters in *Rosalie l'infâme* in the context of migration to the United States two centuries after Haitian independence. In Danticat's novel, the characters negotiate the brutality of separation, adaptation to a hostile environment, racism, and gender marginality as they attempt to come to terms with the presence of a brutal torturer in their midst. Danticat's characters mediate the tensions between the trauma of an oppressive past characterized by death, repression, dictatorship, and the hope for new beginnings in the diasporic location despite their marginalization as disfavored immigrants. Consequently, Danticat's narratives reveal the complicated trajectories of the human struggle against adversity, the resilience of the spirit, the power of remembering, and the need to reconcile with the past as a primary step to imagine a better future.

Memory plays a primordial role in this crossing of timelines, where the past favors a "future-inspired present" as an integral part of the diasporic process. This negotiation recreates memories of home in the new location to reveal the immigrant's exilic dispositions that vacillate between the love-hate dualities of nostalgia and assimilation, adaptation and alienation, and hope and despair as primal responses to "home" and the adopted environment. For Danticat, however, this process retains its roots in Haiti despite diasporic recreations in the country of exile. As the author affirms in an interview with Rachel Holmes, "Haiti is my country, not the US. I have lived in the US for 18 years, but I feel like my home is Haiti."[1] This sense of connection with Haiti results from fond memories of childhood inscribed within a brutal political reality of oppressive dictatorial rule, a reign of terror characterized by twenty-nine years

of the Duvalier father-son autocracy (1957–1986). The regime's power was consolidated by the nefarious activities of the Duvaliers' personal militia, the infamous *Tonton Macoute*, who internalized and replaced the violence of coloniality in the 1980s. This brutality left permanent scars on the national psyche despite claims that Jean Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier was supposedly less violent than his father, Jean François "Papa Doc." The traumatic legacy of Caribbean dictatorship becomes a leitmotif in Danticat's work. This repertoire includes *The Farming of Bones*, a novel about the repressive rule of the Dominican leader Raphael Trujillo and his extermination of thousands of Haitian exiles in the Dominican Republic, and *The Dew Breaker*. In *The Dew Breaker*, the title character, a former *macoute*, seeks asylum in the diasporic anonymity of Brooklyn, New York.

In *The Dew Breaker*, the reader gets the impression that Baby Doc's ruthless domination of the people leaves a permanent imprint on Danticat's mind.[2] Noted for his brutal suppression of dissent and popular opinion, Baby Doc's authoritarianism ushered in an era of political repression and silencing as an effective method of physical control. As Danticat reminisces, "I just remember . . . you couldn't say certain things . . . People would be arrested, some people would disappear and you'd never hear of them again . . . But people still had dreams and they tried to live as much of a daily life as possible" (Gardiner 2005, 7). Danticat's comments reveal the duality of life under the Duvalierian regime; the tyranny of political and social oppression was also countered by the resilience and creative faith of the people like the characters in *Rosalie l'infâme*. The daily negotiations of hope and fear, and subjection and resilience, as reflected in the lives of ordinary people, became important testimonial narratives for the Danticat, a creative voicing out of pain and silence through the memory of survival stories and "undocumented" knowledge. As she states, "Everybody had a story . . . And that's what I wanted to write about . . . to show that whole desire to leave a trace behind of your life" (Gardiner 2005, 7). These narratives of survival amid desolation represent vital unofficial documents that subvert the sanitized versions of official discourses and propaganda. In these state-mediated discourses, the voices of the survivors of state-induced brutality are intentionally eliminated to preserve the "sanctity" of the nation's history. These unrecorded testimonials reveal individual and collective experiences and consequently rescue the lost, forgotten, and silenced voices of the dispossessed from statistical anonymity and national erasure. As a counter historiography, these narratives "create memory out of history, silences, fragments, documentation, hints, and denials" (Singh, Skerrett, and Hogan 1996, 14) to expose memory's enabling and disabling potential in text.

The suppressed voices establish their individuality through the language of memory as the discourse of the body, whereby the body remembers its historicity in an enduring narrative. This chapter demonstrates how the dynamic script of memory facilitates the transition from silence to voice in *The Dew Breaker*. This text mediates the multiple trajectories of trauma, violence, loss, identity, and resistance to engender commemorative narratives defying erasure through oral recreation, mnemonic disclosure, and sensorial expression. The connection between memory and the physical body inscribes itself within an economy of violence that articulates and subverts traumatic experience as the body's primary text. This semiotic code underscores the legacy of violence in the novel as it mediates the slippery borders between good and evil, nationalism and transnationalism, choice and inaction, remorse and absolving, revenge and forgiveness, and free agency and circumstance to reveal a mosaic of diverse reactions, thoughts, and perspectives in the framing of Haitian experiences in the United States. Memory provides the transnational bridge linking the Haitian past to its American present through dual, albeit split, ontological affiliations between the *then* and *now*. These fractures embroil the two countries in an inevitable political *marassahood*,[3] or twinning, that reveals the transnational face of terror, stereotyping, and racial profiling.

However, in the case of U.S.-Haiti relations, the *marassa* principle of complementarity is corrupted by an oppositional dialectic of othering in which the United States affirms its superiority by denigrating "black difference." Like the enslaved bodies, this difference is perceived in terms of criminality, disease, immorality, barbarity, and other racist variables. As Michael Dash states, "Images of the rebellious body, the repulsive body, the seductive body and the sick body constitute a consistent discourse that fixed Haiti in the Western imagination: The Haitianizing of Haiti as unredeemably deviant" (1997, 137). This highly racialized binary positions the Haitian body as a fetish that can be distorted, objectified, and manipulated at will by the Western power to represent alterity as a defensive strategy of control. The involution of a Vodou trope of spiritual duality by a unilateral "civilizing mission" leads to a similar corruption of Haiti's history through an insider-outsider problematic. The dysfunctional policies of the United States that maintain Haiti in a cocoon of abjection and protected by foreign "interests" from the outside collude with the internal devastation wreaked by local dictators. This involvement creates a nation-in-alienation of its own identity torn apart by political and economic violence leading to mass migration, psychological displacement, and homelessness. This ontological dilemma leads to a further commodification of the expendable black body within local power systems. The body becomes the object of obsessive

state violence and manipulative control to highlight the collusion between the national dictatorial patriarchy and its transnational colonial counterpart.

Within this perversely symbiotic network, dyaspora becomes the site of possibility and enforced criminality; it offers simultaneous asylum to economically and politically disenfranchised Haitian immigrants in America and the political henchmen responsible for persecuting them with impunity in Haiti. The ambivalence of dyaspora consequently creates an inverted *marassahood* between the United States and Haiti, linking the two countries via economic and geopolitical power imbalances. This structural imbalance strategically establishes U.S. dominance in the internal and external affairs of Haiti with the collaboration of neocolonial stooges. This domination takes the form of invasion and occupation (1915); successive military interventions (1991, 1994); outright support for dictators and coup organizers; racist immigration policies toward black Haitian "boat people" and refugees since the 1980s; economic pressures through trade embargoes and sanctions; political coups; and undemocratic conspiracies to oust a democratically elected president (2004) during Haiti's bicentennial year.

Michael Dash inscribes U.S.-Haitian relations within a turbulent "Sargasso Sea in that suspicion and insecurity have established a binary vision that reinforces the difference between both groups" (1997, 136). Racialized and ideological antagonisms towards Haitians characterized as "cannibal cousins" by mainstream U.S. perceptions (Dash 1997, 136) have fuelled Haitian perceptions of the United States as a colonizing force. U.S. partisan politics in the Caribbean region have contributed to the increasing political and economic crises in the island nation. These disasters have been exacerbated by the ironic violation of Haitian sovereignty by the stronghold of U.S. "democratic expansionism," positioning the United States itself as a "dew breaker" in the eyes of many Haitians.[4] Dash's study reveals how continued U.S. support of military regimes in Haiti, even after Baby Doc's departure, created a political impasse wherein "the fall of the Duvalier dynasty did offer the possibility of a new beginning for relations between the US and Haiti . . . The problem was how to begin with a clean slate when so much of Haiti's tragedy was the creation of corrupt and predatory governments that had been supported and even installed by Washington in the past" (1997, 139). *The Dew Breaker* exposes the transnational conspiracy to either maintain Haitian dictators in power when they conform to imperialist dictates or to destabilize them for further political gain. As the novel indicates, "Overnight our country had completely changed. We had fallen asleep under a dictatorship headed by a pudgy thirty-four-year-old man and his glamorous wife. During the night they'd sneaked away . . . the husband at the wheel of the family's BMW, driving his wife and himself to the tarmac

of an airport named after his dead father, from whom he'd inherited the country at nineteen, to an American airplane that would carry them to permanent exile in France" (Danticat 2004, 140). This conspiracy is inscribed in a legacy of inheritance-disinheritance characterized by imperialist claims and dictatorial gains achieved at the cost of Haitian civilians.

The narrative action of *The Dew Breaker* is located within the shadows of this predatory past in which the very title "dew breaker" represents a polemic. Situated within an ominous period of political turbulence foreshadowing the overthrow of President Aristide in 1991 by a military coup, the novel highlights the situation of people caught within political interstices—a dyaspora of refugees, exiles, and immigrants whose lives have been brutalized by the representative authority of the nationalist state and its violation of civil rights. The narrative alternates between different time periods through a series of flashbacks as evidence of traumatic remembering, transnational crossings between the Caribbean and the mainland, and specifics about the daily life of Haitians in the United States. This period includes the dictatorial past (1960–1980) and emigration to the diasporic cities of New York and Miami during the 1970s and 1980s. Organized as a series of vignettes structured by a constellation of stories, each fragment relates a personal story of triumph and tribulation. Individual stories ultimately merge with a larger philosophical and psychological inquiry into the problematic functioning of human nature and the will to destroy, protect, and endure.

The autonomy of individual narratives is established in a nonlinear, nonhierarchical fashion to eliminate the dominance of any particular story and the prioritization of hierarchies of acceptable and unacceptable victimization. Like a mosaic, each segment offers a unique reading of the title character from an introspective and retrospective angle, while reconfiguring itself into a narrative kaleidoscope. This prismatic perspective offers a personalized, yet multilayered portrayal of a problematic figure that is simultaneously hated for his heinous crimes against humanity and loved by his family. As Danticat affirms, "I wanted to be introduced to the dew breaker from different angles, and for those who love him, and even for him, to see himself from various perspectives . . . With each new character, each new situation, I wanted to add layers upon layers to the central figure, the dew breaker" (Turner 2004, 2). Like a telescopic lens that zooms in and out of the novel, each angle of the lens highlights or obscures particular details pertaining to the dew breaker and his victims at different moments of the narration to reveal memory's subjective presence in text. Such a structure undermines the fixed "authenticity" of mediated experiences that lay claim to the absolute truth, leaving no space for ambiguity or negotiation. In other words, the dew breaker's centrality or displacement from the narrative

depends upon the indeterminate structuring of each vignette that contests facile binaries of heroism or villainy. Danticat says, "I am very much drawn to people who live in-between determined categories" (Turner 2004, 3). By focusing on liminal spaces as a locus of representation, the author's statement also explains why the symbolism of dew is crucial to an informed reading of this mesmerizing novel.

The reference to dew invites immediate associations with Jacques Roumain's *Masters of the Dew* (*Gouverneurs de la rosée*), a novel that celebrated the dawn of a new proletarian consciousness that would liberate Haiti from its feudal past. The dew symbolizes the power of creative possibility within a liminal space situated at the junction between the fading night and the emerging day. The dew represents a signifier of hope on an ethereally transformed landscape offering the potential for renewed beginnings. Several Caribbean scholars and writers, such as Edouard Glissant and Wilson Harris, have ascribed a particular importance to what they call a "twilight consciousness," located in an intermediary space between dusk and dawn. Symbolizing alternative possibilities for the future through a process of forward thinking, twilight consciousness is synonymous with recreations of intent. As Harris states, "The twilight consciousness enables the language of consciousness to rediscover and reinform itself in the face of accretions of accent and privilege, the burden of the 'sacred' usage of one-sidedness" (1973, 64). Through radicalized thinking, the twilight consciousness resurrects the marginal and the repressed from the weight of "sacred," unitary impositions of signification to reveal an inherent polycentrism. In Roumain's work, the "masters" of revolutionary thinking demonstrate a sense of control over self and environment; they possess the necessary self-confidence to break away from outmoded paradigms to embrace an empowering future. The transcendence of personal ego for collective benefit is a prerequisite to an economic revolution within a socialist utopia of land reform as suggested in Roumain's novel. The Haitian landscape is consequently imbued with a sense of wonder and beauty because of its creative potential, also revealed in the Creole proverb "shoukèt laroze," which is translated as the poetic "breaking" of dew.

The dew, as a marker of the harmonious transitions in nature's rhythms and the cycle of economic progress, suffers a brutal inversion in Danticat's novel when nature's immanence is corrupted by political ideology and violence. Danticat states, "The title is my English translation of a Creole expression 'shoukèt laroze,' which during the 29-year period (1957–1986) that Haiti was ruled by the father and son dictators . . . referred to a rural chief, a brutal regional leader and sometimes torturer" (Turner 2004, 1). The poetry of the virgin dawn is violated by the shock of the torturer's aggression during a "sacred" moment when the dawn's shadows provide an effective cover to mask his actions and

identity. Transformed into the despair of broken hearts and bodies as a result of oppressive politics, the dawn now ushers in an era of immeasurable cruelty to provide a framework for the activities of the *macoutes* who performed their most violent abuses during these transitional moments of the day. As the novel indicates, "'We called them shoukèt laroze,' Beatrice said . . . 'They'd break in your house. Mostly it was at night. But often they'd also come before dawn, as the dew was settling on the leaves, and they'd take you away'" (Danticat 2004, 131). The mastery displayed by informed economic enlightenment revealed in Roumain's novel degenerates into a regressive abuse of power for personal gain. This inversion replaces the communal ethos of socialist reform with the unilateral control of the megalomaniac dictator and his private militia. The novel grapples with the dew's contradictory signification of poetry and violence in a fragmented narrative that captures the complexities inherent in human characterization. Danticat says, "I have always been fascinated by the poetic naming of such a despicable authority figure" (Turner 2004, 1). How does a poetic narrative reveal the despicable nature of despotic power and authority? Can writing reconfigure torture and the violence of memory by exorcising the ghosts of the past who also inhabit the diasporic present? How does the body script the language of violence conceived in terms of torture, trauma, psychological abuse, and economic exploitation in the homeland and the land of adoption? What is the connection between memory, dyaspora, and the geography of pain? The novel raises more questions than it provides answers; it thereby avoids the closure of a reductive discourse animating the reader's interest by the narrative's imminently suspended points of interrogation.

> History begins with bodies and artifacts; living brains, fossils, texts, buildings . . .
> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*

Michael Dash's study charts three major waves of Haitian migration to North America. The 1950s included members of the elite classes and intellectuals who were fleeing Papa Doc's heavy-handed censorship, while the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a mass migration to the United States of economically and politically disenfranchised Haitians escaping from Baby Doc's state-supported machinery of violence. This later exodus was characterized by a "proletarian migration" of rural workers, activists, and students who braved the treacherous Caribbean crossings in rickety boats, often at the cost of their own lives.[5] A decade later, growing political tensions at the onset of a military coup in September 1991 that ousted President Aristide increased the number of migrating Haitians. This migration created a transnational exilic identity, wherein Haiti lost one-third of its population to exile. As Dash claims, "Haitians were forced to recognize the

fact that they were part of a community living in North America and, numbering 1.5 million, had become unofficially recognized as Haiti's tenth department" (1997, 152–53). In *The Dew Breaker*, this tenth department of dyaspora located in North America negotiates its status through a cartography of pain as evidence of Haiti's tortured history. This history is inscribed on the bodies of the novel's various characters that become "corporeal testaments" of a complicated history (Shemack 2002, 97).

The body as a site of knowledge, resistance, memory, and abjection occupies a prominent position in the novels of both Trouillot and Danticat. In fact, the body represents a certain textual historicity in its capacity to reveal multiple oppressions, violations, and triumphs within the parameters of Haitian history. Danticat pays particular attention to the body of the survivor as a physical marker of racial, sexual, and economic difference as it negotiates subalternity within oppressive power structures. *The Dew Breaker* represents the narrative of these "bodies-in-violation" through graphic scriptings of power as historical and material markers of an infamous legacy of violence coded in mnemonic form. As Michel Foucault affirms, the body is "directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture, it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (1975, 25). The body's subjection to the politics of power is revealed in the visible and invisible tracings of physical scars and psychological wounds inflicted on victims and perpetrators alike as evidence of the state's immediate and invincible hold on its citizens. While the culture of state power is symbolized by the dew breaker's imprint on the aggressed body, this power is also contested by a corresponding culture of resistance that empowers the victim to mark his aggressor at the same time, as revealed in *Rosalie l'infâme*. These bodily inscriptions become decipherable texts revealing a palimpsest-like history presented in hieroglyphic form. This prediscursive structure defies the limits of national discursiveness that polices the borders of history through the predictable and self-aggrandizing victory narratives of despotic rulers and their corrupt regimes. These corporeal markings dislodge national history from its hegemonic permanence to reinsert it within an ontological "migrancy." Accordingly, history remains in a constant state of renewal and redefinition beyond nationally conceived border controls.

In the first story of *The Dew Breaker*, "The Book of the Dead," the narrator, who is also the daughter of the dew breaker, claims a transnational in-between space as her locus of origin. She says, "I was born and raised in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, and have never been to my parent's birthplace. Still I answer 'Haiti' because it is one more thing I've always longed to have in common with my parents" (Danticat 2004, 3–4). Unaware of her father's dubious

past, the narrator displaces the centrality of national origin conceived in terms of birthplace by affirming her allegiance to an imagined "Haiti" as the site of an undifferentiated borderland identity. The watery borderland between the United States and Haiti is a point of separation and convergence through the ebb and flow of tidal waters that provide a common focal point for persecutor and persecuted. The novel describes a reenacted, postmodern middle passage characterized by forced evictions from the homeland; the sharing of transnational spaces such as boats, airplanes, and other forms of transportation by victims and victimizers alike; perilous crossings; and the unwelcome reception of Haitians in North America. The novel evokes the memory of the traumatic trans-Atlantic crossing and its "creeds carried over the ocean by forebears who had squirmed, wailed, and nearly suffocated in the hulls of Middle Passage kanntès, négriers, slave ships" (188).

Moreover, the conjunction between the differing topographies of the sea and flat land represented by East Flatbush creates a paradoxical double movement of spatial dissonance and intersection between the tide's cyclical frequency and the city's landlocked immobility. At the same time, this dual movement also favors possible social and economic mobility. This duality represents the very history of dyaspora as the site of simultaneous displacement and reassemblage, or gathering, an interstitial fault line that paves the way for a bipolar process of new beginnings and psychic displacement in the new origin. In other words, while Flatbush is transformed by the Haitian immigrants into a recreated Haitian landscape of familiar sounds, smells, and sights, providing them with the security of an imagined home, it also represents the trauma of home due to their knowledge of the dew breaker's anonymous presence among them. In this instance, can a community create its new diasporic historicity when the brutal past inserts its indeterminate presence in the present through the chiaroscuro of what Michael Taussig calls a "death space" among the living? (1987, 4). Can history transcend its face of death when the past occupies the living present in a traumatic continuum?

Commemorations in Wood

The narrator commemorates her father in a wood sculpture that immortalizes his presence for posterity. She says, "I'm more of an obsessive wood-carver with a single subject thus far—my father," (Danticat 2004, 5). Believing her father to be a hero of circumstance who has survived the brutality of a dictatorial regime, the daughter wishes to inscribe a new national history from the perspective of the survivors of traumatic experience. The novel reveals her intentions thus:

> I had never tried to tell my father's story in words before now, but my first completed sculpture of him was the reason for our trip: a three-foot mahogany figure of my father naked, kneeling on a half-foot-square base, his back arched like the curve of a crescent moon, his downcast eyes fixed on his very long fingers and the long palms of his hands. It was hardly revolutionary, rough and not too detailed . . . but it was my favorite of all my attempted representations of my father. It was the way I had imagined him in prison. (6)

Unaware that her sculpture will, in fact, expose the hidden face of her father's dark past through "innocent"prediscursive wood markings, the daughter's artistic project unconsciously becomes a catalyst to expose the hidden agenda of nationalist history encoded in wood.

The dew breaker is marked by wood in a polemic of honor and infamy; his victim uses the ragged edge of a broken chair to "sculpt" his face as a sign of dishonor for life. The daughter, on the other hand, uses a wood carving to idolize her father for eternity. The sculpture ironically testifies to the manipulative power of state-selected history-makers who can distort and manipulate words, positioning torturers as heroes and dictators as "godmen" who hide behind commemorative statues and honor scrolls. However, while the political motivations behind these state-fabricated narratives and self-commissioned monuments of glory represent deliberate, yet concealed, acts of historical forgery, these intentions are ironically revealed by the mahogany sculpture's "unconscious" potential to unmask this duplicity. Like an introverted specular image,[6] the sculpture mirrors back a distorted reality in which the dew breaker recognizes himself via the artistically-recreated "truth."

The sculpture becomes a foil to unexpectedly unveil the dew breaker's repressed identity through artistic exposure when he is obliged to confess his true identity: "'Ka, I don't deserve a statue,' he says again, this time much more slowly, 'not a whole one, at least. You see, Ka, your father was the hunter, he was not the prey'" (Danticat 2004, 20). The father's suppliant position in the sculpture is intended to symbolize his victimization in prison, even though his imposing hands betray their capacity to destroy, mutilate, and suffocate victims in his role as a state arbiter of violence. Art, as the sublimated language of the unconscious, has the power to sculpt the unimaginable in prediscursive form graphically evoking repressed impressions and memories from an imposed state of dormancy. The sculpture represents a visual indictment of a political conundrum in which the scripted distortion of history by corrupt leaders instigates the physical disfigurement of dissidents by ruthless henchmen. The sculpture unveils the state's mandated power to alter national memory through a bloodthirsty machinery of unilateral control over victims and intermediaries alike. These putative alterations unite aggressors and the aggressed in a common

history of scars resulting from their compliance or noncompliance to the state's authoritarian stance within repressive institutions such as the prison, the very symbol of its omnipotence.

The dew breaker's most distinguishing feature is a prominent scar resulting from a deep wound inflicted by one of his own victims, a priest tortured for his supposed sedition against the state. The gaping wound exposes the hidden chapters of state violence recovered from the genocidal archives of the torture chamber ("when they were visited at home in the middle of the night and dragged away for questioning in the torture cells at the nearby Casernes Dessalines military barracks" [Danticat 2004, 185]). These archival documents are stamped with the authorizing signature of the victim to create a dramatic power inversion. The sight of the wound evokes the memory of the victim each time the dew breaker is forced to confront his own image; this likeness taunts him by the visible and invincible imprint of his conscience. At the same time, the physical wound duplicates a deeper psychological wound inflicted in childhood, as the very source of the dew breaker's own trauma. These wounds lead to the repetitive acting out of childhood traumas through violent action. The novel describes the origin of his violence thus: "His family had lost all their land soon after the Sovereign One had come to power in 1957, when a few local army officials decided they wanted to build summer homes there. Consequently his father had gone mad and his mother had simply disappeared . . . He had joined the Miliciens, the Volunteers for National Security, at nineteen, after his mother left" (191). The violation of personal security represented by the loss of family life is compensated by national affiliations with violence as a method of regaining control over self and circumstance. As the novel reveals, "I couldn't help but be frightened. I was twelve years old, and, according to my mother, three months before my birth I had lost my father to something my mother would only vaguely describe as 'political,' making me part of a generation of mostly fatherless boys" (141). The terror of loss, dispossession, and separation experienced by a child reconfigures itself in later years into the terror of violence, wherein an inexpressible emotion of moral pain seeks articulation in the expressible language of power.

The dew breaker's early trauma belatedly expresses itself in his teenage years when the seductive lure of power and brute force coincides with the emerging virility of manhood as the locus of a new national identity. The new identity nevertheless has a utilitarian value, whereby the dew breaker becomes a function of the state, depersonalized as an agent of state repression. His individuality is subsumed under a denim uniform and behind dark glasses, the standard uniform of the *macoutes* (Danticat 2004, 195). The loss of his biological parents through "madness" and disappearance prompts the dew breaker to seek a

reconfigured national family of father and son, as an act of filial piety to a new brotherhood and its diabolical codes of allegiance. This pact conjures the devil and his disciples as a living presence among the people; the people are traumatized by the visibility of the devil's cult of terror in their daily lives: "These people don't have far to go to find their devils. Their devils aren't imagined, they're real" (186). Through a misguided loyalty, the dew breaker perverts the cause of messianic duty by transforming himself into a fallen angel and agent of death instead, sacrificing other human beings as a necessary obligation to the new father's "commandments." He thereby pledges his allegiance to a new credo of worship by remaining faithful to a sacred covenant with Hell. The repeated violations against his victims reflect a traumatic compensation for the original violations against his parents; the scars of trauma bear witness to the self-perpetuating neurosis of an embattled orphaning.

The narrator describes her father's scar, which follows the indeterminate contours of his shady life's story, a narrative that is also inextricably entwined with the testimonies of his victims. She says, "I also bring up the blunt, ropelike scar that runs from my father's right cheek down to the corner of his mouth, the only visible reminder of the year he spent in prison in Haiti" (Danticat 2004, 5). The scar represents memory's autograph as an enduring timeline, a glaring reminder of the past despite the dew breaker's attempts to assume a new identity in the United States. Memory reconfigures itself in dyaspora to demonstrate how mnemonic inscriptions have an enduring existence in an expressive body language that resists the censorship of political subterfuge. The telltale scar reinforces the visibility of its presence each time the dew breaker confronts his distorted reflection in the mirror; this inverted image reflects his distorted ideals at the same time. The inverted image thereby magnifies the shameful motivation behind his violent mission of extermination committed in the name of patriotism and national interests. As the narrator admits, "My father has never liked having his picture taken. We have only a few of him at home . . . with him covering his scar" (5). The scar assumes its autonomy by its ability to reveal the father's "other" face veiled behind the apparent respectability of a new identity. This identity is ironically revealed in his new name, *Bienaimé*, or one who is well-loved. The conversion of the bogeyman (*macoute*) into the beloved man (*bienaimé*) reveals the transformative power of naming and its ability to dramatically alter identity through manipulative nomenclature. However, the sculpture, like the photograph, becomes a mnemonic device that resists the symbolic language of signification by subverting the law of the letter and the closure of forgetfulness; the two visual aids become external representations of the dew breaker's darkened soul condemned to eternal damnation without the recuperative power of amnesia, and the possible bliss of spiritual transcendence in the afterlife.

In an attempt to reclaim his lost soul, Bienaimé adopts the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* as his new bible and names his daughter Ka, or good angel. As the father explains, "'You see, ka is like soul,' my father now says. 'In Haiti is what we call good angel, *ti bon anj*. When you born, I look at your face, I think, here is my ka, my good angel'" (Danticat 2004, 17). Ka, as her father's alter ego, resurrects the positive aspects of spiritual twinning by becoming "a double of the body . . . the body's companion through life and after life. It guides the body through the kingdom of the dead" (17). As her father's passport to immortal life and in her function as his spiritual twin, Ka absorbs her father's dark energy; however, she unwittingly projects its evil intent onto a block of wood. The daughter wants to create a redemptive figure, a *pater doloroso* objectified in his abjection, a perception that contradicts the statue's implicit condemnation made visible in graphic form to the father. His choice of the Egyptian book of mortuary spells is not fortuitous, which reveals his attempts to connect with the ancient African past as a means of exorcising the present. As a guidebook to navigate the vicissitudes of the afterlife, the book "enabled the deceased to overcome obstacles and not lose the way . . . It did this by teaching passwords, giving clues, and revealing routes that would allow the deceased to answer questions and navigate around hazards" (Parsons 2005).

Bienaimé consults the book as a reference guide to chart an unhindered escape route to the afterlife, just as the diasporic crossing offered him safe passage to the United States without the threat of extradition or imprisonment. Seeking preservation in life and death, he uses the password "Ka" as his key to immortality in the afterlife just as the password of violence became his key to notoriety in Haiti. His criminality is awarded the safe space of anonymity in a respectable profession; his crimes against humanity are reconfigured into public service for humanity in the form of his barbershop. The novel underlines this camouflaging of identity in the story "The Book of Miracles": "Besides, soon after her husband had opened his barbershop, he'd discovered that since he'd lost eighty pounds, changed his name and given as his place of birth a village deep in the mountains of Léogâne, no one asked about him anymore, thinking he was just a peasant who'd made good in New York. He hadn't been a famous 'dew breaker,' or torturer, anyway, just one of hundreds who had done their jobs so well that their victims were never able to speak of them again" (Danticat 2004, 76–77).

The efficient obscuring of the past nevertheless repeats itself in Bienaimé's new calling as a barber, giving him the power to significantly alter or disfigure his client's appearance once again. The phallic instruments of torture are reconfigured into equally lethal knives, blades, and scissors as a symbol of his continued control over an unsuspecting customer. The novel mediates the fine

line between professional decency and criminality when the act of haircutting becomes a sublimated form of past activities. The barber's significant weight loss makes him unrecognizable to his clients who unwittingly shed their hair to sustain his economic survival in the diasporic location, just as the shedding of their blood ensured his professional survival as a *macoute* in Haiti. The novel demonstrates how criminality does not receive a moral or legal sentence. On the contrary, criminals receive lifetime immunity guaranteed by a politics of silencing and disavowal. Referring to the leader of the paramilitary FRAPH[7] force, noted for its acts of brutality and violent politicking, the narrator of "The Book of Miracles" declares, "After the president returned from exile, Constant fled to New York on Christmas Eve. He was tried *in absentia* in a Haitian court and sentenced to life in prison, a sentence he would probably never serve" (Danticat 2004, 79). Like Bienaimé, Constant is ironically reborn on Christmas Eve to symbolize a "second coming" in dyaspora space. Transnational law guarantees him the protection of a politicized U.S. residency that neutralizes his deviance into diplomatic expediency. The reference to a real-life person such as Constant, who, until recently, was able to enjoy diplomatic immunity in the United States, despite his criminal acts against Haitian civilians in Haiti, indicates that the traumatic permanence of memory is not a literary invention in this novel. The source of trauma concretizes itself in human form to embody memory's living presence in dyaspora space. The insertion of historical detail gives the narrative the nonfictionalized quality of a journalistic entry that exposes Constant's "undercover" story. This story is nevertheless "protected" from public exposure by partisan politics.

Negotiating the "Death-Space" of Dyaspora

The specter of death haunts all the characters in the form of traumatic memory, physical pain, guilt, and silencing. The space of death as a phantasmagoric intervention characterizes the indeterminacy of history represented as a legacy of scars, an antinationalist "war" memorial that commemorates the infamy of violence. Inscribed within a "fragmented collage" (Danticat 2004, 79) of broken dreams, tortured bodies, nightmares, and redemptive faith, the space of death invokes memory's photographic imprint to traumatize characters such as the dew breaker's wife Anne. As Michael Taussig claims, "The space of death is important in the creation of meaning and consciousness, nowhere more so than in societies where torture is endemic and where the culture of terror flourishes" (1987, 4). As a symbolic inscription of the authority and control that prefigures death's mediation in life through a culture of violence, the death-space leaves its victims in an existential limbo. They remain suspended between life's materiality (the diasporic experience as affirmation or negation)

and death's eventuality represented by trauma and suffering. Anne inhabits this borderline space between the "madness" of conspiratorial silence and her faith in the healing power of love. The tenuousness of her position reveals itself when she marries the man responsible for the death of her own brother, the deacon who marks the dew breaker with his dying imprint. The priest's physical victimization by torture complements his sister's psychological victimization by the dictates of a patriarchal marriage. The act of honoring the new husband by keeping his secret predicates the dishonoring of her own brother's memory through her inability to denounce his killer in public. The conflicting tensions between denunciation and allegiance mark the site of Anne's personal trauma; she is inscribed in a culture of shame and fear influenced by a perverted sense of Christian piety. The novel exposes her dilemma thus: "As a devout Catholic and the wife of a man like her husband, she didn't have the same freedom to condemn as her daughter did" (Danticat 2004, 81). Her faith shames her to favor acceptance over denunciation in a twisted misreading of the parables of good and evil; condemnation ironically becomes an unchristian act for Anne—criminality's most pious defense.

Anne's faith confines her to nonethical action within the dual problematics of shame, the shame of exposure and the shame of conspiracy through silence. Jacqui Alexander equates patriarchal marriage with a contract that reinforces obligatory moral and social expectations on women through "powerful notions of consent" (1991, 140). By regularizing social relations within the familial unit under the aegis of patriarchal institutions like the church and marriage, the contract mediates an authority-compliance power dynamic. This structure socializes women into accepting an inherited culture of victimization promising martyrdom and spiritual transcendence. Anne questions the imposed weight of consent that binds her to a "shameful" union when she contemplates Constant's image on the poster: "What if it were Constant? What would she do? Would she spit in his face or embrace him, acknowledging a kinship of shame and guilt that she'd inherited by marrying her husband?" (Danticat 2004, 81) However, her obsession to be a devout Christian wife and mother overrides her ethical concerns for the truth. This obscuring of the truth demonstrates the extent to which institutional authorities such as the dictatorial state, church, and marriage script their own agendas of physical and psychological abuse. They bewitch gullible followers into unconditional compliance through ideological manipulations or physical "alterations."

Silence as shame's language has a long history that safeguards the myth of criminal inviolability. In the novel, this myth is preserved in memory's photographic images of the past symbolized by the infamous FRAPH legacy of Constant and his followers. In this case, criminality maintains its permanence

through its self-duplicating face nevertheless protected by the terrifying shame of revelation: "Still, every morning and evening as her eyes wandered to the flyer on the lamppost in front of her beauty salon and her husband's barbershop, Anne had a strong desire to pull it down, not out of sympathy for Constant but out of a fear that even though her husband's prison 'work' and Constant's offenses were separated by thirty-plus years, she might arrive at her store one morning to find her husband's likeness on the lamppost rather than Constant's" (Danticat 2004, 80). Anne's fear-mediated shame reveals itself in the form of photographic superimpositions that blur memory's timelines in an undifferentiated historical temporality. The blurred timelines reflect Anne's tormented consciousness in which the very questioning of blind faith becomes an act of bad faith. Consequently, Anne's beauty salon, like her husband's barbershop, attempts to give a creative "face lift" to the truth through physical alterations and concealment as effective techniques of camouflage. A hideous reality of lies and torture remains concealed by skin-cleansing beauty treatments; Anne tries to eradicate the blemishes of an unforgivable past by spreading "beauty" through cosmetic treatments such as bleaching, waxing, and hair dyeing. The salon becomes a symbol of her atonement for her husband's physical defilement of his former victims; his violations can be purged from their bodies by the therapeutic effects of beauty cures.

At the same time, Anne's refusal to judge another human being in terms of self-righteous morality could also be interpreted as her refusal to enter the predator's judgmental binary of distinguishing captors from disciples. Like a self appointed godhead, the executioner's discriminating eye gives him the unilateral power to determine the expendability or utility of human life as the ultimate expression of his ego and will to control. However, Anne's belief in the redemptive value of life unwittingly positions her as a self-anointed messiah figure whose duty lies in healing lives rather than destroying them: "It was obvious that she now felt she'd been there to save him, to usher him back home and heal him" (Danticat 2004, 237). She assumes an exaggerated sense of responsibility for her husband's life convinced about the infallibility of her own healing powers as a form of spiritual control. The novel inscribes the tenuous boundary between political "godliness" and moral guardianship as forms of obsessive control within a culture of compliance and secrecy. This culture provides Anne with a defensive shield and spiritual pretext to justify her indirect complicity in the dew breaker's crimes.

The mother's belief nevertheless leads to the daughter's disbelief in her mother's actions leading to an irreparable separation between the two women; the mother's pain becomes the daughter's shame. Anne's faith leads to the irrevocable loss of a daughter and the destruction of her own sense of self for living

a lie: "She was too busy concentrating on and revising who she was now, or who she wanted to become" (Danticat 2004, 241). The suspension of self through misrecognition or a "fabricated" existence of duplicity, secrecy, and "conspirational friendship" (240) creates a schizophrenic tension between accommodation and renewal in the absence of a core identity. This polarization reveals a fragmented body denied its holistic value by the manipulative swings of the "pendulum between regret and forgiveness" (242). The conflicting demands of faith, convention, and personal intervention create an alien body that has lost its point of historicity by a traumatic effacing of memory on the very night of Anne's ill-fated meeting with the dew breaker. The novel highlights the connection between trauma and amnesia when Anne's blocked impressions refuse to delve "too far back in time, beyond the night they met" (241).

Anne's life symbolizes a painful journey into memory's landscape of loss and grief guided by the illusory motivation of love as "these coded utterances" (Danticat 2004, 241) of dismemberment. The collusion between faith and duty as patriarchal imperatives suspends the body in an existential soullessness in which an unresolved mind and body split reveals a state of zombification, wherein "she had slipped out of her own body then, just as now" (239). Anne's physical disconnection from a painful reality of death and moral infamy also symbolizes the ontological need to claim ownership of the confiscated body through the language of corporeality. As Gurleen Grewal asks, "How to name that which is both unnamed and unnameable, how to mediate between silence and speech, and how to transform this wreckage into a body of grace?" (1996, 142). The unnamed language of loss filtered through the nameable parameters of faith becomes Anne's scripted text in which involuntary remembering, as a form of alternative consciousness, gives voice to unarticulated experiences.

This language inscribes its physicality on the body in the form of Anne's epileptic fits as an uncensored speaking-in-multiple tongues. Consequently, epilepsy as a narrative trope becomes memory's performative language. This discourse speaks the unspeakable in a nonconventional language that contests patriarchal "rationality" and censored control. Epilepsy, as memory's locatedness within a violent deathscape, generates convulsive speech acts. These acts symbolize repressed impressions seeking an outlet in bodily expression. The novel describes the progression of Anne's epileptic attacks thus:

> The lights suddenly went out in the house and all over Rue Tirremasse just as Anne was feeling one of those odd sensations she'd been experiencing since childhood. Even though it was pitch-black, she felt a slight pinch in both her eyes, another curtain of darkness settling in, further deepening the obscurity around her . . . A high-pitched sound was ringing in her ears, like a monotonic flute, just as her nose was being bombarded with the sweet, lingering smell of frangipanis in

> bloom. Anticipating the convulsions to follow, she lowered herself to the ground and lay on her back, spreading her arms and legs apart. (Danticat 2004, 214)

Like experimental theatre, epilepsy sets the stage for the expression of an entire gamut of sensorial experiences through the receptivity of a stream of consciousness narrative that liberates the spirit from external or self-imposed controls. Winding through the labyrinthine recesses of the brain in deliberate and unhindered motion, epileptic sensors trigger the pain of remembering a traumatic experience in convulsive movements and actions. These movements are projected onto the mind's canvas as a visible manifestation of suffering. Epilepsy provides the medium for the performative exorcism of this pain in which the spiritual dissolution of the senses keeps memory alive in the absence of physical defense mechanisms.

> Her body stiffened and the inside of her mouth felt crowded, her tongue swelling and spreading out over her teeth, filling them with the briny taste of dirty seawater. Fragmented moments from her life were filing past her, event after event streaming by at high speed on the giant puppet screen she now imagined her mind to be: her younger brother's drowning, her stepbrother's departure from their seaside village, perhaps to avoid the waters that had taken their brother's life, their respective parents death from either chagrin or hunger or both, her recent move to the city to join her older brother, his inability to stop speaking about his wife's death, which, it seemed, was not so unlike this death she was sure she was experiencing. (215)

The language of epilepsy, as an introversion of tongue, transcends the body's materiality to represent the "memoryspeak" of the subaltern. This language remains unconsciously submerged under cyclical waves of trauma, repression, and death. As the return of the repressed, epilepsy charts an invisible cartography to simultaneously locate and displace pain's "immeasurability," a symptom of traumatic remembering. As Elaine Scarry asserts, "Whatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability, and it ensures this unsharability through its resistance to language" (1985, 4). As a presymbolic inscription, epilepsy reveals the immediacy of trauma in semiotic movement and preverbal soundbytes that resist the law of the letter. This law is represented by a deciphering system that imposes official meaning through the linguistic manipulations of nationalist discourses, scriptures, marriage vows, immigration laws, and a hegemonically imposed national tongue.

It is interesting to note that the Vatican equates epilepsy with a form of diabolical possession because it eludes conformity to its regulatory codes of conduct and speech. As an overt demonstration of trauma's painful trajectory, epilepsy resists the authority of the father's name, whereby language is not only resisted but actively subverted, "bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior

to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned" (Scarry 1985, 4). These aural fragments located within memory's interstices reveal their inherent polyvalence to defy the linguistic normativity of French and Haitian as state-sponsored languages. At the same time, these fragments affirm the popular usage of an "indigenized" Kreyol or Ayisyen as the language of the majority. As a language "indetermination," epilepsy represents the coded expressions of the dispossessed. While dramatizing their protest, the dispossessed claim subjectivity in a space located outside patriarchy and its repressive rules. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Anne is "cured" of her affliction when she submits to the authority of legislated marriage vows. This programmed language erases prior traces of linguistic expansiveness through the traumatic shock of negation: "These spirits, they'd left her for good the morning that the news was broadcast on the radio that her brother had set his body on fire in the prison yard at dawn, leaving behind no corpse to bury, no trace of himself at all" (242). The loss of memory's heteroglossic expression confirms the monolingualism of patriarchy's mnemonic disfigurations symbolized by erasure, distortion, and, brainwashing.

Language as Difference

The Haitian immigrants in the novel exemplify the inscription of language within a national power dynamic. Their relationship to English, as the language of dominance, represents another locus of indeterminancy. Julio Ramos refers to "the pathologization of immigrant speech" (1994, 27) as a sign of audible difference, creating functional borders between the linguistic acceptability of the citizen and the corresponding deviance of the immigrant. Language, as a marker of alterity, elicits conformity to standardized linguistic codes. Consequently, any deviation from the norm leads to suspected criminality through linguistic targeting distinguishing insider groups from unwelcome outsiders to maintain the nation's border markings. The novel exposes these linguistic boundaries resisting bilingualism in an ideological confrontation with the "foreign traces" that nevertheless submit to the power of hegemony.

> It's the maid. She's a young Cuban woman who is overly polite, making up for her lack of English with deferential gestures: a great big smile, a nod, even a bow as she backs out of the room. She reminds me of my mother when she has to work on non-Haitian clients at her beauty shop, how she pays much more attention to those clients, forcing herself to laugh at jokes she barely understands and smiling at insults she doesn't quite grasp, all to avoid being forced into a conversation, knowing she couldn't hold up her end very well. (Danticat 2004, 8–9).

Speech, as a marker of social status, reveals the linguistic and economic disenfranchisement of the Haitian and Cuban immigrants whose fixed marginality

in service professions parallels the slicing of the mother tongues of Spanish and Creole. The imposition of American English as the language of upward mobility and transnational authority reveals the immigrant's inadequacy in the master's tongue as a sign of mediocrity and social displacement. This betrayal by speech is compensated by deferential body movements and nervous laughter in a "speaking" text that exposes the internalization of projected inferiority and racism. The immigrant's social and economic commodification through language becomes an acceptable form of assimilation for the racist state that imposes its own criteria of social decorum. Ramos establishes "the correlation between language, sociability and work: to speak, to enter the territory regulated by the law of language, is concomitant with the incorporation of the speaking body into a rationalized working force" (1994, 25). The immigrant's linguistic deprivation through a less-than-working-knowledge of English justifies economic deprivation through proletarian labor, making him or her part of a dispensable, unprotected work force that remains beyond the protection of law. On the contrary, the corruption of the master's language as a primary violation of the law is associated with criminal intent punishable by police brutality, as demonstrated by the frequent acts of violence against Haitian men in particular. As the novel reveals: "In the old days, they had often gone dancing at the Rendez Vous, which was not the Cenegal nightclub. But they hadn't gone much since the place had become famous—a Haitian man named Abner Louima was arrested there, then beaten and sodomized at a nearby police station" (Danticat 2004, 38). Referring to a real-life incident, the novel's journalistic mode exposes the racist face of multicultural America, where skin coloring becomes a normative marker of racialized codes of humanity.

The audibility of difference symbolized by a foreign accent is complicated by the visibility of difference; blackness marks the "contamination" of public space as another sign of perceived criminality, which is also revealed in *Rosalie l'infâme*. The arbitrariness of the law reveals itself in its class-coded executions, wherein state supported elitist dictators receive diasporic immunity while working-class immigrants experience the law's ruthlessness. Within this configuration, dyaspora becomes a site of dissonance, a confined space limited to a shared "apartment in the basement of a two-story house with two other men, Michel and Dany" (Danticat 2004, 35). Spatial restrictions mirror corresponding job restrictions that are limited to "low-level" jobs, such as "his two jobs, as a night janitor at Medger Evers College and a day janitor at Kings' County Hospital," (36) restricting the "American dream" to the privileged few within selective categories of citizenship.

For some of the characters, such as Nadine in "Water Child," dyaspora is a site of aborted dreams, unfulfilled promises, desertion, and acute alienation reflected in repeated nightmares of dispossession, wherein "the dread of being

voiceless hitting her anew each day as though it had just happened, when she would awake from dreams in which she'd spoken to find that she had no voice, or when she would see something alarming and realize that she couldn't scream for help, or even when she would realize that she herself was slowly forgetting, without the help of old audio or videocassettes or answering-machine greetings, what her own voice used to sound like" (Danticat 2004, 66). As a powerful statement about immigrant dystopia, Nadine's dreams betray the extreme alienation she experiences within a hostile environment in which technology becomes a vital life support against moral death in the absence of love and intimacy. A forced abortion disconnects her from a vital part of herself leaving her with a truncated identity. This identity is ironically conferred by the anonymity and depersonalizing qualities of an answering machine. Nadine's inability to voice her pain in an audible language condemns her to the voicelessness of aphasia as a symptom of traumatic loss. As an unresolved narrative, trauma occupies the intermediary space between life and near-death revealed in the interstitial spaces of Nadine's nightmares.

These distorted dreams project convoluted images of an unrecognizable self "staring back at her from the closed elevator doors" (Danticat 2004, 68). Disfigured images of an "unrecognizable woman" (68) project themselves onto the metal doors that, like a speculum, reveal the phantom of a presence in a series of grotesquely-inverted impressions. The body's nonreality manifests itself in the absence of voice and well-defined body contours, as well as indistinct features that project the interiority of grief. The loss of a child painfully recreates itself in pregnant silences as an inner, eloquent, preverbal form of expression that exteriorizes the image of the festering internal wound. Unable to share the pain of her abortion with her lover, who is a married man awaiting his wife's arrival from Haiti, Nadine's grief inhabits her body in an exaggerated form plunging her into the depths of unresolved mourning. The ritual of mourning as a form of catharsis does not provide Nadine with an outlet to express her insurmountable grief; on the contrary, her repressed emotions remain frozen within the body by stifling speech and thwarting the body's defenses against another onslaught of pain. This pain is nevertheless inscribed within the memory of multiple and irreversible losses instigated by the primal separation from the Haitian homeland; the wounds of separation reveal pain's legacy in the life of an immigrant.

Nadine's silence reflects the absence of an adequate vocabulary to describe pain in conventional textbook fashion. At the same time, silence creatively reconfigures itself in an "unconventional," popular manner when other immigrants reclaim mainland space through vibrant linguistic creolizations. These adaptations and transformations of language express the immigrant's linguistic duality and resistance to linguist homogeneity. The novel provides several

examples of these creolized spaces filtered by multiple languages that retain and reflect the complexity of dyaspora. Within this space, American English is indigenized with Kreyol, Haitian English, and French inflections[8] to produce a particular "Flatbush tongue." This language recognizes the regional specificity of idiomatic speech, while representing a broader dyaspora identity of de-essentialized Haitianness in America.

The Dew Breaker reveals the multiple stories of dyaspora in survival narratives as songs of resistance, creation, and redemption. Each story becomes a survivor's epitaph to reverse the traditional anonymity suffered by victims who are very often reduced to serial numbers or the identifying markers of wounds as proof of existence. However, by enabling individuals to tell their personal stories in a first person voice, Danticat uses orality as a powerful instrument to give trauma its voice. These individualized histories make their own historical interventions in the language of pain. Dyaspora provides the site of narrative possibility for these creation stories scripted in the language of a prediscursive corporeality, as mentioned earlier, to humanize these physical rememberings from the objectification of victimhood. Memory thereby provides a moveable landscape in these transnational passages by speaking through the body's mobility in diasporic space. In other words, each character's attempt to voice memory's presence becomes a way of both confronting and surviving individual trauma. The passage from trauma to catharsis exposes concealed wounds. These wounds speak the interior language of "night talkers" whose nightmarish dreams release internalized suffering. Consequently, trauma as a suspended death-space is also a paradoxically transcendent space revealing its dual accessibility and inaccessibility to successful resolution. As Michael Taussig claims:, "Yet this space of death is preeminently a space of transformation: through the experience of coming close to death there well may be a more vivid sense of life; through fear there can come not only a growth in self-consciousness but also fragmentation, then loss of self conforming to authority" (1987, 7). How do Danticat's characters negotiate their individual and collective death-spaces in their efforts to contest the "official" memory banks of the national archives? Can they reclaim transnational agency as Haitian citizens and American residents through voluntary and involuntary invocations of Haiti's ambivalent past?

The memory of Haiti "inhabits" each character in the form of love, nostalgia, and despair. As Sita Bridgemohan asserts, "Danticat's characters never forget Haiti; they remember the land in language, in memories, in food, in values, in old proverbs and customs. They remember the good with the bad, the love remains; they long to remain" (2004, 1). Memory provides an idealized life link

through the vibrancy of oral culture and love for a distressed country as well as through violent bloodlines. As the narrator of "The Funeral Singer" states, "It feels like I'm drinking blood, not the symbolic blood of the sacraments, but real blood, velvet, blood, our own blood" (Danticat 2004, 179). Haiti's violent history nevertheless exposes the spilled blood of martyrs and victims who make their own mark on the national landscape, just as the blood of Haitians in the United States supports the national economy through immigrant labor. Bloodstains reveal their resistance to effacement through their visible telltale imprints. Consequently, blood represents the corporeal traces of both murderers and victims in an indifferentiated mnemonic time space. The viscosity of blood reveals the dense texturing of Haitian history inscribed on successive layers of epidermal grafting.

The stranglehold of the past resurrects itself in the dew breaker's nightmares of a living memory. His dishonest action to lie about the past in order to receive immunity in the present reconfigures itself within the "honesty" of bloody dreams. These dreams traumatize him by the indelible traces of the blood of his victims. The dew breaker's daughter wonders about her father's dreams: "I imagine my father's nightmares. Maybe he dreams of dipping his hands in the sand on a beach in his own country and finding that what he comes up with is a fistful of blood" (Danticat 2004, 30). A legacy of blood shedding animates the present by "spilling" forth in retrogression. The past's occupation of the present blurs the dew breaker's interior mindscape with traumatizing images of former misdeeds making him a prisoner of his own identity. Even the *Book of the Dead* cannot provide a creative escape on account of "the enormous weight of permanent markers" (34).

Blood brands the dew breaker for life by resurrecting his nefarious image with cyclical frequency each time a victim evokes his painful memory in an act of traumatic remembering. In "The Bridal Seamstress," Beatrice exposes the scar-covered wounds she received in her youth when she refused to dance with the dew breaker: "Beatrice removed her open-toed sandals and raised her feet so Aline could see the soles of her feet. They were thin and sheer like an albino baby's skin" (Danticat 2004, 131). Her exposed soles reveal trauma's permanence on the body in the form of a violent ripping apart of the flesh as a symbolic act of rape: "He tied me to some type of rack in the prison and whipped the bottom of my feet until they bled. Then he made me walk home, barefoot. On tar roads. In the hot sun. At high noon" (132). Beatrice's ordeal embeds the aggressor's presence within the deep recesses of her soul as an unforgettable impression. At the same time, the baby-thin skin also provides an epidermal cover to maintain the dew breaker's innocence through the albino whitening of his violence.

The deep lodging of pain within the soles of the feet establishes the connection between memory and space to demonstrate how pain's occupation of the corporeal body parallels a similar psychic inhabitation of the mind. Beatrice carries her perpetrator's presence in her mind and body as a permanent inscription. She is haunted by his ghost-like appearance that magnifies her larger-than-life agony. The novel exposes her trauma in the form of hallucinatory remembering: "This man, wherever I rent or buy a house in this city, I find him, living on my street" (Danticat 2004, 132). A ghost from the past materializes its physicality in its capacity to inhabit empty spaces. As Cathy Caruth asserts, "In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (1996, 11). Hallucinations, as trauma's intrusive presence, reveal memory's visual inevitability as a portable text of pain projected onto empty screens and open spaces. If survival includes the act of overcoming trauma, can one be a survivor when the ghost of the perpetrator has a more enduring presence in absence and negation? Can one ever survive the phantom of a presence that lurks within death-space defying definition and material presence? At the same time, do hallucinations give the phantom an embodied presence that disembodies the victim whose "tremendous agonies filled every blank space in their lives. Maybe there were hundreds, even thousands, of people like this, men and women chasing fragments of themselves long lost to others" (Danticat 2004, 137–38). The novel complicates the very definition of a survival story through its fragmented narrative locating survival in a cyclical space of constant mediation between the pain of remembering and the loss of forgetting.

Making Memories in Dyaspora

At the same time, dyaspora becomes the space for making new memories through the reconstructing power of oral culture located within a "tidalectic" framework. Coined by Barbadian writer Kamau Braithwaite, the term tidalectics refers to a poetics of the sea as "the movements of the water backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic . . . motion, rather than linear" (Braithwaite 1991, 44). This concept refers to the reclaiming of space by the fluid dynamism of water that regenerates itself in cyclical motion. As indicated by Elizabeth DeLoughrey, tidalectics can also be used a a metaphor for diaspora, dispersal, and migration (1998b, 18–38). Refusing closure in determining paradigms and resisting spatial confinement, tidalectics embodies the Haitian *Weltanschauung* of life's dualities in which negating binaries are dissolved within waves of fluid indeterminancy reflected in language, food, and cultural expression. Tidalectic orality is the process of cultural reinvention amid adversity, a

progressive-regressive claiming of identity in alien spaces, wherein the telling of stories leads to the possible reconstruction of lives from the trauma of violence, migration, and cultural alienation. The narrator of "The Funeral Singer" admits, "I thought exposing a few details of my life would inspire them to do the same and slowly we'd parcel out our sorrows, each walking out with fewer than we'd carried in" (Danticat 2004, 170). This space encourages the voicing-out of pain in the "unconventional language" of intimacy in which the body sheds its defenses within the familiarity of "immigrantspeak," a form of resistance to hegemonic conventions through linguistic inversions. The narrator describes her experiences in a language class, "We didn't always understand what was going on in the classroom and, being the only Haitians, we thought we might be able to explain certain lessons to one another, like the grammatical rules for present perfect, which at first I thought meant perfect presents or matchless gifts" (169). These inversions create a more palatable language of anticipated rewards and compensation instead of the teacher's expected derision for mispronunciation and faulty syntax—an attitude that reveals the more punitive aspects of language acquisition.

Survival stories articulated in the reconfigured language counter tales of traumatic violence to become enabling narratives. As Therese Saliba indicates, "The curative quality of narrative simultaneously transforms suffering into resistance and family stories into part of the collective definition of the national continually constructing itself in exile" (2002, 146). The forging of solidarity bonds within the therapeutic space of words creates a familial "dyaspora nation," a reconfigured transnational family unit that shares a common language and similar experiences like Pineau's characters in *L'Exil selon Julia*. In other words, Haiti reconstructs itself in orality through a transnational perspective that "speaks" about an inclusive communal experience of trauma and resilience, while establishing oceanic linkages with the motherland and other diasporic locations. As Michel Laguerre affirms, "While physical displacement is one form of spatial motion, one observes in the contemporary diasporic experience an expansion of the space of interaction, spatial continuity, and the transnational spatial flows of social connections" (1998, 10). This tidalectic communication between and across the black Atlantic is a form of spatial and psychological reterritorialization after decades of political introversion. The new spatiality establishes its own historiography through cartographic relocations. This dyaspora of multiple voices sings its songs of hope to heal old wounds, while bracing itself for the uncertainties of the future: "When we've exhausted poor Timonie, we move on to a few more songs, happier songs. And for the rest of the night we raise our glasses, broken and unbroken alike, to the terrible days behind us and the uncertain ones ahead" (Danticat 2004, 181). Memory composes its symphonic

score to record these voices for posterity by giving courage an admirable face and denouncing violence's disgrace.

The Dew Breaker guides its readers into the terrifying realm of violence and traumatic memory as its characters struggle to comprehend the infamy of life represented by dictatorship, exile, and forced migration. Like the enslaved ancestors, the immigrant characters cope with painful wounds that brand them with permanent psychological and physical scars as memory's indelible imprint. At the same time, they try to find a curative language that articulates this pain and suffering. The inevitability of the past nevertheless imposes its presence among them in the form of the infamous dew breaker, the source of their trauma and anguish; this man is also marked for life by the betraying scar of his victim. Edwidge Danticat provides a compelling survival narrative that simultaneously pushes her characters to the heights of heroism and the depths of perdition as they struggle to comprehend life's unresolved mysteries of injustice, cruelty, and violence. Their individual stories commemorate their personal epitaphs of pain, glory, shame, and ignominy to provide a vibrant mosaic of the human aspirations for transcendent subjectivity in times of duress. *The Dew Breaker* inscribes itself in the reader's memory as the epic story of ordinary people who create their own historiographies by either resisting or surrendering to the powerful state machinery of unimaginable villainy—an unenviable fight between life and death.

CHAPTER 3

Culinary Diasporas

Identity and the Transnational Geography of Food in Gisèle Pineau's *Un Papillon dans la cité* and *L'Exil selon Julia*

> Food is both a highly condensed social fact and a marvelously plastic kind of collective representation with the capacity to mobilize strong emotions
>
> Arjun Appadurai, "Gastro-politics in Hindu South Asia"[1]

This chapter represents another dimension of diaspora and migration. It focuses on the wounds borne by Caribbean and North African communities in France and the efforts made by diasporic women to claim subjectivity through the cultural politics of food. Charting the migrating routes of food and spices, Gisèle Pineau's novels—*Un Papillon dans la cité* and *L'Exil selon Julia*—highlight the historicity of food and the possibility of creating diasporic solidarities within and beyond the Caribbean. Caribbean cuisine offers an astounding variety of local and regionally defined dishes that incorporate a multitude of cooking styles and ingredients. Ranging from the indigenous Arawak techniques of *barbacoa* (barbecue) to the African-inspired use of root crops such as yam and taro, beans like pigeon peas, and vegetables, including a form of collard green named *callaloo*, plantains, and okra, or *gombo*, this cuisine also reflects the colonial influences of delicately-flavored sauces and poaching or *court bouillon*. Caribbean cuisine has also distinguished itself by the use of East Indian spices found in curried meats such as *colombo cabri* (curried goat) as well as breads such as *rotis* and paratas, while simultaneously highlighting the Chinese contributions of spiced noodle dishes, or *mein*, and the Middle Eastern staple of *couscous*. A product of the blending of cultural influences from Africa, Asia, and Europe with indigenous culinary practices, Caribbean food demonstrates its truly transnational scope. It also emphasizes each island's culinary particularities such as

jerk chicken in Jamaica, *rotis* (bread) and *pelau* (spiced rice) in Trinidad, squid in Martinique, and *vadè* (savory doughnuts) and colombo, or curry, in Guadeloupe.

The Francophone island of Guadeloupe is no exception to the dynamic culinary extravaganza of French, Spanish, Dutch, Creole, African, Indian, Mesoamerican, Chinese, and Middle Eastern cooking styles. This cuisine enjoys international repute while tantalizing local taste buds with pumpkin and coconut soup, *matété* (Antillean crab pilaf), *accra* (salted cod fritters), fish crêpes saintoises,[1] stuffed papaya with crayfish, curried goat and *roti*, poached catfish, flambéed bananas, and other mouthwatering specialties. Moreover, Guadeloupe acknowledges the cultural sanctity of food in the form of its famous *Fête des Cuisinières* (Feast of Women Cooks). This feast is celebrated around August 10 in the capital city, Pointe-à-Pitre, on the occasion of the feast of St. Laurent, the patron saint of female cooks. Organized as a veritable culinary festival that highlights the creativity, skills, and cultural ingenuity of women as agents of cultural production in the Antillean imaginary, this feast also embodies the aesthetics of Creole food preparation. This culinary art form is based on its sensorial richness, variety, gastronomic indulgence, the autonomy of the cook, and her artful blending of different cooking techniques into a cross-cultural culinary mosaic. The association between the secular habit of eating food and its spiritual consecration demonstrates a particular Guadeloupean culinary cosmovision of symbiotic affiliations between humans, nature, and the divine presence to affirm the primacy of food in cultural representation.

Gisèle Pineau's novels *Un Papillon dans la cité* and *L'exil selon Julia* testify to this culinary primordiality, wherein food assumes its individuality by encoding an entire semiotic system of political, cultural, and social significations. Food acquires political salience in Pineau's work as it is impossible to separate the island's culinary history from its colonial history of Amerindian genocide, African slavery, Indian and Chinese indenture, and its subsequent consequences of creolization, migration, departmentalization, survival, and adaptation. Sidney Mintz analyzes the impact of colonial structural power and its capacity to alter indigenous landscapes through a nefarious sugar polity. Referring to the case of British colonialism, Mintz states, "The history of sugar in Britain is connected with the imperial political and economic system, who carved out the West Indian colonies and gave them governments; who saw to the successful—immense and centuries-long—importation of enslaved Africans to the islands; who bequeathed land wrested from the indigenes to the first settlers; who financed and managed the ever-rising importation of tropical goods to Britain, including chocolate, coffee, cotton, and tobacco, as well as sugar, rum, molasses, tea, and much else" (1992, 22). The European delirium for sugar provided the justification for the feverish "fix" of conquest that nourished the tea party sociability of the European

bourgeoisie through frenzied "first world" consumption and dehumanized "third world" production creating an unhealthy power-based codependence. If sugar provided Europe with enormous wealth, it also led to the corresponding impoverishment of the sugar-growing Caribbean islands via monoculture and unilateral foreign profit. Nevertheless, the politics of sugar provided the base to locate Caribbean cuisine within the parameters of Caribbean historicity and the intersectional positionality of its transcontinental diasporic routes.

At the same time, this cuisine remains rooted in its locality and also extends itself synchronically and diachronically to encompass a culinary geography of diaspora. This study affirms that Caribbean cooking offers an example of two important theories of "expanded creolization": Antonio Benítez-Rojo's trope of the repeating process in which repetition leads to transformative mutations "with a difference," and Edouard Glissant's "poetics of relation" as the site of synchronic movement. This theory has been inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of the rhizome described in Glissant's text as "an enmeshed root system, a network spread either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently . . . The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root" (1997, 11).[2] The connection between the rhizome and Caribbean cuisine is immediately evident both in the presence of roots such as taro, manioc, and yucca that were staples in the Arawak diet, as well as the transnational influences of other foods such as corn, tomatoes, potatoes, ginger, and chilies from parts of Mesoamerica, Africa, and Asia.

Caribbean cuisine is noted for its versatility, adaptability, and openness to creative experimentation. At the same time, it retains the use of distinctive flavors and culturally identifiable ingredients that can be traced back to their African, Indian, European, and Mesoamerican roots. The representation of food in Pineau's novels consequently mirrors the Antillean search for foundational roots in the island department of Guadeloupe and the alienating French metropolis.[3] In other words, food becomes an important marker of identity and cultural difference, wherein the culinary imagination is inscribed within the political dimensions of food and the history of conquest and colonization to provide a culinary map. Eating, cooking, and food choice consequently become explicitly political acts to demarcate boundaries of inclusion, exclusion, affirmation, and negation within circular routes of diasporic mobility and an imagined "home locale" in Guadeloupe. The novels explore the tensions between these migrating notions of cultural identity and the associative value of food through rituals of eating, feasts, diasporic solidarities, food preference as well as the French overseas national's resistance or assimilation to hegemonic dominance within patterns of globalization and transatlantic modernity in the colonial city.[4]

In addition, cooking and eating as forms of cultural praxis animate the author's literary sensibilities by providing an energized alphabet, this "soup of signs" evoked by Benítez-Rojo.[5] This indigenist narrative of floating signifiers simultaneously reveals and resists the colonizing imprint of otherness in the form of reconfigured culinary routes. Geographical reroutings are indicative of postcolonial remappings of space according to a revised semiology of signs. These signifiers resist epistemological closure in colonial narratives when they elaborate open-ended rhizomatic textualities "stirred" by the language of the "repeating process." By advocating a particular diasporic literacy through culinary pluralism, the production and consumption of food in Pineau's novels articulates the language(s) of diaspora through symbiotic links between cooking, eating, and creative expression. These communicative acts provide the basic script for subjective mediations, culinary negotiations, and diasporic (re)locations. Food thereby becomes an effective strategy to appease the diasporic wounds of separation, migration, and alienation in an unwelcoming French metropolis.

Pineau's novels offer a gendered reading of Edouard Glissant's "poetics of relation" as the very basis of rhizomatic thought "in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (Glissant 1997, 11). In a similar fashion, Benítez-Rojo's "repeating island" recreates itself constantly through a "meta-archipelago" configuration that "has the virtue of having neither a boundary nor a center" (1992, 4). The meta-archipelago represents an aquatic rhizome that extends the geography of cultural possibility. Characterized as a series of "island bridges" (Benítez-Rojo 1992, 4) spanning the horizontal expanse of the Caribbean Sea and its trans-Atlantic navigational routes, the meta-archipelago provides a fluid diaspora space of cultural cross currents and aquatic movement to undermine closure in island insularity. These tropes of transformative creolization occasioned by the "tidalectic" dynamism of water provide the conceptual framework for an analysis of food imagery in Pineau's novels from main course to dessert. These enabling culinary negotiations exemplify the never-ending rhizomatic network and the repeating process. These mediations not only explore African culinary retentions but also incorporate East Indian influences with the synergy of North African cooking, while problematizing the impact of globalization on the life and cooking styles of Caribbean (and North African) families living overseas. Food as "semiotic praxis" (together with music, dance, religion, fashion, and art) reveals the more dynamic and successful aspects of cultural creolization, wherein interactive engagements between varied transnational culinary synergies offer renewed paradigms of Caribbean "opacity" and decenteredness. This model highlights cultural plurality and subverts the fixity of unitary origin(s)

through the indeterminate "chaos" or unpredictability of the relational process, wherein women claim important spaces in the feminized dynamics of creolization.

This strategy of imaging and imagining the Caribbean and its diaspora in terms of cultural opacity and "ceaseless creolization" (Dash 1989, xxviii) and Benítez-Rojo's forever repeating process has been particularly instructive in terms of gender. It has created the possibility for structural dissolutions within masculinist codes of Caribbeanness by opening the necessary spaces for women writers to contest their invisibility in these discourses and include their gendered perspectives on identity and creolization. Pineau's discursive inscriptions in these borderland spaces enable her to claim a multicultural binational identity as a Francophone Creole woman writer who subverts reductive binary identifications (French versus Francophone Creole, male versus female, metropole versus department) through contrapuntal affiliations and cultural mediations. These identities complicate the particularity of Francophone Caribbeanness on the islands of origin and in the Parisian Métropole. Emphasizing the "dual-centeredness" of her geographical location and cultural inheritance that redefines Frenchness through the insertion of Caribbean Creoleness as a part of mainland and island identity, Pineau lays claim to both countries simultaneously. The politics of transversality represents a particular strategy of belonging. Lucia Suárez affirms, "Her writing advocates an individuality enriched by two communities, structured by multiple cultural inheritances where the beauty and the challenge lie in mixing languages, styles, rhythms, colors, and beliefs" (2001, 10). The cultural and political claiming of Creoleness as part of an "undifferentiated" French identity is an act of discursive subversion by the author to disrupt the very real alienation experienced by Guadeloupeans who have been denied sovereignty at "home" through their departmental dependence on France. At the same time, they face the racism of French immigration laws in their ambiguous status as non-French, non-immigrant Antillean citizens of the overseas territories (Murdoch 2001b, 130). This "third island diaspora" evoked by Alain Anselin[6] nevertheless faces the same marginalization and sense of displacement suffered by other disfavored immigrants of color in France despite (and in spite of) its French and now European[7] passport of legitimacy; nevertheless, the establishment of Guadeloupean territoriality in Paris simultaneously transforms the white "city of lights" into a creolized "Negropolis."

> Thinking about food has much to reveal about how we understand our personal and collective identities. Seemingly simple acts of eating are flavoured with complicated and sometimes contradictory cultural meanings.
>
> Uma Narayan, "Eating Cultures: Incorporation, Identity and Indian food"

The representation of food in Pineau's novels participates in a cross-cultural culinary poetics. Creolization reveals the multicultural historicity of Caribbean cuisine, as mentioned earlier, as well as its potential for transnational diasporic affinities between and within Guadeloupe and France. Food provides the dominant language of creolization as a form of diasporic consciousness generated along various culinary circuits circumnavigating the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and the Caribbean Sea. Like discursive patterns of expression that trace migratory notions of Caribbeanness, food gives body to text through a similar model of circulation. In her interview with Christiane Makward, Pineau describes the physical nature of her writing that stems from the heart, voice, gut, and head to establish the corporeality of words as a form of sensorial language. This language also furnishes the food necessary for creative thought in the absence of prefabricated recipes and fixed literary agendas enabling marginalized grandmothers in Pineau's novels as well as in Maryse Condé's *Victoire: les saveurs et les mots* (discussed in Chapter 5) to articulate their subjectivity. Pineau says, "Je pense que j'ai toujours recherché, au niveau de l'écriture, ma voix . . . celle qui fait écho avec ce que j'ai à l'intérieur. Je ne triche pas avec les mots, je n'ai pas de recette. Il faut que ça soit vraiment en phase avec ce que j'ai dans le coeur, dans le ventre, dans la tête" (Makward 2003, 1209). [I think I have always searched for my voice through writing . . . a voice that echoes my inner being. I don't manipulate words, I don't have a fixed recipe. My writing has to reflect what I have in my heart, belly, and head.]

Writing provides a structuring force in Pineau's life by enabling her to "write the body" as an expression of inner experience; it also gives her the strength to personally deal with and portray the alienating forces of exile, migration, economic displacement, and social fragmentation reflected in the lives of her characters. If writing becomes the vital glue to reassemble a community's fragmented sense of self (as a result of colonialism or migration to the metropolis) through narrative experience, food provides a similar binding force wherein "self-identity and place-identity are woven through webs of consumption" (Bell and Valentine 1997, 3). These networks replicate a complex culinary semiology of cultural, political, and social codes ranging from "health to nationalism, from ethics to aesthetics, from local politics to the role of transnational corporations in global regimes of accumulation" (Bell and Valentine 1997, 5). In other words, food patterns provide their own scripts of aesthetic experience as a dynamic "gastro-political" (Appadurai 1981, 494) grid to problematize questions of identity, location, and cultural praxis, especially in terms of gender.

These gendered negotiations are initiated by Pineau's teenage narrator, Félicie, in *Un Papillon dans la cité* and the grandmother figure, Man Julia, in *L'Exil selon Julia*, in conjunction with other secondary female characters in

both novels. The dominance of the grandmother in the two texts goes beyond mere nostalgia and cultural stereotyping to include a certain politicization of narrative intent. Given Guadeloupe's ambiguous political status as an overseas French department, questions of motherland affiliation with France become particularly problematic in terms of identity and self-determination. At the same time, the inability to claim a political motherland in the absence of nationhood further complicates the interrogation of maternal roots in the context of colonization and the consequent severing of ontological origins. The ambivalence represented by the symbolic mother is, to some extent, confronted by the grandmother as the figure of a presymbolic or "arche" sensibility that inhabits the cross-cultural imaginary in a space that is "not linear and not prophetic, but woven from enduring patience and irreducible accretions . . . [in] . . . the accumulation of the common place and the clarification of related obscurity" (Glissant 1989, 142). This is the space Sycorax inhabits (discussed further in Chapter 5).

The grandmother is not an archetype confined to the symbolic fixity or conceptual value of a national ideal found in representations of the "mother country." On the contrary, she becomes the maker and preserver of a dynamic prehistory of cultural productivity. The grandmother reconfigures the exilic disposition of the "discovered" Caribbean landscape into a site of creative possibility through culinary imaginings of "an-other" (Mignolo 2000, 67) historical perspective. Referring to the Pineau's grandmother Julia (reverently called Man Ya), Marie-Agnès Sourieau claims:

> For the pre-1946 generations of unschooled Antilleans to which Pineau's grandmother belonged, the vernacular language was exclusively spoken. Man Ya never knew French and never learned to read and write. However, she was the depository of vast knowledge, passed on orally from generation to generation. Through her stories, tales, and riddles Man Ya fulfilled the traditional role of transmitter of her people's collective memory as it was practiced at the time of plantation life. During slavery and until the end of the agrarian economic system, grandmothers were responsible for the education of children. Their knowledge of history and nature's powers and their wisdom and devotion to the group made them natural educators (2003, 181–82).

Ma Ya's influential presence and her role as a *conteuse* or female oral historian endows her with the expansive consciousness of collective memory as an archive of knowledge and wisdom. The process of collective remembering consequently resists colonial confinement and erasure through the mobility and inventiveness of creative expression. Cultural production in the form of cooking, cultivation, storytelling, and other forms of cultural discursiveness becomes Man Ya's alphabet, her symbolic system of self-inscription in family and communal history as in the case of Condé's grandmother Victoire.

At the same time, these "other" histories illuminate women's unrecognized domestic labor skills such as cooking and subsistence farming as recognizable forms of creativity within the privacy of home space. This marginalization of women's work was compounded by the one-sidedness of colonial and patriarchal perspectives that discounted female productivity into the realm of the private as a further eclipsing of women's histories. The culinary unraveling of an historical palimpsest becomes part of the grandmother's transforming vision of Creole subjectivity. This vision is later projected onto the granddaughter who, in turn, conjures a progressive model of diasporic Caribbean citizenship through the mediating discourse of food.

> Writing as a black creole woman means bringing my voice to other women's voices, from here and elsewhere, who testify for a tomorrow, giving understanding to different words in the French language.
>
> Gisèle Pineau[8]

L'Exil selon Julia describes the alienating experiences of the Antillean diaspora in a racist Parisian milieu through the eyes of the grandmother, Julia, who longs for the security and comfort of her modest rural home in Guadeloupe, despite the hardships of village life and the mistreatment of an abusive husband. The novel is set in the 1960s during a period of social upheaval caused by student demonstrations in 1968 and a political referendum resulting in the resignation of President Charles de Gaulle in 1969. It focuses on the anguish of exile, the pain of misguided loyalties, the difficulties of assimilation and adaptation, and the impact of globalization. At the same time, the novel celebrates the importance of orality, memory, and cultural resistance through the dynamics of food in the urban ghetto. Commenting on her novel, Pineau asserts, "I tell the story of my grandmother, the six years she spent in France. . . . I lived in France an exile by proxy, at my grandmother's side because it was she who really was an exile. She had not chosen to come to France" (Makward and Githire 2001, 222–23).

Similarly, *Un Papillon dans la cité* traces the trajectory of a young Guadeloupean girl, Félicie, who leaves the stability of her Caribbean home and her grandmother, Man Ya, to join her mother in Paris. Félicie meets an adolescent North African boy named Mohammed in the disfavored housing projects of the HLM (Habitation à Loyer Modéré), or low incoming housing, which is "reserved" for immigrants and the economically disenfranchised. Their friendship as schoolmates and residents of the HLM explores the complexity of African diasporic affiliations in which food becomes a special language of communication between the two children. Through the creation of a translocational

diaspora space imagined by the semiotics of food, North African and Caribbean cuisine become an important link between France and the French-speaking diaspora amid the dispersal of exile and immigration through repeating rhizomatic connections. The economic and social marginalization of the African diasporic immigrants is compensated for by the richness of their culinary traditions. The children of these diasporas are introduced to each other's cultures via the intermediary discourse of food as a form of culinary migration.

> The rite of eating and drinking together . . . is clearly a rite of incorporation, of physical union . . . the sharing of meals is reciprocal, and there is thus an exchange of food which constitutes the confirmation of a bond
>
> Arnold van Gennep[9]

L'Exil selon Julia reveals the particular relationship between identity, migration, and food in which the sharing of meals establishes bonds of communion among disfavored groups in France. As the novel indicates, "Apart from Man Ya, my parents, and a few Caribbean army friends, there are only white people around us. Imagine, the middle of the sixties. A housing project in the middle of Ile-de-France" (Pineau 2003, 3). The housing project represents an anomaly in a city noted for its glorious architecture; the residents of the project are confined to minority representation and second-class citizenship despite their French status and France's claims to universality and equality. The urban ghetto becomes a visible marker of Caribbean difference, a black stain on an otherwise whitewashed color scheme symbolizing diasporic dystopia. Spatial dislocations mirror the internal psychological disorientation of disfavored French nationals of color when faced with a confounding landscape. The novel refers to the situation of the narrator's parents, Daisy and Maréchal, who migrated to Paris as part of a post-1946 departmentalization work force destined to service the French Empire in terms of labor and military service. The parents migrate ten years before the formal establishment of agencies such as the BUMIDOM mentioned in the Introduction, companies that were responsible for recruiting a massive labor force between 1963 and 1981. As Renée Larrier states, "The post departmentalization period experienced what could be termed 'out migration,' that is, people were recruited to take jobs in the metropole, sparking Alain Anselin to label Paris *la troisième île* (the third island)" (2006b, 2).

The acronym BUMIDOM, or Office for the Development of Migrations from the Overseas Department, highlights two signifiers of racialized difference. The term "development" indicates a less than desirable level of acceptability, while "migrant" references a state of permanent Otherness and exclusion

from complete French citizenship. These partial citizens "stigmatized by a society that refused to recognize their Frenchness" (Murdoch 2001b, 136) are identified by their "citoyenneté inachevée," a state of incomplete citizenship (or "development") determined by race, geography, and class. Doubly exiled from two island locations, Guadeloupe and Ile-de-France, this generation exemplifies "the contradictions between French ideals of equality and actual practice" (Larrier 2006a, 85) despite their departmental status of overseas Frenchness. Caught in a state of suspension between two geographical displacements, further compounded by their frenzied assimilation of mainstream French cultural values as a sign of "loyal" citizenship, this in-between generation becomes equally estranged from its French-born offspring who wonder if the parents have abdicated all rights to their Caribbean identity.

Ironically, assimilation does not guarantee the parents the satisfaction of complete citizenship neither does it protect the children from racism in school. In this crucial instance, food represents a binding familial and communal force by providing a sense of wholeness and security to compensate for the anxiety provoked by this undetermined identity and insecure affiliations. The overt ingestion of metropolitan values cannot resist the umbilical power of nostalgia-imbued Caribbean food whose ritualistic digestion nevertheless signifies a latent form of resistance to complete assimilation. For example, the fullness of a typical family-oriented meal—replete with roasted meat, vegetables, peas and rice, and coconut cake, together with its accompanying rites of "gustatory intake"—creates a sense of diasporic belonging through communal tasting and feeding. In so doing, the characters in the novel "preserve their ties to a homeland through their preservation of and participation in traditional customs and rituals of consumption" (Roy 2002, 472).

Sharing a meal becomes an act of cultural repossession to maintain a sense of integrity, while imposing order in a disempowering world through the structuring force of rituals and shared "gastrophilic histories" (Roy 2002, 472). The novel describes the Sunday ritual of communal eating thus: "On Sundays, between the roast and rice and peas, they tell the stories of their adventures, going over the numberless times when, helping out each other, they conned death . . . Sometimes, bygone days come to jostle words from the present. Then they stutter, all choked up, stumbling with emotion over words that will not come. While these fragments of history come tumbling out one after the other, we children are only allowed to keep quiet and admire" (Pineau 2003, 4).

The verbal virtuosity of the men's stories mirrors the culinary virtuosity of the women's cooking to create gender-specific forms of orality, wherein the power of food sometimes replaces words as expression. Cooking and storytelling consequently become performative acts, ritualized adult traditions that the

children can only passively observe rather than participate in. The passage also reveals the inadequacy of words to articulate inner emotions aroused by homeland recollections when the pain of exile reveals its inability to be translated into speech acts. At the same time, the urban French environment encourages a level of linguistic erasure when the parents are obliged to speak to their children in the language of the metropolis. The dominance of French imposes itself on the Antillean family through a linguistic divide separating generations of grandmothers who only speak Creole, parents who speak Creolized French, and children who primarily speak French. The "universal" hegemony of the colonial language resists the repeating process through linguistic conformity in school and the work place only to reverse itself through the creolized tongue of food.

* * *

Food provides the silent and sometimes tenuous language of self-conception, whereby the cooking of rice and peas validates the group's cultural identity via ancestral links with the Caribbean, and through it, links with Africa, India, and China. In her book, *Life and Food in the Caribbean*, Cristine Mackie asserts that rice and beans or peas were important grain crops in West Africa that survived the Atlantic crossings to become a staple in Caribbean cooking (1991, 70). Noted for their adaptability and ability to survive in adverse conditions, rice and peas could be cultivated inexpensively and could thereby provide large communities with the basic nutritive value of proteins and carbohydrates needed to withstand the grueling forces of plantation labor described in *Rosalie l'infâme*. Moreover, the preparation of rice and peas does not follow a standard recipe, thereby demonstrating the creativity of the cook who can skillfully adapt each dish to suit specific tastes. As Mackie claims, "One way to cook 'peas n rice' is in coconut milk, or with rice, or in water, with a little piece of salted meat to flavor. Among these, stewed peas in coconut milk are a particular passion" (1991, 82). The versatility, resilience, and creative adaptability personified by these food grains was to become the credo of both the enslaved Africans and Indians in the Caribbean and the estranged Antilleans in France for whom the trans-Atlantic diasporic crossings represented a brutal lesson in endurance and survival.

Within these conditions of physical dispersal, rice and peas offered a sense of community through their methods of cultivation and preparation. The consumption of this dish affirms communal ties in the familiarity of habit (the habit of consuming familiar food together). Mackie describes the shelling of peas as a group activity, especially during feasts and holidays (such as Christmas in the Caribbean when black-eyed peas or pigeon peas are the most important

crop). At the same time, the reference to coconut milk highlights the cultural heritage that survived the journey from India as a form of liquid memory to be creolized with Caribbean impressions. Coconut milk, as an integral part of southern Indian cooking, flavors and thickens curries, chutneys, and desserts. Its use in Caribbean cooking testifies to the importance of the south Indian Tamilian presence in the Antilles reflected in names such as Mounssamy, Moutoussamy, and Ramssamy, among others.

The preparation of the Christmas meal in *Un papillon dans la cité* celebrates a communal distribution of labor symbolized by the task of shelling peas that is "shared by young and old alike, who appear from nowhere and all sit down until the job is done, passing the time by gossiping, discussing whether the peas had had enough rain or not, and relishing the many ways in which they might prepare them" (Mackie 1991, 81). A similar activity surrounds the preparation of a Venezuelan Christmas dish named *pastel* that is also enjoyed in Trinidad at the same time. No two cooks make it the same way. Pastels, in turn, probably owe their origin to the Aztec *tamales* (savory corn patties steamed in corn husks). The Indian bread *roti* also has a communal ethos because a small amount of dough can be creatively stretched to feed a group. A shared activity becomes a pretext for making history through the oral transmission of culture; the culinary inventiveness of the cook parallels the literary inventiveness of the storyteller as a dynamic and interactive exchange of ideas and knowledge in a rural setting.

Un Papillon dans la cité describes the synchronicity involved in preparing the Guadeloupean Christmas meal. Each member has a specific function to perform to ensure the success of the meal through an equitable sharing of responsibilities. Robert fattens the Christmas pig for an entire year ("toute l'année, Robert engrossait un cochon pour Noël" [Pineau 1992, 49]), while the women prepare and serve a hearty meal consisting of peas, yams, and roasted pork (" . . . de pleines assiettes de pois, d'ignames et de cochon" [Pineau 1992, 50]). Valérie Loichot indicates that the communal feast is also a celebration of the community's hard labor concretized by a collective harvest; the consumption of food is directly linked to the cultivation and productivity of the land (2002, 31–32) as evidence of a certain culinary rootedness to the soil. The community finds its locus in earth-based culinary traditions creatively adapted from West Africa, India, and other parts of the Americas, and then "indigenized" with local ingredients (both native to the region and brought in from other regions) to demonstrate its identification with the Caribbean land in an engaging dynamic of culinary creolization.

The Christmas meal also focuses on yam as another vital root food signifying the motif of diasporic culinary retentions from West Africa. Like beans,

yams are hardy, nutritious, and versatile (Mackie 1991, 72) and can be boiled, fried, or pounded into meal. The planting of yams follows a ritualized pattern of production to become a commemorative rite invoking the African ancestors. Moreover, their cultivation requires strenuous manual labor to ensure a successful crop, thereby representing and consolidating the laborious work ethic of the formerly enslaved Africans in the Caribbean. Man Ya's vegetable patch in *L'Exil selon Julia* testifies to this ancestral ethic of cultivation, which is a source of economic independence and occupational groundedness in the soil and water. The novel describes Man Ya as "always planting all kinds of roots, fertilizing vanilla, climbing trees, and setting her shrimp nets in the river" (Pineau 2003, 202). Located within a natural cosmogony of land and water, Man Ya's holistic embracing of the heights and depths of the universe reveals a unique perspective of organic wholeness. This sense of cohesion is violently severed when she is transplanted into an environment of sensory imbalance punctuated by "the infirmity of exile" (Pineau 2003, 96).

Subsistence farming has also characterized the lifestyles of rural Indo-Caribbeans who were primarily an agricultural labor force in the days of indenture from 1838–1917. Indians and Chinese introduced the cultivation of rice paddies, thereby broadening the scope of Caribbean staples such as cassava, yucca, yam, and manioc. For this reason, the representation of certain foods and spices in Pineau's work evokes a sense of ancestry associated with all the founding civilizations of the Caribbean, recreated in the ethereal flavors and scents of cinnamon, curry powder, and cassava flour (Pineau 2003, 112). Food and identity find their associative value in symbiotic links with the land and sea that nourish the community through umbilical affiliations with its historicity, and a sense of place in Guadeloupe.

* * *

In the French city described in *L'Exile selon Julia*, eating and telling stories are vibrant forms of orality. Fragments of history and morsels of roasted meat reveal the individuality of the socially- and culturally-displaced Antilleans through sensory animation. Shared confidences and a communal meal demarcate common bonds of affiliation, wherein exile establishes its own community of group sociability and identification, as demonstrated in Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*. Oral signifiers of identity are absorbed into the collective consciousness as a living memory of the homeland to counter the pain of separation and the frustration of failed dreams. In addition, the ingestion of food produces gender-particular responses and attitudes. The male characters associate traditional food with a reclaiming of manhood; they affirm their Caribbean maleness in

narratives of adventure, invincibility in the face of death, bravado, and overt forms of history making. Extroverted expressions of manhood compensate for their powerlessness within a racialized French social system that continues to enforce a master-slave dichotomy between its "nationals" and "others."

This dialectic seems all the more poignant given that certain characters, such as the narrator's father, are war veterans. They uphold the "universal" values of the French nation in the form of active military service in the French Resistance and a slavish admiration for the national father General de Gaulle to proclaim their unabashed (i.e., colonized) loyalty to the "mother" country. The father's national service is ironically rewarded by obscurity in the immigrant Parisian ghetto and his disgruntled return to the island home of Guadeloupe as a way of protesting de Gaulle's forced resignation from power.

For the women, the relationship to food reinstates a power imbalance in domestic duty; their gender roles are very often limited to the diasporic kitchen and the preparation of "memory foods" that motivate nostalgia and storytelling. In addition, their dual disenfranchisement as women and wives of dispossessed Caribbean men leads to the internalized expression of their feelings in the form of "comfort food" preparation such as cake and other desserts.[10] These foods symbolize the women's capacity to sugarcoat their bitterness under the guise of romantic fantasy. Sweets and desserts also provide the necessary bursts of energy (through the intake of sugar) to confront hardships within the domestic sphere. As the novel indicates, "Drying the dishes, they also dry up their secret sorrows and speak cryptically . . . of their bitterness as wives and of the military regime that they sometimes endure. Late in the evening, after dessert, cake made by the lady of the house, they let slip nostalgic couplets about the faraway islands where they grew up" (Pineau 2003, 5).

The Caribbean attitude to food in the novel unearths deep associations with what I call a "homeland imaginary" and acquires particular importance in Pineau's work. The sensory construction of the distant island home is a way of localizing space in the metropolis. Recreating the fragrances of "home" through the culinary occupation of space in Paris symbolizes the act of creolizing dominant space when the familiarity of the birthland is both conjured and physically actualized through fragrant whiffs of memory. The novel provides the recipes for these culinary performances in which home is imagined through associative ingredients, flavors, smells, tastes, and colors. In other words, food fills the void of exile and homelessness in acts of culinary belonging that delineate recognizable mappings of home found in the strong aftertaste of freshwater fish and its pungent seasonings. For example, "Nourishing this longing means buying freshwater fish in France, soaking it in imitation brine—there are neither limes nor bird peppers here. Fry tomatoes and onions gently in an ounce

of Masclet red butter out of a package from the Antilles. Put in the fish, let it cook, then eat it. Take note of the offense. Then, think about Home. In your memory, go in search of odors and the joys of tasting" (Pineau 2003, 89). The use of Caribbean ingredients that cannot be found in France, such as red butter, implies an immediate culinary exchange with the Caribbean. The imitative value of substitutions dilutes culinary expression on the one hand, but also partakes of the "repeating process" as new recipes emerge reflecting the Caribbean overseas.

The flavored fish adds "spice" to the otherwise tedious life of the displaced French citizen of color, and generates a feeling of excitement for having conjured the journey into the realm of the familiar. Food becomes a form of "memory dressing" to ward off the emptiness of exile when customary smells lead to poetic imaginings of well-known faraway places brought to life within the borders of the frying pan and in the liquid fragrance of red Antillean butter. The sense of smell is actually the most "ingrained" of the five senses, proving to be more reliable and lasting than sight or sound. The frying pan has the power to melt boundaries by creating an undifferentiated territoriality between France and Guadeloupe, a "sensorial interstice" that suspends spatial hierarchies through culinary reconstructions. Valérie Loichot equates this reconstruction in Pineau's novels with the idea of a dual culinary creolization or recreolization. This process takes place when an Antillean food product that has already been creolized in the Caribbean (internal creolization) comes into contact with a food item from metropolitan culture (external creolization) (2002, 26–27). This product is further transformed or reconfigured through its dual (internal and external) hybridity.[11] *L'Exil selon Julia* offers an example of the principle of "repeating hybridity" through a reverse recreolization revealed in the abovementioned example of fried fish. The taste of freshwater fish is creolized by the use of imitation French brine in the absence of fresh limes and bird pepper (external creolization). The altered taste of the fish in the absence of local ingredients and spices is subsequently neutralized by the transformative flavor of the familiar red butter (internal creolization) to produce a satisfying dish of French-Creole fish in tomato sauce. The recreated dish momentarily bridges the gap between home and foreign land.[12]

These culinary reimaginings are the very source of Man Ya's survival in France as they bring home a step closer through the immediacy of memory in *L'Exil selon Julia*.

> Reinvent a Caribbean Sea. Put yourself on a strip of beach. Wait for the return of the fishermen. Haul in the canoes with the regulars, as if you had never left Home. Look at the fish dancing their deaths in the bottom of the nets. And go

> off, with your booty: two goatfish, a sunfish, three sea bass, and a grunt in the shade of a basket. Later, close your eyes, suck a fish head from a red snapper, crush a thick slice of breadfruit in the *court-bouillon* sauce, sweat from the heat of a pepper. Relive all those tastes. Breath in and belch . . . For Man Ya, warding off this emptiness means dressing the wounds of her nostalgia with recollections raked up from the bottom of her memory. (Pineau 2003, 88).

The frequent references to fish symbolize an entire range of choices and possibilities that elude Man Ya as a non-French speaking, "uneducated," working class, rural, alien woman in France. If the sea offers her the expansiveness of the horizon in Guadeloupe represented by the limitless variety of fresh fish, the confining landlocked geography of the Parisian city[13] becomes a living nightmare to be dispelled by nostalgic recollections of open spaces, a flavorful meal, and the healthy functioning of the body that can easily digest food cooked with fresh ingredients. The sucking of fish heads as sensory pleasure, and loud belching as a sign of satisfaction violate the rules of bourgeois etiquette in France but create an immediate link with the African traditions of the Black Atlantic, where the fish head is actually prized because of its sweet flavor. This is also a common culinary tradition among Bengalis and Southern Indians who are noted for their fish head curry. These "natural" foods occasion pepper-induced sweats and belching, which minimizies acidity and other forms of indigestion that have become an intimate part of modernity and fast-paced living.

If migration to the metropolis offers the illusion of a better life and enhanced economic prospects, it certainly does not offer the illusion of healthy eating for working-class Guadeloupeans, despite the conveniences of first world living.[14] While foods such as junk food, processed and packaged goods, and "minute meals" cater to the specifics of contemporary urban life, they also satisfy capitalist forms of consumption and production strategies that sacrifice the quality of the product in the interests of quantity and easy profit. The industrialization of the food industry favors the commoditization of food into sanitized, chemically-preserved, and neatly-wrapped individual packets representing the compressibility of urban lifestyles into hectic schedules, long commutes, a frenzied pace, and poor eating habits. When Man Ya returns to Guadeloupe, the narrator's family has to forego her home-cooked meals in favor of supermarket utility products. The mother's work schedule forces her to buy "packets of Mousseline soup and ravioli. That's what we eat everyday" (Pineau 2003, 115). The intrusion of technology into food production produces food mutations in the form of canned ravioli and condensed soup whose contents are devoid of nutritional value, thereby subjecting the body to a particular form of colonization in the absence of food's recuperative value. These instant foods also deprive the family of shared preparation time as an opportunity to bond. The 1968 "Events"

(Pineau 2003, 115) calling for social and political reform do not include food reform on their agenda. The demand for political and social enfranchisement obscures the urgency of corporeal liberation from food conglomerations; the uniformity of supermarket consumerism encourages the homogenization of taste and choice through factory-produced goods.

These assembly line foods eliminate cultural particularity within a corporation-determined politics of sameness in which difference is assimilated into a mixed common culture. This assimilation can be illustrated by the example of frozen pizza, the consumption of which does not constitute a sign of allegiance to Italian culture, but represents a transnational food for all. Faced with a sense of culinary bereavement in the absence of Man Ya and her Creole cooking, the narrator laments, "Perhaps if you had been here, you would have been able to warn us about the Events. Manman would have done the shopping, and we wouldn't be sitting down to ravioli, fish sticks, soup from a packet, and all these kinds of tasteless factory-prepared foods" (Pineau 2003, 115). The replacement of the kitchen by the factory reveals the intrusion of corporate attitudes into the intimacy of domestic space. These attitudes undermine family-oriented food values through culinary perversions that violate the esthetic value of food, as represented by the pre-fabricated fish sticks. The distinctiveness of goatfish, snapper, sunfish, and sea bass is camouflaged by an undistinguishable taste and origin of processed fish parts, as a symbol of industrial waste and artificial flavor. Moreover, the sanitized and reconfigured fish fragments do not conjure images of open seas, warm breezes, and singing fishermen, or smells of tangy salt air and fresh fish. The familiarity of a cherished Caribbean seascape degenerates into the frigid anonymity of the frozen-food section as a site of sensory alterations. In addition, processed food represents the culinary norm, whereby the national consumption of government-sanctioned items and meals becomes a form of patriotism to the industrialized nation.

The industrialization of family life is represented by the "corporate father" as the "popular" and easily available father of the nation who remains on duty twenty-four hours a day. He replaces the head of the Caribbean household whose long working hours necessitate frequent and extended absences from the home. Supermarket culture consequently becomes a newly coveted family value through the paradoxical displacement of familial and social structures, and the seductive appeal of choice and suitability to postmodern needs. Dominating the cultural landscape, the supermarket, in fact, becomes the model city that "integrates" the aesthetics of food into a normative cultural homogeneity through the conforming appeal of comfort food. The very architecture of the supermarket satisfies national ideals of urban planning: angular aisles; symmetrically-arranged produce; artificial lighting; disinfected floors; absence

of smell; ghettoized sections for ethnic foods, dwarfed by an abundance of the more popular "standard" foods and commercial name brands; a lack of personal service as an opportunity for exchange; and now, even self check-out services in addition to a strategic choice of "elevator music" that lulls the consumer into the complacency of overindulgent purchase. Supermarket corporations seduce working-class immigrants through competitive prices that are much lower than the cost of imported foods in ethnic food stores. The super cities of consumption and production such as Euromarché and COSTCO represent food empires that absorb economically disenfranchised groups into capitalist systems of manipulative control; the presumed affordability of wholesale goods ensures the assimilative and exploitative functioning of food conglomerations. These economic "institutions" sustain their economic profits by manipulating the allegiances of consumer-oriented immigrants to corporate America, France, Britain, and other economic powerhouses.

The investment in food security is enhanced by the bioengineering of food into a required and predetermined product based on the manipulative control of nature as a sign of unlimited access to resources. As Ron Scapp and Brian Seitz affirm, "Nature itself has acquired a curious status in connection with eating practices lately too, having become something not just to use or exploit but to actively manipulate or transform" (1998, 4). The search for the artifice under the guise of multiple choices supports the industrial manufacturing of products, wherein camouflage and subterfuge compensate for altered tastes. In this way, genetically-fashioned Easter eggs can become a delectable treat when they are disguised and painted meticulously as "oeufs déguisés ou peints minutieusement" in *Un Papillon dans la cité* (Pineau 1992, 119). The invitation to eat something extraordinary in the form of commercially-fabricated colored eggs (with dyes probably made in Taiwan or China) masks the ordinariness of consuming boiled eggs as part of a banal routine in which class and race distinctions regulate quality control.

On the other hand, Caribbean cuisine finds its sanctity in nature through the abundant use of fresh seafood, fruits, and vegetables as an organically conceived culinary ethic. As shown earlier, the novels expose the capitalist alteration of staples such as eggs in the commercial center by juxtaposing this deviation with the bountiful harvests of "nature food" such as crabs to be shared by an entire community in Guadeloupe. Nature or organic food promotes an ethos of sharing and enjoying a communal dish such as *matété* or crab pilaf. The ability to afford crab is not a sign of economic privilege associated with the "sophistication" of French cuisine and chic dining but a "common" signifier of everyday affordability and pleasure. The capitalist appropriation of nature makes crab a luxury item for exclusive consumption by imposing profit-bearing and

market-regulating tariffs on the item through product control, thereby indicating that nature and its organic foods are affordable and accessible only to the privileged few as a sign of first-world obsessions with health and body control. The organic, as a postmodern fetish, according to Scapp and Seitz, "is highly valued, although its exorbitant price represents the elitist reality of its production and its market niche" (1998, 7). The irony of paying an exorbitant price for naturally-grown, chemical-free food becomes part of the globalizing process of consumer control in which first-world health is maintained at the expense of third-world migrant labor from Latin America, as in the case of the United States, and "immigrants" from Africa and the Caribbean in France.

The desecration of nature through "fetishistic culinary capitalism" and technological manipulation contrasts with the religiosity of sharing food on a Guadeloupean beach, where a culinary repast of callaloo, colombo, matété, dumplings, breadfruit, and rice (Pineau 1992, 119) becomes a sublime offering to be consumed with closed eyes (119). The Sunday meal promotes another level of inclusion by the direct reference to *colombo* (curry) which is considered to be the national dish of Guadeloupe and Martinique. As an affirmation of the East Indian presence in the Antilles, *colombo* charts the history of Indian indenture through the migration of spices and curry flavors attesting both to the distinctiveness of Indian cuisine and its creolized adaptations in the Caribbean. A variation of the Indian *garam massala* or allspice, colombo can be used either in powdered or paste form to flavor different meats, goat and chicken being the favorites, and seafood. Colombo spices such as mustard seeds, turmeric, cumin, pepper corns, and coriander seeds establish ancestral connections with India in the form of spice routes marked by the experience of indenture across the *kala pani* to highlight the two lateral middle passage crossings of the Caribbean (discussed further in Chapter 4). The eventual blending of the tangy Indian spices with the verve of African bird pepper is further enhanced by a sweet-and-sour vinegar mixture to produce a distinctive Caribbean form of "culinary douglarization," an energized component of creolization and cultural dynamism.

In other words, colombo concretizes the tenuous position of Indo-Caribbeans who nevertheless manage to insert themselves into the Antillean cultural imaginary through their culinary distinction, despite their minority ethnic and religious status in Guadeloupe and Martinique (discussed further in Chapter 4).[15] The beach outing as a communal feast in Pineau's novel promotes a participatory model of belonging reflected in the complementary positioning of African-inspired crab callaloo (a spicy green leaf soup with coconut milk) and Indian-inspired crab colombo. This culinary rapport is based on the natural abundance of crab, "only crabs, everywhere" ("seulement des crabes. Partout" [Pineau 1992, 119]). Food provides an advanced "text" of cultural understanding when nationalist

discourses on ethnic privileging or competing ethnicity reveal their disabling intent. Moreover, the crab claws represent the different branches of a community brought together to savor the "warmth" of nature's plenitude through gastronomic pleasure.[16] The sophisticated preparation of these dishes in regular cooking pots or *canaris* blackened with age (in the absence of food processing techniques) reveals this food's exclusivity in terms of delectable taste instead of limited accessibility and privileged dining.

Technology has also ensured the wide distribution of processed food primarily among the former colonies of the third world in the form of first world rejects. As Scapp and Seitz confirm, "Technology may have helped create one world, but it is still a divided world, a world bifurcated by the difference between empty bellies and full . . . For some people, the range of eating possibilities has never been better. But for hundreds of millions of others, it remains as empty and bleak as it ever was" (1998, 5–6). In fact, food technologies foster hierarchies of discrimination; the "free" circulation of food creates possibilities for creolized culinary styles through migrating food patterns on the one hand, and also defines the parameters of a "misery market culture"[17] through the uneven production, distribution, and concentration of resources on the other. In *Un Papillon dans la cité*, the narrator's mother buys a supermarket turkey for the Christmas meal as a sign of her assimilation to a French culinary tradition and her need to identify with a hegemonically constructed notion of a "white Christmas" as a form of self-validation. The narrator says, "Mother bought oysters and a large turkey for Christmas dinner. She told me that it was a tradition here and that it was necessary to adapt to French customs. Without exaggerating, this was the first time that I had ever seen a full turkey" (Pineau 1992, 46; my translation).[18] The turkey gives the mother the "security" of cultural acceptance even though this act of culinary identification involves a certain loss of self through the ingestion of a dominant ideal. By consuming the turkey and the cold water oysters produced locally in France, the mother receives the "comfort" of positionality in a French milieu as a way of eating her way into Frenchness, despite her legitimate French passport.

The turkey represents her allegiance to the "implicit universalism" (Murdoch 2001b, 130) of cultural normativity in France based on assimilative codes of integrated sameness. At the same time, the presence of a full turkey symbolizes France's ideal of culinary and cultural superiority. In the novel, France maintains its culinary wholeness at the expense of its colonies illustrated by the following examples. The access to "luxury" items such as turkey on Christmas Day does not necessarily create an ambiance of good living among displaced constituencies in France. The consumption of colonial leftovers in Guadeloupe in the form of frozen turkey wings and giblets maintains economic ties of

dependence to the "mother country" which provides scraps and meager nourishment. In addition, store-bought turkey generally is already trussed up with no head, liver, or other "abats" to be used as nutritious soup broth afterwards. As the novel indicates, "In the home country, we are only familiar with turkey wings. We find them in all the small grocery shops. They are frozen . . . In Guadeloupe, it's poor man's meat. They are sold for 8–10 francs a kilo. Sometimes, in the shop that was close to where we lived, Madame Zizine was forced to separate the frozen wings by hitting them with a hammer before throwing them on the scale" (Pineau 1992, 46; my translation).[19] The novel juxtaposes the cold turkey with the warmth of the communally-raised and prepared Christmas pig. The preservation of colonial waste through modern-day refrigeration techniques also indicates the pervasiveness of colonial ideology in the overseas island in the form of contaminated and substandard produce. These goods supports a need-based "misery market" of unsavory produce, a further reminder of Guadeloupe's ambiguous departmental status.

The ambiguity of location finds symbolic representation in turkey as a signifier of truncated affiliations and misplaced origins. The very name for turkey in French, *dinde*, is based on falsified reference points for the official (i.e., colonial) history of the Caribbean dating back to the infamous Columbian "discovery" of the islands. The word *dinde*, as the irony of nomenclature (*d'Inde* means *from India*), provides linguistic proof of Columbus' misnavigation and his ultimate confusing of India with the (West) Indies in a French context.[20] The displaced origin of turkey from the Americas to India is revealed in *Un Papillon dans la cité* when Madame Zizine mistakenly labels the frozen turkey parts as wings from India ("Ailes d'Indes" [Pineau 1992, 47]) instead of turkey wings (ailes de dinde). Turkey as indigenous food from the Americas was "discovered" by the Spanish conquistadors and then transported to Western Europe where it soon became a popular food item. Finding its way to the French table at the height of colonial expansion, the indigenous origins of turkey were obscured as a result of colonial reroutings to be misrepresented as quintessentially French. This culinary vampirism symbolizes the ways in which the colonial diet has always enriched itself via unacknowledged appropriations from the Other. In other words, the "New World" signification of this bird is ignored when it is reconfigured nationally by the colonial palate as traditional Christmas fare in France, and Thanksgiving food of the Pilgrim Fathers in the United States. The displaced turkey is successfully integrated into the colonial meal plan, just as the disoriented Antillean successfully assimilates Frenchness in new ties of belonging.

At the same time, the consumption of roast pig on Christmas Day also highlights the significant alteration of the indigenous diet in the Americas by the

colonial imposition of food items such as pork. As a non-native scavenger, the pig could be raised cheaply and abundantly to infiltrate and contaminate local digestion through its indigestible and trans-fatty byproducts, such as lard, which was popularly used as a staple cooking and flavoring medium among the working class. The consumption of pork thereby parallels the ingestion of colonial refuse to demonstrate how food is inscribed within the politics of corporeal control based on unhealthy eating. These forms of culinary colonization maintain the body in a permanent state of disease heightened by severe hypertension, clogging of the arteries, obesity, and other death-inducing symptoms to demonstrate how the body is forced to submit to a foreign regime as part of the colonizing mission. While high-quality pork is cultivated in Europe through a controlled diet of organic meal and, as in the case of Spain, wild acorns, pork production in many parts of the Caribbean follows the mechanics of assembly-line manufacturing and limited quality control. Moreover, pigs raised in rural areas are "free" to eat waste materials that are automatically absorbed into the human bloodstream so that the body remains forever contaminated by coloniality's "corporeal power."

The culture of lard provides further evidence of ideological and physical colonizations by food given the immense popularity of pork in the Americas, and the preference for pork fat as a shortening agent for tortillas, tamales, collard greens, and beans. On the other hand, the use of olive oil as the basis of French, Spanish, Portuguese, and other Mediterranean cuisine demonstrates Europe's preoccupation with "pure" blood and its credo to maintain the colonizing imprint on the Americas through the long-term consequences of lard consumption. Even though pork constitutes an important food item in Europe, the use of olive oil for cooking minimizes the corrosive impact of pork fat on the digestive system due to the recuperative qualities of olive oil in terms of fat content, cholesterol levels, and digestibility. However, many Caribbean cooks are now becoming more health-conscious by replacing lard and other trans-fatty substances with canola and olive oil to relieve the body's congested blood streams and contest the oppressive weight of colonial capitalism in food production.

> The power of the center does not depend on geographical representations but, on the contrary, geographical representations are built around the power of the center. Once the ethnic perspective is detached from the geometric one, the authoritative center becomes a matter of political power rather than of ethnic subjectivity.
>
> Walter Mignolo[21]

The prerogative to alter and invent maps by devising Eurocentered cartographies of (dis)location forms the basis of colonial geography. By reconfiguring

landscape through the imposition of arbitrary borders and boundaries, colonial geography maps its colonizing intent in accordance with a master plan of restructured territoriality. Walter Mignolo associates territoriality with "the practical control of space" (1994, 41) conceived in physical terms of conquest, genocide, displacement, and psychological states of assimilation. The colonial map constructs the Caribbean in terms of structural dissonance as a homogenous landmass to be possessed and absorbed into French territoriality under the appellation "the French West Indies" and "overseas department." The colony as an inverted image of the *metropole* becomes a spatial and cultural caricature of lesser proportions and an exotic outpost to be consumed by mainland tourism. The feminization of the islands in French as *la* Guadeloupe and *la* Martinique confirms the link between conquest and rape in fetishistic tropes of virgin lands, paradise, and idyllic beauty, as discussed in the Introduction. The island as artifact loses its ontological center by becoming a floating signifier of indeterminacy, a pawn to be manipulated at will by competing European factions.

However, scholars such as Glissant and Benítez-Rojo creatively problematize the notion of indeterminacy in terms of Caribbean diasporic spaces that "inspire multidisciplinary maps of unexpected design" (Benîtez-Rojo 1992, 3–4). Inscribing the Caribbean within the parameters of an aquatic sensibility in which the rhizomatic configuration of the archipelago displaces the hegemonic unity of any fixed center, Benítez-Rojo situates the archipelago in a state of constant regeneration (as discussed in the Introduction). Mignolo describes this transformative condition as "native territoriality," (1994, 35) which resists the imprint of the colonial map through a subaltern reworking and reclaiming of spatiality. Likewise, *L'Exil selon Julia* offers a literary basis to contest these spatial colonizations through the "native territoriality" of food, as demonstrated by a bowl of lentils. It is important to indicate that in French the word *lentille* has multiple connotations including lentils, perspective, and lens. When the narrator describes the Antillean islands as grains of lentils, she connects geography (*île*) with food (*lentille*) as an example of culinary resistance to deterritorialization. As the narrator says, "Whenever I eat lentils, I think about the Antilles. Lentils, Antilles. Can you say that Guadeloupe is one island among so many others that make up the Antilles? Each grain is an island in my plate. I know that there are heaps of islands in the vicinity of Guadeloupe. Manman cooked lentils yesterday. And in the evening, as usual, she added water and put the rest in the blender to make soup . . . Each island is a land floating on a brown Caribbean Sea" (Pineau 2003, 109–10).

The soup of lentils becomes a mobile map offering shifting perspectives of island subjectivity from a regional perspective. These culinary decolonizations of space are essential to uncover lost histories submerged under the weight of

colonial ideology; the constant stirring of the soup pot thereby transforms itself into a floating sea of memory. Individualized histories rise to the surface of the pot via the eruptive movements of the boiling soup as evidence of multiple Caribbean identities in search of their obscured origins. The narrator searches for these hidden narratives as she picks over the lentils hoping to find buried truths and alternative signification in "all the little stones that I find, like the beginning of a collection of precious stones. Where do these stones come from?" (2003, 110). The play on words "lentilles" also includes contact lenses and indicates the need for clear vision to articulate new Caribbean identities by correcting colonial and neo-colonial myopia.

The desire to remap the Antillean islands through the lens (*lentille*) of subaltern subjectivity is synonymous with the need to reconceptualize the Caribbean in terms of its "other Americanity" (Glissant 1989, xxxiii) based on synchronic ties with Latin America and the American South. *L'Exil selon Julia* makes particular reference to a horizontal relation with Latin America through the trope of chocolate as a pre-Columbian signifier of historicity. The history of chocolate dates back to the Mesoamerican Aztec and Maya peoples who called it the "food of the gods" on account of its rich flavor, dense composition, and ethereal taste. Representing the preferred drink of royalty as well as a popular beverage enjoyed by the masses, chocolate played an important role in religious and social life as it was used during ceremonial rituals, religious celebrations, coronations, and other significant events due to its "divine" properties.[22] At the same time, the shared predilection for chocolate between king and subject established the undiscriminating "culinary classlessness" of the American taste buds that united royalty and nonroyalty alike by the imaginative liquefaction of class boundaries.

Moreover, cocoa beans were an important item of trade often used as monetary tokens in precapitalist commercial exchange.[23] Food as currency offered a healthy item of barter that worked to the nutritious benefit of both trading partners. The circulation of chocolate, vanilla, and other foods like peppers, tomatoes, yucca, and corn explains the presence of these products in different parts of the Americas before the colonial invasions; this highlights the commercial and cross-cultural synchronic dialogues that were already in place before the colonial interruptions and the sugar trade. These "oral" transmissions of culture highlight a long preconquest history of cultural symbiosis and royal origin, an "arche-creolization" as a "presugar diaspora," wherein chocolate was flavored with natural sweeteners such as vanilla and a cactus-derived syrup in the absence of processed cane sugar cultivation. In this way, "American history" could subvert its colonized Western origins in the evocation of a precolonial memory of ancestral affinity within and across the Americas as another repeating process.

The consciousness of a precolonial "native America" is represented by another grandmother figure in *L'Exil selon Julia*, Man Bouboule. The narrator remembers Man Bouboule's legendary chocolate tea as a sign of ancestry, a fluid timeline that charts the very landscape of memory in sensory evocation. She says, "What did Man Bouboule put in her creamy chocolate tea that made Manman's never have this exact taste that we have on our tongues, that we are forever seeking, that opens up countries of vanilla and nutmeg? . . . Gather together all the gestures of the ancestor. Close your eyes. Chase essences. A zest of lime. A cinnamon stick . . . And fragrances from yesterday go back through the course of time to sidetrack, confuse, scatter the thoughts that are trying to put themselves in order" (Pineau 2003, 127). Once again, taste and smell evoke stronger memories than seeing. The ancestral tea is a mnemonic aid to circumvent colonial genealogies as misleading points of origin. The mother's inability to replicate the exact flavor of the tea reveals her psychological alienation from her own historicity that takes colonial history as its primary referent. Fragrances and tastes from the past mediate the present in the search for traces of vanilla, nutmeg, and cinnamon as markers of an original creation story. The narrator expresses the urgency of documenting these stories in a memory-enriched language compared to the richness and fluidity of chocolate sauce. This language represents the discourse of Sycorax historicity, a bilingual mother tongue that incorporates orality in writing through an energized linguistic Creoleness of taste, rhythm, sound, and voice seasoned with the tangy sweetness of memory. The narrator makes the following recommendation: "Write the burned bottom of a saucepan of chocolate custard," she says (2003, 105). The burned saucepan bottom transforms itself into a richly coated historical palimpsest imprinted with the chocolate-like creaminess of liquid memory.

* * *

The Antillean and Maghrebi characters in the two novels highlight the importance of maintaining ancestral identifications. In a similar fashion, grandmother Fathia's cooking in *Un Papillon dans la cité* recreates the ancestral home of the Algerian desert heartland in her suburban HLM apartment. Traditional North African food such as *couscous* evokes a sense of community in an alien environment. The HLM, as an urban ghetto in the metropolis, replicates the social and economic structures of the Caribbean plantation. Associated with criminality and delinquency by the mainstream media, these housing projects represent marginal spaces due to their peripheral location, cheap construction, and overcrowded and substandard living conditions that reflect the dystopia of immigrant and proletarian living. As living monuments to France's dubious colonial

past and subsequent attempts "to eliminate its immigrant presence and experiences from the Parisian landscape" (Durmelat 2001, 118), the HLM represents a disfavored no-man's-land of cultural impoverishment and socioeconomic degradation in the French imaginary. However, Pineau's novels subvert the one-dimensional stereotype of the urban projects by positioning them as vibrant loci of cultural production and exchange. Like Man Julia, Fathia becomes a dynamic cultural agent who politicizes her kitchen through the preparation of specific foods. These dishes subvert and transform mainstream paradigms of "French" cuisine through Maghrebi creolizations, as an affirmation of the North African Algerian[24] diaspora in France. Diaspora space symbolizes a point of negotiation via the migration of culinary routes that nevertheless set up roots in the metropolis as Fathia prepares savory couscous and sweet treats of loukoum, baklava, and makroude. Fathia's identity as a Maghrebi Arab immigrant in France is anchored in these foods inscribed within a continuum of cultural and social meanings.

Couscous represents communal food and the food of the Maghrebi diaspora par excellence. Greg and Laidia Noakes highlight the social aspect of couscous preparation and consumption by stating, "For all North Africans, couscous is part of one's cultural identity, a food that is both ceremonial, served at each of life's milestones, and quotidian, comfort food." In other words, couscous becomes a metonym for self-concept and cultural definition by embracing a vast geographical expanse of identification. This geography incorporates a remarkable regional specificity in terms of culinary variation distinguishing a Tunisian fish couscous from a Moroccan lamb-based version. Like the Antillean colombo or callaloo, Maghbrei couscous provides another example of culinary creolization to establish its historicity in world cuisine in general, and in the Arab immigrant locale in particular. The following quotation establishes the historical specificity of couscous. "The Arabic word *kuskus* comes from the Berber *seksu*, which points to the dish's presence in North Africa before the arrival of Arab Muslims in the 100 years following the death of the Prophet Muhammed in 632. But the introduction of new ingredients from around the world, as well as influences from Mashriqi (eastern Arab), African, Andalusian and even European cooking, has transformed couscous over the centuries, and resulted in distinct regional cuisines" (Greg and Laidia Noakes 1). In addition, the tomato-based couscous sauce suggests another primordial trans-Atlantic link, as tomatoes were one of the most important Mesoamerican culinary contributions to European and African cuisine.

The collective symbolism of couscous is reflected in its stew-like combination of meat or fish, vegetables, and spices into a flavorful tomato sauce poured over a bed of steamed semolina grains to be shared by a group of people. Individualized servings of couscous found in *nouvelle cuisine* restaurants violate its

sanctity as a blessing from Allah and its social significance as communal bread. The ethos of sharing a plate of couscous in the HLM humanizes the immigrants in bonds of communion to deflect the oft-repeated portrayals of rivalry and tension among different ethnic minorities. In fact, *Un Papillon dans la cité*'s narrator Félicie is introduced to her friend Mohammed's Maghrebi household through the tantalizing odors of the simmering meat sauce (Pineau 1992, 58) that provides a warm welcome in an unfamiliar home. Intoxicated by the smell of the spices, which are heightened by the grandmother's sweet offering of *loukoum* or Turkish delight, Félicie closes her eyes in fragrant remembering: "Mohammed riait parce que je fermais les yeux" (1992, 59) [Mohammed laughed because I was closing my eyes; my translation]. She privileges taste and smell over seeing to invoke her own grandmother Man Ya in Fathia's kitchen. She thereby converts her feelings of loss and separation into a creative conjuring of presence. Food provides its own sensorial landscape to unite the two grandmothers in the kitchen through the crossing of boundaries, wherein the kitchen dominates the spatial confines of the HLM apartment: "La cuisine débordait presque dans le salon" (1992, 58) [The kitchen almost extended into the living room; my translation].

The Caribbean Sea embraces the arid desert land in a postmodern "cartography of reconciliation" to frame a transcontinental African-Franco-Maghrebi-Antillean diaspora whose shared history of hard labor for the French Empire encourages new bonds of cooperation. Although the Maghrebi and Antillean diasporas follow different historical and geographical migratory routes, they nevertheless share a common root of economic marginalization to constitute a pan-African diaspora of labor-induced subalternity. Consequently, Pineau's vision of diaspora favors a transgressive movement "beyond ethnicity" to establish interracial economic solidarities along class and gender lines. This counter globalization force emerging from the disenfranchised "south" exposes the inherent inequities of dominant economic hegemonies in France.

At the same time, cooking maintains Fathia's sense of regional identification with her ancestral desert heartland home in Algeria inhabited by the fearless Touareg warriors of Hoggar (Pineau 1992, 60). Described as the "blue people" of the Saharian desert, the Touareg are noted for their resilience, sense of pride in their desert ancestry, and skills in warfare that enable them to retain the autonomy of their tribes and territory. Fathia's open identification with the Touareg reveals her attempt to resist the colonizing imprint of French assimilation through the power of the tactile senses. She keeps the memory of the desert homeland alive in home-cooking recipes wherein the semolina grains of couscous assume the texture of the Saharan sands as tangible presence in everyday life. Equating the act of forgetting a recipe with death, Fathia cooks to

avoid amnesia and to preserve life in the form of generational continuity. The narrator states, "Elle dit tout le temps que c'est la dernière chose qui la rattache à son pays et que l'heure où elle oubliera une recette sera l'heure de sa mort, vrai" (Pineau 1992, 59) [She always says it is the last thing linking her to her country and that the day she forgets a recipe will be the hour of her death, in truth; my translation]. Through food, Fathia tries to instill a sense of Toureg pride in her grandson whose Arabness in France represents a visible marker of alterity as does blackness for the Antillean protagonists of the novels. Fathia compensates for her poverty and social marginalization in France by a culinary richness testifying to the richness of Arab cultural traditions alternatively exoticized or demonized by mainstream politics. Félicie is dazzled by the sensory richness of Mohammed's apartment that resembles the vibrancy of an Arab market or *souk* with its brass trays, brocaded tapestries, carpets to cover ugly linoleum floors, penetrating fragrances, and the delicately embroidered robes worn by the mother and grandmother as a reminder of better times (1992, 60).[25] The Maghrebi décor personalizes the anonymity of the bleak HLM architecture through cultural claimings of space that mark the individuality of the Ben Doussant household.

However, traditional artifacts from the home country also immobilize themselves in a cultural frieze. These faded remnants of the past risk the dangers of obscurity or commodification in the present as a result of the continued social and religious displacement of France's Arab populations. The discrepancy between the sensory fullness of memory and the fragmentation of daily life reveals itself in the mother and grandmother's formerly vibrant evening dresses that display signs of over use in the form of faded embroidery and frayed fabric (Pineau 1992, 58). In addition, the comfort of traditional identity food does not protect Mohammed from feelings of social disenfranchisement as a Maghrebi boy. He searches for the affirmation of his adolescent identity within the "comforting" politics of gang affiliation and a stereotypical adherence to juvenile non-conformance until his life-transforming trip with Félicie and other classmates to Guadeloupe. The cultural freezing of gender roles in diaspora is also evidenced by the women's spatial confinement in the kitchen where they "produce culture" under the guise of domestic labor to maintain the "cultural authenticity" of their communities. In Fathia's case, the culinary "authenticity" of pastries like baklava, makroude, and loukoum inscribes itself indelibly on the female body through her decayed teeth and physical corpulence. The narrator describes her thus: "Ma grand-mère est une passionnée de pâtisserie. T'as vu sa grosseur! Et ses dents! blindés!" (1992, 59). [My grandmother is crazy about pastry. Have you seen how fat she is! And her teeth! Completely ruined; my translation] The grandmother's passion for pastry reveals her addiction to

sugar. The sweetness of her culinary creations nevertheless imposes its corrosive effects on her body in the form of possible hypertension, diabetes, and obesity as physical symptoms of her postcolonial malaise as an Arab immigrant in France. While the grandmother's physical decay cannot be linked directly to colonial sugar production as in the case of the Antillean migrants, her physical state nevertheless emphasizes the abjection of the racialized female body when it is subjected to the negating politics of French alterity.

In fact, all the characters in Pineau's novels are linked by the politics of sugar as a critique of French imperialism. The representation of food demonstrates how the insatiability of the colonial sweet tooth led to the most insidious forms of labor exploitation represented by slavery and indenture, and the later commodification of Maghrebis in France through migrant labor. Ironically, sugar provides the common connection between "Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, and India." The sweetness of Maghrebi *loukoum* finds its linguistic affinity with Antillean *doukoum* (coconut cake) as a not-so-sweet reminder of the violence that underlies the creation of diaspora. The coercive force of sugar to dramatically change the course of world history highlights the association between power and food consumption.

The burden of sugar makes its long-lasting impression on the urgency of survival demonstrated in *L'Exil selon Julia*, where the connection between sugar, labor, and economic deprivation remains explicit:

> Jet-black women walking like men. One, carrying a tray on her head and calling out to the customer: "*Doudou-chéri*, darling, come and buy from me!" And in her voice, in her cries, you understand that there is urgency. She must sell all her wares, cakes and sweets, coconut cakes and lollipops, peanut brittle and roasted peanuts in paper cones. You understand that she must go back home with money for there are mouths to feed . . . How many? Four, five . . . She laughs and sweats beneath the tray that she sometimes holds with one hand. No one can sing the praises of her sweets better than she can. Her words flow thick and serious in the smile that she gives the customer. And then, all of a sudden, all the hardships of existence crease her face, and her features harden for a moment with an ugly thought. (Pineau 2003, 135–36)

The narrator describes the tactics of a vendor of sweets who uses syrupy language to attract potential customers; her sweet voice is nevertheless inflected with the bitter taste of her impoverished existence, whereby her ability to feed her children depends upon the marketability of the sweetened products. Her labor is to be consumed by others in sugary morsels through the asymmetrical value of sugar, while her own belly must remain empty until she ensures the satiety of the market. As the sole breadwinner in her family, the market woman has to assume the dual responsibilities of economic provider and nurturer

outside and within the home in the absence of gender role complementary. This imbalance highlights the destructive impact of the plantation structure on family life and the distribution of social functions. Similarly, the sugar-coated language of immigration officials and corrupt politicians in India also tricked impoverished rural Indians into accepting the abjection of indenture and plantation labor exploitation when they were lured onto the merchant ships in the name of sugar and improved economic prospects. These socioeconomic imbalances reveal their undemocratic intent as a form of colonial residue and neocolonial dependence to highlight the ambivalence that has "colored" the dynamics of creolization through the violence of cross-cultural contact and domination.

In addition, food's celebratory value in diaspora can also be compromised by the feelings of displacement, alienation, and cultural schizophrenia experienced by immigrants and disavowed French Caribbean citizens in the first world metropolis. Instead of representing a recuperative cure, food can exemplify a site of trauma as the body is forced to negotiate the conflicting cultural and social values of home and adopted country. The relationship between the aesthetics of home cooking and Western models of beauty and body normativity may, in fact, inspire hatred for the home cuisine, especially if this food conflicts with standardized norms of body image and calorie intake. This problem is experienced most acutely by young immigrant women in novels such as Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*.[26] The simultaneous (and contradictory) ingestion and repulsion of Western ideologies in terms of food habits can lead to eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. These disorders are a result of the body's alienation from familiar (and comforting) edible referents reinforced by the exilic process on the one hand, and the refusal to conform to a dominant ideal on the other. This body in suspension is a negation of the repeating process as it embodies the disjunction between opposing cultural systems and the violence of the postmodern conditions of immigrant life, especially for women. Associations with identifiable home food can also inspire feelings of shame for belonging to an "inferior" culture when dominant food sensibilities establish discriminatory hierarchies between low- and haute-cuisine as a sign of cultural hegemony over "alien" food. In this way, a Caribbean *roti* may be rejected in favor of a French *brioche* as a sign of the immigrant or overseas national's culinary allegiance to the host nation in disempowering bonds of integration.

The violence of contact has nevertheless created a "way of living differently" (Dash 1989, 72) through the negotiation of intersecting cultural and historical landscapes. Gisèle Pineau's novels establish the polysemic value of food and its capacity to realize comparative geographies of diaspora via interactive culinary re-imaginings of identity. By problematizing the (im)permeability of spatial boundaries and nationalistic credos of territoriality, culinary creolizations

contest the primacy of France as the hegemonic center to invite meditations on cultural and spatial plurilocality through circulating food routes. These transnational culinary migrations reframe diaspora in terms of relational praxis, a "repeating" process still at play in the Caribbean diaspora. By valorizing the cultural appropriateness of food and culinary practice to inscribe subaltern subjectivities within an energized transculturalism, Caribbean culinary creolizations mediate the global and the local in a distinctly transcontinental hybridization of expression. Pineau's novels take the initiative to provide the necessary parameters for these crosscultural exchanges through the dynamism of food as the signifier of a new Caribbeanness. This cultural trope maintains its ontological uniqueness via diasporic affiliations and postmodern contestations.

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CHAPTER 4

Diasporic Identity

Problematizing the Figure of the *Dougla* in Laure Moutoussamy's *Passerelle de vie* and Maryse Condé's *La migration des coeurs*

This chapter highlights the inherent historical ruptures that give birth to new Caribbean identities in a process of conflict resolution and lateral "south-south" hybridizations. The quest for identity constitutes an important leitmotif in French-Caribbean women's writing, as affirmed earlier. This search is situated within the negating tropes of colonization, departmentalization, sexual and racial alterity, assimilation, and migration to demarcate the liminal spaces of exile's physical and psychological trajectories. These spaces provide the characters with potentially ambivalent referential paradigms of self-definition. Succumbing to the alienation, isolation, and frustration of their exilic dispositions at home and abroad, the protagonists in this literature express their conflicting reactions of anguish and resistance to Otherness through suicide, nervous breakdown, illness, violence, and madness as symptoms of a gender-determined response to the tensions and ambiguities inherent in Antillean "transcoloniality."

While most of French-Caribbean women's novels focus on the dilemmas confronted by Afro-Caribbean female characters, writers such as Jacqueline Manicom, Laure Moutoussamy, Maryse Condé, and Arlette Minatchy-Bogat have created important narrative spaces for the inclusion of the experiences of Francophone Indo-Caribbean women and *dougla* or mixed race Indo-African men and women to broaden the scope of créolité's ethnic and gendered negotiations of French-Caribbean identity. Créolité assumes the possibility of framing a national identity, or totality (Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau 1990, 892), to uniformly represent the French Caribbean. Accordingly, the Créolistes

consider the designation "Creole" as the only suitable characterization for the diverse populations of the French Caribbean (893); all subjective particularities are neutralized in a common, homogenous "melting pot" of Caribbean sameness. Consequently, they assimilate Indo-Caribbean identity into a dominant cultural and ideological model despite the movement's intended engagement with multiple difference as part of its ideological schema. As Myriam Rosser argues, "Créolité turns out to be a category that sublimates differences—of ethnicity as well as of gender and of class—in order to promote an organic vision of a whole, harmonious community" (1998, 476). In addition, créolité has ironically retained an Afro-centered imaginary as its primary locus of inspiration and normative ideal despite claims to the contrary. Peripheral engagements with Indianness and other minority ethnicities such as Chinese, Lebanese, and Syrian have resulted in the further Othering and exoticism of these cultures as folkloric objects of local color in the absence of "relational" theorizing. As Beverly Ormerod affirms, "the theory of Creoleness also concerns the content of literary works, maintaining that Creole fiction should express the true experience and the collective voice of the Martinican working class in all its diversity: multiracial and interracial. Here the greatest challenge has perhaps been to avoid existing stereotypes when depicting racially mixed individuals or members of minority groups" (1998, 3–4).

Notable exceptions include Raphaël Confiant, to a certain extent, and women writers such as Condé, Bébel-Gisler, and Moutoussamy in particular. The women have critiqued créolité's apolitical, essentialized, and fixed paradigms of representation as an inadequate means of addressing Caribbean difference in terms of ethnicity, racialized power dynamics, and gender. For Condé, creolization is a site of perturbation and violence rather than assumed harmony or unproblematic cultural synchronicity. The desire for sameness is transformed into "a community of differences that must be negotiated and tested, in the midst of, in some cases, intransigent conflicts and power differences" (Smyth 2002, 11). Condé's interest in creolization lies in its creation of discordant alliances and liminal constituencies that both reflect and refract French-Caribbean subjectivity. The character Razyé in *La migration des coeurs* is an example of such rupture.

Créolité Represents Indianité

Raphaël Confiant calls himself a recently converted Hinduized Creole ("je suis devenu hindouiste créole" [Mirthil 2004, 2]) after receiving the prestigious *Prix des Amériques insulaires et de la Guyane* for his recent novel *La Panse du chacal*. This novel focuses on the exilic passages of Indians in Martinique during the nineteenth century, as recreated through Confiant's childhood memories. He

observed Indian estate workers and their cultural rituals on his paternal grandfather's property in Macédoine and on neighboring white plantations (Mirthil 2004, 2). Bemoaning the fact that no Créoliste before him had chosen to represent Indians in any significant way in Martinican literature, Confiant felt impelled to celebrate the rich heritage of Indians and their contributions to Martinique's cultural landscape through food, music, madras cloth, and language (Mirthil 2004, 3). At the same time, Confiant refuses to acknowledge the presence of a distinctive Indo-Caribbean tradition in Martinique when he absorbs it into a broader Creole framework.

Confiant states that Indianness is merely a facet of a dominant Creoleness since the descendants of the original Indian immigrants are more Creole today than Indian.[1] He thereby effaces the traces of Indian memory in a hegemonic discourse that denies Indian historicity in the Antilles. The novel's languages are primarily French and Creole, but by peppering the novel with Tamil words for local flavor, Confiant unwittingly colludes with colonialism's stereotypical representations of "exotic" foreign cultures that nevertheless continue to remain on the cultural periphery in twenty-first century Martinique, despite créolité's credo of cultural symbiosis. Does créolité orientalize minority cultures as a way of "colonizing" difference through sameness and transparency? Does créolité unconsciously adopt the machinations of French policies of "integration" that undermine the relational process? Condé and Moutoussamy respond to some of these questions in their novels. While both authors critique the sense of representational closure advocated by créolité, they nevertheless favor an engagement with the open-ended dynamism of creolization even though both theories collude in their common inattention to gender.

Interrogating *Dougla* Identity

Laure Moutoussamy's *Passerelle de vie* (The Bridge of Life) marks a crucial intervention in these discourses on gender, race, and mixed-race affiliations through the protagonist Déméta, who problematizes French-Caribbean engagements with creolization, while inserting the necessary intersectional positionalities of *dougla* identity and *indianité*. In turn, Maryse Condé problematizes the positionality of *dougla* men, such as Razyé in *La Migration des coeurs*, to demonstrate how *dougla* men are reduced to stereotypes of bestiality and monstrosity when they resist categorization in reductive colonial paradigms of Caribbean identity. If *dougla* women are exoticized within these negating categories, *dougla* men are considered less than human by serving as a visible reminder of a prior taboo, the mixing of African and Indian blood streams. Concretizing the anxieties that result from "disruptive" notions of racial and ethnic absolutes in the colonial polity, the *dougla* man, in particular, challenges whiteness by disrupting

normative racial binaries between African black and colonial white. He further complicates this identity through his "ominous sexuality."

These interventions by Condé and Moutoussamy are particularly important given that *dougla* identity in the French Caribbean lacks the specific political, social, and cultural resonances of its Anglophone counterpart in Trinidad and Guyana, where it is articulated in terms of "*douglarization*," "*dougla* poetics," "*dougla* aesthetics," and "*dougla* in-betweeness" in the work of scholars such as Rhoda Reddock, Shalini Puri, Kamala Kempadoo, and others. Referring to *douglarization* in Trinidad, Grant Stoddard and Eve Cornwall argue, "the '*douglarization*' of Trinidadian culture can be read as a form of creolization, but as a form of creolization in its most general and inclusive sense which decenters the African origins of Creole culture and foregrounds the ongoing syncretic process of cultural formation. It also highlights the power struggles inherent in those processes" (1999, 213). These theories have validated the inevitability of racial contact between Indians and Africans despite the somewhat problematic connotations of the word *dougla*, which denotes ethnic impurity.[2] At the same time, the term *dougla* has also seemed to be a little less polemical in its usage than the word *creole* attempting to allay fears about the cultural assimilation of Indians in a predominantly creolized social fabric in Trinidad. In addition, several Anglophone *dougla* writers, scholars, artists, and calypsonians such as Michelle Mohabeer, Kamala Kempadoo, Brother Marvin, and The Mighty *Dougla* have reclaimed the term *dougla* as a positive locus of identity, neutralizing its ambivalence into a more affirming marker of Caribbean postcoloniality. As Kempadoo asserts, "the empowerment of the concept of the 'dogla' could indeed be a way forward . . . It is a way to give voice to experiences, perspectives and standpoints which are not reflected in the existing paradigms" (1991, 11).

The absence of such a theoretical framework in the Francophone context has consequently marginalized the presence of biological *douglas* who are omitted from discussions of Antillean identity either as *chappé* or *échappé coolie* in Martinique or *bata coolie* in Guadeloupe. This omission has also impeded a truly prismatic reading of Francophone Caribbeanness through the lack of cultural and theoretical "intimacy" between the shared experiences of Indians and Africans in terms of labor exploitation and the specific historical conditions of indenture and slavery.[3] Although the use of the term *dougla* in the French-Caribbean context can appear to be a semantic imposition remaining alien to the region's politics of naming, it nevertheless offers a more affirming locus of diasporic identification in the absence of satisfactory nomenclature in Martinique and Guadeloupe. In Martinique, the term *échappé coolie* evokes the ambiguity of double entendre, whereby the escape (*s'échapper*) from coolie servitude as a form of resistance to subalternity or *négrité* also connotes an escape

from or disavowal of one's Indian historicity at the same time. This ambiguity is further compounded by bastardization (*bata*) in Guadeloupe, thereby revealing the inadequacies of both French and Creole to appropriately name this constituency. Until these languages convincingly recreate themselves through "indeterminate" vocabularies that extend beyond literalness, the term *dougla* represents the only viable alternative to characterize this identity. As a signifier of diasporic affinity and postmodern subjectivity, the word *dougla* temporarily unites the Anglophone and French islands in a trans-Caribbean linguistic rapprochement accepted by some and rejected by others on both sides of the Caribbean "divide."

In this chapter, I would like to determine whether the *dougla* quest for identity leads to an avowal or disavowal of one's mixed-race heritage. How do French-Caribbean women writers represent *dougla* difference in the absence of literary, political, and cultural points of reference? What is the link between psychological exile and truncated roots as symptoms of negated identity and the internalization of racialized paradigms of self-expression? For example, the female protagonist of Jacqueline Manicom's *Mon examen de blanc*, who ironically bears the Indian name Madévi (the great goddess), betrays her alienation through an initial and overt negation of her Indian ancestry. She yearns to lactify her skin through psychological associations with racial dominance.[4] In Laure Moutoussamy's *Passerelle de vie*, the question of psychic alienation is further complicated by tropes of illness and exile as the only grid to interrogate these "alternative" identities located within the racialized spectrum of Europe and the homeland Martinique. Condé's Razyé conforms to stereotypical expectations of violent and debauched behavior to both contest and negate the stereotype of *dougla* men through the trope of baroque excess and opacity conceived in terms of the self's resistance to colonial phenotypecasting. Consequently, how do the political realities of colonialism (Condé) and departmentalization (Moutoussamy) further negate the affirmation of these identities that do not necessarily include whiteness as a dominant racial signifier? Are questions of creolization destabilized when Africa and India displace European whiteness as primary reference points? What are the implications of such a displacement, and how do they manifest themselves in narrative form, especially in women's writing?

Passerelle de vie and *La migration des coeurs* cover different time periods in Martinique and Guadeloupe respectively. However, they converge in their common preoccupation with questions of *dougla* identity and its place in the racial spectrum of the French Caribbean. Moutoussamy's novel is a contemporary "coming to consciousness" story of a *dougla* woman from Martinique who leaves home for the insecurity of exile in France. She leads the life of an actress immersed in French culture surrounded by European friends from France and

Germany. Her affair with a German man reveals all the tensions inherent in a white man and woman of color relationship, even though the couple seeks solace in each other's company to combat loneliness, alienation, and exile. The death of a common friend named Willy nevertheless triggers a wave of nostalgic memories. Willy's death "shocks" Déméta into remembering her own father's demise and her inability to spend his dying moments with him. Death ironically becomes a point of motivation to connect the protagonist with her repressed Indian heritage as she reflects on her ambivalent identity as a *dougla* from Martinique, and a partial French citizen in Europe due to the laws of departmentalization. Moutoussamy's novel situates the protagonist in a conflicted space created by a confounding landscape of historical erasure, cultural invalidation, rejection, and European exoticism. Forced to identify as a black woman based on the visibility of her racialized difference in Europe, where "elle ne passait pas inaperçue" (Moutoussamy 2002, 119), [she did not pass unnoticed],[5] Déméta's search for self inscribes itself within the alienating politics of Otherness. Alterity accentuates the precariousness of a nonwhite biraciality and simultaneously reveals the erasure of her Indian heritage. The successful fruition of her quest is thereby contingent upon the recovery of the obscured Indian past that can only be reconciled after the death of her father and the invalidation of colonial and nationalist[6] categories of acceptable and unacceptable citizenship. In other words, Déméta has to reconcile with her father's memory and feelings of guilt for having missed his funeral in Martinique. She must also negotiate her displacement in spaces that oblige her to masquerade her identity in acts of posturing or misidentifications with French and German referents.

In *La migration des coeurs*, Condé presents a nineteenth century Caribbean reworking of Emily Brontë's eighteenth century classic novel *Wuthering Heights*. Using a polyphonic narrative style that is inclusive of multiple voices and points of view, Condé favors a shifting, translocational perspective as a point of diasporic connection between the Americas (Cuba, Guadeloupe, Marie Galante, and Dominica) during a period of class conflict, political uprising, and racial unrest. The novel begins in the late 1890s with the return to Guadeloupe of the *dougla* protagonist Razyé who has just spent three years in exile fighting as a mercenary in the Spanish-American War in Cuba. The voyage back to Guadeloupe is prompted by his desire for revenge against Aymeric de Linsseuil, the head of a prominent *béké* family of white planters responsible for seducing his childhood love, Cathy Gagneur, with white culture, privilege, and the coveted possibility of whitening her brown mulatta skin by marriage. Against the backdrop of thwarted love, passion, incest, disease, revenge, racism, sexism, and class prejudice, the novel highlights the colonial fear of miscegenation and its obsession with pure and impure blood. As Françoise Lionnet states, "Condé's

pages convey searingly the fears and anxieties that racial proximity engendered in that unstable era, with its charged atmosphere of hatred and suspicion, its ideologies of degeneration, and the transcolonial desires and disavowals that miscegenation provoked" (2002, 68). The novel consequently dramatizes the traumatic tensions of creolization and the violence of cultural contact together with the ill-fated consequences of such encounters.

* * *

Maryse Condé's textual poetics embrace a transcontinental imaginary spanning the geographical expanses of Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas to engage in a truly transformative and disruptive negotiation of Caribbean identity. Refusing to be limited by the conventional mappings of Caribbean identity politics in terms of race, gender, class, language, sexuality, location, and ideological affiliations, Condé subscribes to a subversive textuality that contests pre-established categories of identification through disorder, discursive nomadism or narrative free play, migrating notions of home, and a borderless rhizomatic positionality defying the "rootedness" of colonial maps and their territorial markings. As Barbour and Herndon state, "Condé reiterates in numerous conversations that travel, the nomadic life allows one to spread out, like a rhizome, to be open to others and to continue to feed the creative imagination" (2006, 9). Believing that spatial, narrative, and racial transgressions favor the liberation of the writer's creativity, Condé imagines a "brave new world"[7] in which her characters ironically search for their identity in placelessness and diasporic movement instead of within the security of cultural and racial origin. Characters such as Veronica (*Hérémakhonon*), Razyé (*La migration des coeurs*), Ludovic (*Desirada*), Sancher (*Traversée de la mangrove*) are all "mobile, geographical nomads, expatriate wanderers, symbolically in exile, or immigrants who later attempt to return 'home.' They help make up the new communities and ethnoscapes that challenge both our conventional perceptions of nations and borders and our comprehension of cultural references" (Barbour and Herndon 2006, 15). Condé's protagonists embody the politics of dislocation by dispelling idealized notions of mythical origin centered on essentialized racialisms and harmonized communal identifications. They situate themselves in a space outside the norms of social acceptability and cultural relativity as the proverbial antiheroes and antiheroines defying representation and facile racial categorization. In fact, Condé's characters encourage a particular reading against the grain to encourage new ways of seeing and becoming. The discursive heterogeneity of Condé's narratives reflects the Caribbean's sociocultural and racial polyvalence with its omissions, erasures, conjunctions, deflections, and "unexpected affiliations" (Mardorossian 2005, 28).

Condé insists on literary Relation in her multilayered narratives (Larrier 2006b, 145) to challenge the theoretical impasses confronting Antillean literature's overdetermined ideological dependence on France as a primary locus of influence in terms of language, identity, economics, and political power. She favors the more synchronic relations that emerge from the shock of colonial, cultural, and social contacts within and beyond the Caribbean and the global South, resulting in other forms of hitherto "unrecognized" mixings. Contesting the nonrepresentative value of the marginal or the peripheral voice, Condé's literary preoccupations focus on liminal constituencies such as the mixed-race Razyé, whose insertion into the narrative mainstream becomes a "violent" act displacing the hegemony of the racist, class-determined plantocracy depicted in *La migration des coeurs*.

Razyé's social and racial marginality subjects him to a double Othering, both within colonial race categorizations and in contemporary literary criticism of the novel. Certain literary critics have obscured Razyé's racial complexity by either ignoring it completely through a generic "mixed race" label or by subsuming it under dominant characterizations of uncomplicated blackness, as demonstrated later by Moutoussamy's protagonist.[8] Carine Mardorossian states, "as a black Creole of unmixed African ancestry, Razyé (Heathcliff's counterpart) is a member of the lowest class" (2005, 29). Mardorossian's unwillingness to problematize Razyé's *dougla* identity is symptomatic of créolité's program to universalize difference through a normative affiliation with creoleness. She unwittingly undermines Condé's assertion that Caribbean identities and experiences create disorder by simultaneously resisting "translation" in exclusionary racial paradigms; these identities locate themselves beyond the limits of signification. As Condé asserts, "my books are concerned less with race and much more with the complexities of overlapping cultures, with conditions of diaspora, and with cross-racial, cross-generational encounters" (Apter 2001, 90), Accordingly, the figure of the *dougla* as the embodiment of these transcolonial liminalities contests essentialism in a nonconforming narrative that positions the French Caribbean as a site of transgressive impossibility, uncertainty, and unpredictability. In such a state of flux and indetermination, identity cannot be assumed unilaterally or celebrated naively without seriously engaging with the attendant crises of economic, political, and social destabilization resulting from colonialism and subsequent departmentalization.[9]

In the novel, this uncertainty is represented in terms of Razyé's monstrosity and perceived barbarism. His physical appearance betrays a certain animal-like quality, whereby his unidentifiable mixed race origins associate him with a state of "primitive" subhumanity. The young Razyé is introduced to the reader as the pet plaything of Hubert Gagneur, a white planter. Razyé represents a racial

anomaly in the absence of recognizable phenotype, "a dirty, repulsive, seven- or eight-year-old boy, completely naked, with a well-developed sex, believe me; a little black boy or Indian half-caste. His skin was black, and his tangled curly hair reached down his back" (Condé 1998, 21). The combination of his black skin and long curly hair concretizes Razyé's physical difference, which is magnified by the size of his penis. The exaggerated penis often points to a sign of hypersexuality and savagery. Razyé remains immobilized in and by the racialized gaze that confines him to a representational frieze. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon refers to this form of objectification as a "crushing objecthood" in which the man of color will "experience his being through others" (1967, 109). Fanon refers to a particular way of being seen and dehumanized by racist eyes that reduce the person of color to the zero sum total of fragmented body parts as evidence of physical imperfection or deformity. At the same time, Razyé's overemphasized penis symbolizes the very root of colonial anxiety, a "monstrous" appendage capable of destabilizing existing sexual hierarchies and undermining the hegemony of whiteness within the colonial social order.

In her work on Condé's novel *Célanire Cou-Coupé*, Dawn Fulton equates social monstrosity with the unrepresentable, "positioned outside the familiar world, presenting a challenge to that world and disturbing its boundaries. As an outsider, the character thus affords the possibility of interrogating the social and cultural codes that exclude [her] functioning in many ways as the very embodiment of the fears and anxieties particular to [her] historical context" (2006, 201). The body's monstrosity defies social conventions by remain impervious to any form of accountability for its actions and appearance. This "monstrosity" is visibly constructed by the body's fetishized nudity, just as Razyé's name paradoxically reveals the ambiguity of nomenclature and origin. The novel highlights this ambivalence when Razyé proclaims, "But I have no home. I was found in Guadeloupe as naked as the day I was born, on the barren heath and cliffs—the *razyés*—hence my name" (Condé 1998, 9). The disassociation between name, location, and identity indicates a disrupted or traceless genealogy without inherent kinship or parental affiliations, the very foundation of colonial lineage and proprietary rights. The character's homelessness, symbolized by the bare heath and forbidding cliffs, underscores his simultaneous territorial dispossessions and deprivation of subjectivity. He thereby provides a naked or blank slate on which coloniality inscribes its negating imprint of the Other's supposed savagery.

Colonial impositions on the racialized body are destined to recreate it as a deviated caricature of a master image. As Hubert Gagneur's favored project, Razyé is transformed into the proverbial monster representing the negative or dark side of "white positivity" in the colonial power play of difference.

Introduced into the world of the white planter and his family residence at L'Engoulvent "on a day of wind, terror and rain" (Condé 1998, 22) Razyé's menacing nakedness seems to be "naturally" associated with the weather's malevolence. The novel demonstrates how coloniality has the "unnatural" power to mold subaltern identity within negating tropes of experimental recreation and "representational alteration." Consequently, the subaltern body becomes the ultimate colonial fetish, a manipulated object of attraction and repulsion that both defends and defies hegemony through its subversive resistance to transparency.

The body's nudity becomes the very site of its transgressive potential when it reveals the "darkness" of the colonial project in an inverted binary. Concretizing the fears and obsessions of the colonial psyche when confronted with the threat of miscegenation and the impending destruction of colonial racial and social exclusiveness, the naked body displays its open rejection of social decorum by its visibly intimidating manhood (even in childhood). The imposing penis is consequently capable of castrating white masculinity and minimizing its scepter of authority through the dissemination of the subaltern's sperm in uncontrollable acts of sexual creolization with women. In so doing, the dispossessed body reclaims territoriality by "marking" its physical presence throughout the social and geographical landscape of Guadeloupe as a way of redefining and displacing colonial routings in the Caribbean. These spatial alterations "re-instate what colonial history has threatened to erase: an experience, immersed within history, that confronts the reader from within the fictional text as a model for a subjectivity yet-to-be-achieved" (Nesbitt 2003, 194).

The Body as History

The *dougla's* as-yet-to-be-achieved subjectivity nevertheless situates itself at a mediating point of racial confluence and ideological fracturing between Indian and African histories in the Caribbean. The novel reveals the consequences of this mixing thus: "His skin was too black, that shiny black they call Ashanti, and his hair hung in curls like those of an Indian half-caste, the bata-Zindien" (Condé 1998, 7). The perceived illegitimacy of Razyé's presence, qualified by the term *bata* or bastard, highlights the traditional misconceptions of *douglas* as ethnic bastards and products of impure crossbreeding as a further disavowal of subaltern historicities in the colonial imaginary. The use of narrative stereotypes to characterize *douglas*, and *dougla* men in particular, becomes a reflection on the social limitations placed on this constituency "located outside the boundaries of the racialized group . . . In other words, people who live outside the boundaries of what we know as racial and ethnic groups do not exist, according to dominant perceptions" (Kempadoo 1999, 105). These borderland

identities are disallowed precisely because they call for a reassessment of existing categories of racial distinction through their interstitial positionality. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the characterization of bastardization is equated uniquely with the Indian component of the *dougla's* identity; his African roots invite associations with the royal lineage from Ghana despite Razyé's disfavored working class status. In other words, his blackness constitutes an acceptable or "unequivocal" physical attribute in nineteenth century colonial race politics (Mardorossian 2005, 36), whereas his more repressed physical features are reduced to liminal traces of "other" historical experiences.

The *dougla's* racial bastardization complements a broader historical negation in the French Caribbean symbolized by Razyé's quest for his absent mother who could either be Indian or African. Razyé laments this loss of origin: "Why didn't he have a maman like all the other human beings? Even the slaves in the depths of their hell knew the womb that had carried them. He wondered what face he should give to his dreams and who was this mother he was never to know. Sometimes he told himself she was an Indian who had arrived in this land of exile and misfortune on board the *Aurélie*. Other times she was an African, treading the island paths in search of lost gods" (Condé 1998, 38). Razyé looks for the maternal roots of history hidden beneath colonial timelines and geographical routings as a more affirming locus of identification. The forced affiliation with the colonial stepmother creates an alienating origin locating France as a primary and exclusive origin in the determination of the subaltern's identity. The mother's elusiveness and unknown origins confine Razyé to an exilic identity in the absence of a precolonial mother history. This identity created by the colonial encounter straddles two rival cultures that remain equally foreign to each other in a self-canceling claim to authenticity. The novel exposes these exilic tensions in disconnected timelines between the past, present, and future as a particular Caribbean predicament, wherein "the Caribbean community lives without a sense of its own history in a place where everyday experience does not fit into a continuum between past, present and future . . . The Caribbean has not formed its own counter narrative . . . because the islands do not have their own pre-colonial tradition with which to resist the Western narrative" (Lee 2002, 166).[10] While Condé herself is critical of mythologized origins justifying unitary or exclusionary identifications and mixed race disaffiliation, her novels nevertheless focus on the trauma experienced by psychologically and physically alienated protagonists who search for subjectivity in the absence of a supporting "mother community." These exilic nonbeginnings deprived of umbilical bonds complement the characters" social ostracism in a hostile, isolated environment "on the horizon, the island of La Désirade, isle of lepers and outcastes like Razyé himself" (Condé 1998, 36).

Razyé's sense of exile expresses itself in his diasporic wanderings, solitude, and the "acting-out" of unconventional behavior. He tries to create his own nonconforming language of subjectivity unmediated by the existing colonial narratives. These discourses confine him to the social periphery, a liminal space inhabited by disenfranchised Indian estate workers as well. The following quotation highlights the liminal spaces occupied by Indians: "From that day on Justin forbade Razyé to set foot inside the house and confined him to the fields with the Indians . . . That was where he now spent his nights, after having toiled with the Indians and eaten his root vegetables out of the same gourd" (Condé 1998, 26–27). The marginal spaces shared by Razyé and the Indians provide further evidence of the commodification and negation of the Indian labor presence in colonial schemes and later, in the Caribbean's master discourses on identity. These hegemonically devised spatial hierarchies negate the establishment of permanent roots for subaltern groups in Guadeloupe, even though Indians provide the country's root sustenance as indicated in the novel.

The Colonial Wound

The *dougla* problematizes the infliction of the "colonial wound" (Mignolo 2005, 53) on the body in a series of historical ruptures that both reflect and refract the experiences of the subaltern. This gaping wound reflects the violence of contact and the trauma of history symbolized by the searing of the flesh, and the subsequent efforts to suture these wounds through creative self-positioning. Associating this wound with the pain, humiliation, frustration, and anger expressed by the subaltern as a response to continued marginality, Mignolo frames the colonial wound in terms of racialized discourses that reinforce coloniality's disempowering influence. At the same time, the wound creates spaces for new forms of knowledge to emerge as a response and reaction to continued marginalization (Condé 1998, 97–98). In other words, how does the body speak its pain as a means of articulating its subjective text in a non-conventional, "irreverent" language, wherein irreverence resists conformity in a "radical breaking of the rules," according to Celia Britton (2004, 45)? Does irreverence become a form of "subalternspeak" expressing an inner landscape of tormented emotions, conflicted aspirations, resistance, and social disregard? How does the subaltern speak in a situation of racial and political dominance without subscribing to the hypocritical niceties of the colonial tongue in the absence of an identifying mother tongue? Can Razyé resist colonial signification by searching for an outer body and ultra cosmic affiliation found in Chango worship for example, as highlighted in the novel? These founding questions lead to the character's diasporic journeys across physical space and astral time in search for other signifying systems that will resist immobilization in confining human

paradigms. His quest for the immeasurable expanse of the cosmos reveals the limitations of the earth-bound preoccupations of colonialism reflected in the French title that suggests a migration beyond the physicality of space and presence. As Lionnet claims, "the title of the novel suggests an other-worldly voyage or passage" (2002, 73).

At the same time, the colonial wound's epistemological fracture in prevailing systems of thought creates a symbolic space to insert an oppositional or insurrectional discourse. This discourse is capable of mirroring the discontinuities and fragmentation inherent in the process of rewording the Caribbean from an anticolonial perspective. In the novel, Condé inscribes this search for new forms of representation within a Caribbean and Latin American determined "neo-baroque aesthetics"[11] defined by Omar Calabrese as "those categories that powerfully 'excite' the ordering of the system, that destabilize part of the system by creating turbulence and fluctuations between it and thus suspending its ability to decide on values" (1992, 25–26). This poetics of suspended or destabilized primary referents negates the authoritative scope of colonial values and their fixed hierarchical racial and social categories through a strategy of colonial deterritorrialization, also found in Glissant's theory of the rhizome. By displacing the hegemonic center by a series of asymmetrical movements, the neo-Baroque excess, according to Calabrese, "throws doubt upon an existing order, as well as the possibility to destroy it or to construct a new order. All societies or systems of ideas, in any case, accuse of excess that which they cannot or do not want to absorb . . . Each order isolates itself and defines excess by forbidding it" (58).

Coloniality's projection of excess onto the racialized and sexualized Other becomes a concomitant strategy of colonial self-distinction and racial profiling. Criminalized by race and a lack of social distinction, the *dougla* concretizes the ambivalent stereotype of the socially degenerate and sexually depraved man when he indulges in the hedonistic pleasures of sex, gambling, alcoholism, and violence with total disregard for socially defined norms of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. In fact, his "excess" ironically become a reflection of the colonial excesses that vandalize Guadeloupe and a radicalized politics of the unassimilable resisting colonization within prescribed social boundaries. As the novel indicates, Razyé "was a volcano, a hurricane, an earthquake, a nigger stud with his iron spike pointing between his legs" (Condé 1998, 72). Positioned as a naturally disruptive and destabilizing force, Razyé "violates" colonial control; this transgression is equated with the demonic when the subject-in-violation undermines coloniality by exposing its hypocritical double standards. In other words, by acting out the stereotype of imposed deviance, the *dougla* ingests the stereotype before spitting it out with a volcanic force capable of disordering

social organization. He consequently projects all the colonial evils that represent the illicit, morally reprehensible, and depraved aspects of human nature in a specular inversion of the normative. In so doing, he thwarts the carefully preserved ideals of colonial exemplarity by exposing the different forms of pathology that are demonstrated by the white characters who are ultimately consumed by sickness, disease, arrested development, and premature death. The novel reveals the "nervous condition" of the colonials thus: "Marie-France La Rinardière had the figure and waist of a ten-year-old, the complexion of a tallow candle and white-blond hair that fell right down her back. She perspired and was ready to faint at the slightest effort. For generations the sons and daughters of La Rinardière had been carried off by tuberculosis, and there was no counting the number of tombs scattered down one side of the plantation of La Grivelle in the shade of the casuarina-trees" (Condé 1998, 28–29). In contrast, Razyé's excessive sexuality represents the ultimate threat to the colonial order when he inseminates the Caribbean landscape with life; ironically, the colonials foresee the death of their own dominance through tuberculosis and miscegenation.

Beyond Duality: Searching for Chango

The novel highlights the intimate connection between the Yoruba *orisha* (deity) Chango and Razyé, whose search for a more validating identity leads to the spiritual world of the ancestors and their complex divination systems; these systems of thought transcend reductive human binaries. Syncretized with the Catholic female saint Santa Barbara, Chango embodies the male and female principle of life as a form of "total" identity transcending the limits of gender liminality, race, and class bias in a diasporic and transcultural context. As Miguel de la Torre states, "Among the orishas, Chango is the most human, displaying all the complexities of human passion and emotion. For this reason, he is much loved by the people" (2004, 65). Razyé's identification with this powerful orisha, who has complete control over the forces of nature, especially thunder and lightening, reveals his need for a protecting spirit in a hostile world where he suffers excommunication for his racial difference "as if his parents had not bothered to give him a saint's name on the day of his christening" (Condé 1998, 8). The deprivation of a patron saint's illumination at birth reflects a disallowed identity distinguishing "civilized Catholic" from "heathen savage" in power-inflected differentials of good and evil, darkness and light manipulated by colonial religiosity. Razyé's affiliation with Chango is based precisely on his resistance to Christian ideology that characterizes him as demonic and bestial in the absence of an institutionalized baptism. The novel underscores popular perceptions of Razyé's demonic qualities. "Demon—in my opinion he doesn't deserve a better name" (111). As the protector of identity and the dispenser of justice (de la

Torre 2004, 64), Chango offers a more affirming mirror for the *dougla* subaltern criminalized collectively by whites, mulattos, Indians, and Africans in the novel because of his inability to identify fully with any particular ethnic group.

Consequently, the pursuit of Chango symbolizes a search for power and agency in a disempowering environment that only privileges the respectability of whiteness. Razyé exclaims, "If I were white everyone would respect me! Justin like all the rest" (Condé 1998, 30). Spurned by his childhood love and soul mate Cathy Gagneur on account of his "primitive" ancestry (13), Razyé leaves Guadeloupe for Cuba, where he joins the mercenary forces of the Spanish army in the Spanish-American War of 1898. His less than heroic actions as a mercenary connect him with a group of *lucumi* (followers of Chango) whose chief priest (*babalawo*) Melchior possesses the formidable ability to communicate with the ancestral world. Several studies on Chango worship claim that the deity's eminence is based on his authoritative powers of divination (González-Wippler 1989, 40). This secret wisdom is needed to penetrate the mysteries of the unknown. Similarly, the word *lucumi* itself refers to the descendants of formerly enslaved Yoruba people in Cuba and other parts of the Caribbean diaspora who resisted the permanent chains of slavery by fighting for emancipation. Consequently, divination and resistance symbolize Chango's credo of worship inscribed within the politics of insurrection against oppression and discrimination. Razyé seeks communion with a diasporic community of rebels and other nonconformists who are in search of a more far-reaching planetary consciousness or knowledge needed to overthrow existing power inequities between the colonials and the "wretched of the earth," (307) as Fanon would state. This knowledge of the ancestors and the spiritual world represents another form of rationality displacing the primacy of reason from the pedestal of colonial might to the daily struggles of subaltern right.

Melchior recognizes in Razyé an earthly manifestation of Chango's more ambivalent qualities of machismo, bravado, and unrestrained physical strength. Miguel Barnet describes Chango thus: "He is a womanizer and drinker, quarrelsome, courageous and daring; made for challenges and dares, proud of his masculine virtues, boastful of his strength and manly beauty, *castigador* [a heart breaker] (1997, 91). The Chango model of excessive sexuality compensates Razyé's vilified masculinity situated in a ambivalent "fatal attraction" dialectic within colonial schemes. "Yet, deep down, the ladies on board fell victim to that inexplicable, mysterious attraction white women feel for the black male" (Condé 1997, 16). At the same time, if Razyé penetrates coloniality in the form of irreverent behavior toward white and mulatto women, his "politics of the reprehensible" as a strategy of self-identification nevertheless demystifies conventional standards of heroism. As Mardorossian asserts, "Condé objects

to any process of recovery that glosses over the vulgar and immoral aspects of Antillean societies. She offers an 'aesthetics of the reprehensible' that advocates both judgement and acceptance and refuses idealized heroes" (2005, 34). By refusing to mythologize her characters, Condé humanizes the stereotype of infallible mythical heroes or heroines by exposing their complementary and competing failings and affirmations. She thereby indicates that a violated history can only produce traumatized subjects whose perceived immorality or sexual license betrays the symptoms of an unsettled traumatic experience. As Calabrese affirms, "Excessive sexuality, therefore, is not only considered in itself for what it conveys referentially, but also as a 'provocation' to overcome the limits of current social principles. This is shown by the way in which excessive sexuality has always symbolized something else" (1992, 59–60). The "something else" referred to by Calabrese goes beyond referentially determined signification, the nonpermissible language of the historically dispossessed. As a victim of history, Razyé's characterization exposes the inner landscape of a primordial identity crisis that plummets the French Caribbean into a state of limbo, the no-man's-land of a nonhistory, as indicated by Glissant in *Caribbean Discourse* (Lee 2002, 168).

Razyé's excessive sexuality also reveals itself in his obsessive and absolute love for Cathy Gagneur as further evidence of trauma in a history of loss and absence. Razyé's desire to possess Cathy both physically in the temporal world and spiritually after her death is an attempt to claim the impossible, in this case, a composite identity linking Cathy's partial blackness with his own. The creation of an undifferentiated blackness resists truncation even though this identity is subjected to the racism of colonial race ideology. As the novel indicates, "How could he live without Cathy? Can a human being live without his soul" (Condé 1998, 99). Razyé's search for ontological wholeness involves a broader epistemological union between his fragmented African self and Cathy's "large aubergine-coloured nipples that bore the mark of her black blood" (70). The claiming of blackness is an act of political assertion complementing the need to fill the void of the French Caribbean's fragmented history. At the same time, the quest for total identity merging two isolated components of blackness across the lines of gender, class, and racialization represents an impossible act revealed in Cathy's internalized racism. She says, "I could never, never marry Razyé. It would be too degrading. It would be like starting to live all over again like our ancestors, the savages in Africa!" (13). Cathy's rejection of Razyé conditioned by her own psychological colonization is further evidence of the ways in which coloniality denies subjectivity to the colonized by denigrating their origins. Her temporary ascent into the world of whiteness by marriage is nevertheless followed by a rapid descent into illness and death, thereby dashing

Razyé's illusions of expressing his "illicit" love in a racist milieu. This disallowed union becomes a source of torment for both partners (despite Cathy's repulsion of Razyé), even though they produce a child whose paternity is repeatedly questioned throughout the text. In addition, Razye's blackness can only be achieved at the expense of his indianness as both entities remain mutually exclusive to indicate the social and racial impasses in his life.

Similarly, when Melchior detects Razyé's unique receptivity to the other world, indicated by his likeness to the *egun*,[12] or ancestors, he also recognizes the comportment of a body in pain. Nick Nesbitt associates pain with the (body) language of repression when he states, "In a world in which individual experience has grown fractured and painful, the aesthetic recollection and representation of lived pain constructs a realm in which that full experience, which was never truly lived before its repression, can reappear" (2003, 196). Pain represents the psychic residue seeking expression in a liminal "arche-space" that exists beyond physical expression, and within the interstices of the unconscious. For this reason, Razyé seems to be more connected to the realm of the dead than the living (Condé 1998, 89) when he looks for a sense of place within the restlessness of limbo. The novel describes this condition thus: "On meeting him, you knew that you had come face to face with a soul that could find no rest, neither day nor night. Melchior could not help comparing him to a spirit of the dead, an *egun*, but an *egun* prevented by an abominable crime from joining the other invisible spirits in the afterlife and who wandered restlessly among the living" (7–8).

Razyé's restive state reveals the trauma of truncation located in his mixed race roots. The repetitive enactment of an initial violation creates a cycle of unresolved aggressions that prevents the *dougla* from mediating his fragmented identity. Moreover, his access to a final catharsis concealed within the secrets of the afterlife remains thwarted by the unexpected murder of Melchior. The priest can no longer show him how to negotiate the perilous crossings between life and death as a key to self-mastery. Unable to reach a state of peace and tranquillity, Razyé is consequently condemned to perpetual errancy like Laure Moutoussamy's protagonist Déméta for having imbibed the crimes of history in the name of cane (slavery and indenture). Even death does not offer an escape from the destabilizing historicity of cane to demonstrate how the *dougla's* exilic condition repeatedly confronts the impossible task to "discern the indiscernible" (Condé 1998, 273).

Exilic Subjectivity

In *Passerelle de vie*, the protagonist Déméta is also situated at the confluence of two exilic passages as the daughter of an Indian father and a black mother.

Exiled from an essential part of her identity due to the machinations of history, Déméta experiences an existential void in her life characterized by feelings of incompletion and rootlessness as evidence of a nomadic errancy or search for a sense of place. As the novel reveals, "tout ce vagabondage de l'esprit vers les îles prouvait bien que Déméta se languissait dans la grande métropole . . . qu'elle n'avait pas encore ses vrais repères" (Moutoussamy 2002, 121) [Her spirit that kept wandering back to the islands proved without a doubt that Déméta was languishing in the big metropolis . . . that she still hadn't found her true bearings; my translation]. Déméta's search for ancestral affiliations ironically locates her within a no-man's-land of existential disaffiliations to produce a physical and psychological crisis embattling the self in an unresolved internal and external conflict. These disjunctions create a divided self that remains cognizant of its own foreignness as it mediates cultural and racial codes within a dominant European polity. Valérie Orlando describes the "disconnected isolation" (2003, 40) that these heroines experience when racialized and cultural differences marginalize them "on the borders of the norm, the accepted, and the nominative of cultural definition" (2003, 34). Relegated to peripheral representation, Déméta's identity becomes a signifier of performative praxis, a spectacle to be objectified for and by European cultural consumption in the name of assimilationist politics and its subsequent obfuscation of origin(s).

The protagonist's profession as an actress represents the struggle to overcome the intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender. Her "acceptable" Caribbean blackness in France nevertheless remains confined to a stage and to men's sexual fantasies. The framing of blackness in the metropolis becomes a devise to regulate it within normative boundaries of sexual and racial exoticism. These borders immobilize the black female body within the controlling permanence of the male European gaze. This gaze "'fixes' the black female in her place, steadies her, in order to decode and comfortably recode her into its own system of representation" (Sharpley-Whiting 1999, 6). Encoded within the power dynamics of racialized binaries that eliminate any scope for ambiguity or nuance, the novel demonstrates how colonial and nationalist discourses collude in their search for purist origins within negating tropes of racial authenticity. While the colonial paradigm maintains the supremacy of whiteness by delineating the savage "look" (Moutoussamy 2002, 133) of Demeta's "primitive" beauty as she poses for a series of nude photographs to illustrate an art book titled *Bronze Beauty*, nationalist Indian and African politics within the Caribbean also negate racial plurality through fixed definitions of identity.

Moutoussamy's novel demonstrates how these identity politics are played out on the female body when it is forced to submit to patriarchal and colonizing tropes in a series of masquerades; at the same time, subterfuge also becomes

a strategy of defense revealed in the following quotation. "C'était la parade qu'elle avait trouvée pour se protéger de regrets éventuels sous la pression de coups bas" (Moutoussamy 2002, 135) [She found mascarading to be the only way to protect herself from future disappointment under the pressure of hard knocks; my translation]. Embroiled within the duplicitous game of "performing identity," Déméta's use of the artifice locates itself on two levels. On the one hand, it represents a source of alienation for the protagonist who must conform to a model of absolute blackness easily recognizable to the European eye, whereby "race, ethnicity, cultural distinctions are collapsed into one black/*nègre* stereotyped abyss" (Sharpley-Whiting 1999, 8). At the same time, this duplicity incorporates its own system of resistance to racial essentialisms in the search for new paradigms of definition. These models nevertheless expose a false sense of ancestry mediated by the imposition of a French genealogical timeline as a sign of Martinique's ambiguous status within the French cultural and political imaginary. As the novel indicates, "Dès son plus jeune âge, on lui avait beaucoup répété que ses ancêtres les Gaulois, habitaient des huttes en bois . . . etc." (Moutoussamy 2002, 159–60) [She had been repeatedly taught since childhood that her ancestors, the Gauls, lived in wooden huts . . . etc.; my translation].

Double Vision

The issue of imposed genealogies and ambiguous homeland affiliations raises questions about Martinique's departmentalization and the possibility of negotiating subjectivity within a socioeconomic and political power imbalance with France, as highlighted in Chapter 3. As H. Adlai Murdoch asserts, "For the DOMS of the French Caribbean, neither independent territories nor fully integrated entities of their ever-present Metropole, the persistent sense of double vision that has framed their outlook since the ambiguities of France's 1946 departmentalization law set them on an equal footing with the mainland sums up quite effectively the ironies and inconsistencies of this unique relationship" (2002/2003, 121). Martinique's insider and outsider relationship with France characterized by the sociohistorical and cultural duality of "doubling and alienation, exile and belonging" (Murdoch 2002/2003, 121–22) has favored the development of an estranged Antillean consciousness, also demonstrated by Pineau's characters. This exilic predicament seeks to mediate the parameters of belonging and nonbelonging within the metropole and the French-Caribbean department. As the motherland, or *mère patrie*, France imposes an inverted kinship system of enforced parental ties rooted in colonialism and subsequent departmentalization to chart misleading cartographies of location and ancestral origin. These dislocations are manifested on physical and existential levels

as revealed by the ambiguous desire and necessity to immigrate to France for better economic prospects, and the psychological alienation experienced by the departmental half-citizen as a result of this rupture. The novel describes Déméta's predicament thus: "Venue améliorer sa condition future dans la 'Mère Patrie,' qui lui avait été décrite comme généreuse, elle eut tôt fait de se remettre de tout rêve utopique et d'opter plutôt pour une manière de se défendre contre tout" (Moutoussamy 2002, 131) [Having come to improve her prospects in the "mother land" which had been described to her as generous, she had to quickly disabuse herself of every dream of utopia and choose self-protection as a defense against everything; my translation].

Déméta's restlessness and disconnection from her environment betray her feelings of exilic estrangement from self and location as her spirit searches for its bearings, "au-delà des montagnes, au-delà des mers, bien au-delà de l'Europe" (Moutoussamy 2002, 119) [Beyond the mountains, beyond the sea and way beyond Europe; my translation]. Ironically, feelings of displacement in France lead the protagonist to another source of filial misidentification represented by the fatherland Germany and a paternalistic relationship with a German named Hyronimus. Her partnership with a German in France betrays a founding need for exilic community based on the shared experience of foreignness and their common rejection by racist epithets as a "'sale boche' bien assorti avec sa 'sale négresse'" (127) [A dirty Kraut well-matched with his dirty negress; my translation]. The couple's social ostracism as a result of historical tensions and racial ambivalence reveals France's biases toward any form of alterity that threatens to "darken" its claim to racial purity or compromise its nationalist integrity by being reminded of crushing defeats inflicted by the Germans in World War Two. Further derided for betraying her departmental loyalty to France as a French subject, "avec Hyronimus le Germain, Déméta avait affronté sur le sol français des vexations bien plus inquiétantes" (126) [with the German Hyronimus, Déméta was forced to confront many troubling problems on French soil; my translation]. Déméta's characterization reveals the duplicity inherent in France's supposedly democratic "departmental protectionism" toward its former colonies. This policy establishes institutionalized hierarchies of preferential status in an ongoing policy of assimilation or anticreolization and "universal" subjectivity. The assimilated self manifests its disembodiment through racial and gendered subjugation within normative paradigms of universality, wherein "the linking of the disjunctures of alienation to an ethnic erasure . . . is implicitly linked to the hierarchies of departmentalization" (Murdoch (2002/2003, 136). Differentiated categories of acceptable and unacceptable universality punctuate a discriminatory French polity in the Caribbean based

on the ideology of making and unmaking the departmental subject through "the mask of division and doubling" (137).

The mask is further textured by the intervention of gender when Déméta's disembodiment within colonial and patriarchal structures of power reveals her own negation of blackness and mixed-race identity. She seeks validation and acceptance into mainstream culture with a white man whose social rejection by the French on the basis of race does not necessarily lead to an understanding of the dynamics of gender in his relationship with her. Hyronimus mediates Déméta's initiation into European culture through an inferiority-superiority dialectic. This cultural and gendered imbalance reduces her to the position of a social neophyte in need of "civilizing" under Hyronimus' tutelage. Hyronimus betrays his desire to "ground" Déméta in a subservient master and apprentice relationship; her in-between identity becomes a source of dislocation in the absence of a secure sense of self and provides the basis to assimilate her further within an alien culture that continues to accentuate her difference. In addition, her exilic origins betray a definite tentativeness in the absence of "identifiable" roots, as in the case of Condé's Razyé. Her Indianness and Africanness seem to negate each other in an unrequited paradigm of nonresolution. In other words, her *dougla* identity reveals the impossibility of synthesizing two irreconcilable histories when colonialism's binary logic creates negating historicities that nevertheless underscore European dominance. The loss of an ontological center motivates the protagonist's disorientation in the form of a borderline identity vacillating in a no-man's land to betray "a lost origin, the impossibility to take root, a rummaging memory, the present in abeyance" (Kristeva 1991, 7). This feeling of placelessness represents the very locus of the "foreigner's" disruptive spatiality in France symbolized by the absence of history and a simultaneous longing for historical subjectivity.

The Alienated Body

Déméta's sense of alienation subjugates her to the physical colonization of her body when she becomes the object of Hyronimus' study and critical evaluation. Her lack of a core identity makes her an open slate on which male desire inscribes a colonizing script of cultural refashioning, psychological manipulation, and physical alterations. As an object of colonial fantasy, Déméta is molded by Hyronimus' "free" will when he subjects her to a psychoanalytic study aimed at creating a colonized pedigree. The novel reveals his intentions thus: "Il a bien psychanalysé Déméta . . . Il ne s'inquiétait guère de savoir si cela convenait à Déméta" (Moutoussamy 2002, 137). [He had psychoanalyzed Déméta very well . . . He was not interested in finding out if this was convenient for Déméta; my translation]. By exercising free choice, "Moi, je t'ai choisie, je

suis bien avec toi, je ne désire pas de changement" (136) [I chose you, you are good for me, I do not want any changes; my translation], Hyronimus reveals his self-centeredness and ability to immobilize Déméta within the confines of his will. Despite his displacement in France, he can nevertheless maintain his privilege as a white European male who colludes with the dominant French polity in the marginalization of the sexualized and racialized subaltern. This collusion neutralizes his own sense of difference in France through his attempts to transform Déméta into a cultural anomaly. Déméta's miming of European culture positions her as a colonial caricature whose "entry" into European high culture validates the colonial norm and Hyronimus' civilizing role as Pygmalion. He is vested with the power to mold her life by a calculated choice. Hyronimus is determined to colonize Déméta's difference by subjugating her through sex and culture as a means of authenticating his own threatened identity as a disfavored German in France. The following quoations highlights Déméta's glaring difference thus: "Il est certain qu'en haute Bavière il n'avait pas eu l'occasion de voir de près une Antillaise" (124) [He is certain that he did not have the chance to see an Antillean woman at such close quarters in upper Bavaria; my translation].

Hyronimus represents the problematic aspects of male European choice that bases itself on a colonizing agenda of obsessive control and possessiveness. His claim to identify with Déméta's outsider status camouflages the strategy to incorporate this difference when he tries to alter her primal impressions through the psychoanalytical process. Capitalizing on Déméta's sense of inferiority toward white men based on the internalizing of dominant racist and sexist paradigms, "elle savait d'une manière sûre qu'elle n'avait pas ses capacités intellectuelles" (169) [she was certain that she didn't have his intellectual capacities; my translation], Hyronimus uses sex and cultural imperialism to further whitewash Déméta's psyche. The intrusion of whiteness is intended to destabilize a lateral creolization of black and Indian by reaffirming the "vertical" primacy of white dominance in any deliberations on mixed race in the French Caribbean. As Richard Burton asserts, these departmental ties to the white metropole create "an unrequited longing for fusion, either by possession or by absorption, with a valorized French Other" (1993, 83). Déméta's psychological lactification[13] thereby becomes a form of epistemological violence when her need to be accepted by the white world becomes a negation of self and culture. Moreover, her sexual inexperience with black men further highlights a core alienation, whereby a "black-with-black" coupling magnifying a mirror image of sameness represents a source of shame and disavowal instead: "Elle n'avait pas eu l'opportunité d'une liaison amoureuse avec un homme de là-bas, mais elle avait consigné tant d'histoires embrouillées à ce propos" (Moutoussamy 2002, 163) [She hadn't had the opportunity to be romantically involved with a man from

back there, but she had recorded so many complicated stories on the subject; my translation]. In the absence of firsthand knowledge, Déméta relies on mediated representations of black men formulated by colonial stereotypes.

As a result, the dual racial and gendered biases of European modernity become a source of rupture for the deracinated Antillean woman in France who is condemned to wander in a perpetual state of migrancy without recognizable moorings. The novel exposes Déméta's sense of errancy thus: "La femme antillaise qui vit en France, déracinée de son environment si précieux dans les îles, souffre bien plus encore car, la modernité des moeurs donne encore des fausses notes à sa naïveté" (Moutoussamy 2002, 165) [The Antillean woman who lives in France, uprooted from her environment that is so precious in the islands, suffers even more, because modernity's customs still give her naïveté false grades; my translation]. Hyronimus creates false ideals for Déméta based on European-determined models of perfection; her perceived naïveté ensures that she will always fall short of attaining these ideals due to basic "inadequacies" in nature and culture. Hyronimus associates these shortcomings with a preordained level of social unacceptability despite (and in spite of) her efforts to ingest Western signifiers such as classical music. An appreciation of this music represents a form of refinement generally beyond the reach of the unsophisticated or uninitiated. "Et pour une non-initiée, ce n'était pas peu de chose" (Moutoussamy 2002, 125). [For an uninitiated woman, this was something significant.] Surprised by Déméta's affinity for Western music, Hyronimus' value judgments create arbitrary binaries between high and low culture, relegating Caribbean *biguines* to the realm of the inferior when compared with the "sophistication" of Schubert concertos or Mozart's night music (2004, 124).

* * *

Déméta's assimilation of white culture exposes her search for place in the territory of the unknown (Moutoussamy 2002, 124). As Valérie Orlando asserts, "Each woman desires to belong to a group and to be accepted because she knows that groups and association with a larger social order play important roles in the makeup of an individual's identity . . . Being unable to break the cultural codes of these foreign spheres obliges the heroines of these novels to struggle against the ominous presence of mental distress that comes from nomadic wanderings and lack of integration into the indigenous societies with which they want to identify" (2003, 34). Torn between the external desire to conform and an inner landscape of conflicted emotions, Déméta seeks refuge in the dual life of the actress whose public persona nevertheless hides an inner face of desolation, the very source of her anguish. Orlando continues, "Adopting a false self is also a

way of coping and assuring their self-preservation, while confronting what is typically expected from their milieus" (2003, 66). Solitude and introversion become Déméta's private "performances" unexposed to public eyes necessitating a schizophrenic splitting of the self as the only way to cope with life's adversities. The novel highlights Déméta's definitive behavior. "Ce n'était pas de la fierté ni du mépris, c'était de la défense" (Moutoussamy 2002, 134) [It wasn't pride or disdain, it was a mechanism of defense; my translation].

At the same time, her public role does not permit her to enjoy the limelight of the center stage. Discrimination in the workplace limits the full realization of her potential by inhibiting professional advancement through marginal involvement demonstrated by the minor acting roles given to Déméta. "Les rôles qui lui étaient destinés se voyaient souvent en fin de tournage réduits au tiers de leur importance, avec la bonne excuse que la durée du film nécessitait des coupures" (Moutoussamy 2002, 133) [She was given roles that were reduced to one third of their importance at the end of the shooting, with the usual excuse that the duration of the film required cuts; my translation]. Confined by personal and professional impasses, Déméta's characterization exposes the socioeconomic and cultural restrictions imposed on French-Caribbean women in France when they are denied full citizenship in their ultra peripheral nonstatus. This liminal position is the site of an internal and external strangeness, or *étrangeté*, in which political foreignness reinforces a more existential foreignness as a response to the exigencies of exile and its lack of "validating certainties" (Laing 1960, 40).

Déméta's insecurity finds its ontological roots in a dual historical void that erases Indian ethnicity and *dougla* identity simultaneously by situating these markers of Caribbean difference outside representation. The search for origin thereby reveals foundational impasses highlighting her disinheritance in and by history symbolized by "le grand fleuve du néant" (Moutoussamy 2002, 184) [the great river of nothingness] and the father's death. Two primordial levels of erasure create gaping wounds represented by truncated memories or "mémoire trouée" (88), tentative affiliations with the unknown, exile's dislocations, and the permanence of death. Kristeva refers to this state of disaffiliation as the outsider's "distressed knowledge" (1991, 10) located in the mind's conflicted landscape of parallel remembering and alienation. This exilic wound charts memory's enabling and disabling trajectories as the source of physical and psychic destruction on the one hand, and the path to reflection on the other. This course nevertheless reveals two irrevocable disjunctions: the impossibility of reconciling with the father and the historical blocks that continue to fragment Indians and Africans in the Caribbean despite reconciliatory discourses aimed at greater interethnic cooperation. As Keith Walker states, "this literature is a representation of a liminal state (where) there is a yearning for reconciliation

of the warring strivings and paradoxical impulses as one lives on the hyphen of cultural identity" (1999, 37). Consequently, the negotiation of the hyphen represents Déméta's efforts to mediate the margins as she struggles to achieve her dual historical subjectivity as an Indian and African woman from the French Caribbean.

Dougla Liminality

As mentioned previously, the novel inscribes Déméta's *dougla* liminality within the cyclical configurations of death and memory. As she confesses, "La mort de Willy avait entraîné des nostalgias, des prises de conscience" (Moutoussamy 2002, 184) [Willy's death had provoked nostalgia and awareness; my translation]. Her journey of self-discovery begins with the traumatic passing of both her father and a close friend (Willy) as she attempts to bridge the gap between life and death in memory (hence the title of the novel), a prelude to reconciling a contested identity in life. As Trinh Minh-ha claims, "Identity is a way of re-departing. The return to a denied heritage allows one to start again with different re-departures, different pauses, different arrivals" (1991, 14). These journeys must chart their own seascapes to avoid colonial misnavigations and misleading points of orientation to demonstrate how Déméta's personal right of passage can only be achieved upon the recognition of the two Middle Passages that have characterized the Caribbean's history of confluence and disjunction. The protagonist bemoans her prior lack of awareness saying, "Ma coolitude ensemence ma négritude . . . J'étais trop jeune et trop ignorante de ma richesse" (Moutoussamy 2002, 180) [My coolitude fertilizes my negritude . . . I was too young and too ignorant about my richness; my translation].

This "*douglarized* historicity" becomes a site of reclaiming and redefinition as the protagonist recalls her father's epic journey across the *kala pani* to Martinique, where he meets his African wife and creates a new Francophone polycentricism amid racism and social disruption. These multiple beginnings nevertheless bear the scars of traumatic intent as Indo-Caribbean history emerges tentatively from the lost archives to make its imprint on the Caribbean landscape. The history of these saffron men and women ("les hommes safranés" [Moutoussamy 2002, 189]) exposes its internal and external fissures as a reaction to the unresolved trauma of separation from India, and involuntary assimilation in Martinique. The protagonist wonders whether Indian identity can emerge from the recesses of a stolen memory (178) and from dehumanization represented by the appellation "coolie" or indentured worker. Can Indo-Caribbean history ever establish its epic passage by transcending its marginalized coolie status to resound like "le cor du héros victorieux" (the horn of a victorious hero; my translation [175])? How does a community rise from servitude

to subjectivity? What are the internal factions that either impede or enhance self-definition as a stepping-stone to cultural pluralism? The story of Déméta's father provides the necessary clues to these questions, stimulating the daughter's own reflections on the French-Caribbean's multicultural positionality today. In other words, Déméta must gain knowledge about her Indian heritage before she negotiates biculturality, a process wherein the past's repressed traces can only be uncovered through the mnemonic process.

In the act of remembering, the father's *kala pani* story attempts to reverse its displaced historicity to become a founding Caribbean text. This narrative traces the routes of Indian migration to Martinique through an individual trajectory that both complements and complicates the particularities of the Antillean experience articulated in terms of hybridity's "third space," a site of multiple discursive positionings. As Homi Bhabha states, "the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity . . . is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority" (1990, 211). The third space is the very space of Caribbean diasporic positionality, a medium to give voice to the Indo-Caribbean experience, while creatively (and politically) mediating and rewriting "accepted notions of subjectivity, otherness, and modernity" (Murdoch 2001, 3). The insertion of the kala pani's "third space" in Caribbean historiography thereby reveals the ontological urgency to recover a primary loss characterizing the Indo-Caribbean predicament in Martinique. As Khal Torabully affirms, "For the Indian descendants, there was no real founding text for their indentureship, and their presence on the islands . . . was vitiated by a cultural uneasiness bordering on frustration. Expressing their presence in the Caribbean society remains an intense desire for them, in view of participating fully in it" (2002, 151). In the novel, this desire for recognition instead of assimilation takes the form of the father's *kala pani* lament that provides the basic script of "coolie historicity." This narrative reveals its multilayered textuality in an expansive diasporic narrative that embraces the seven seas themselves, as evidence of the transnational scope of the Indian trajectory. The novel highlights the idea of expansiveness: "Ce coolie de *bò kannal* narrait la traversée des sept mers avec une sagesse touchante" (Moutoussamy 2002, 187) [This coolie from the northern canal recounted the crossing of the seven seas with moving wisdom; my translation].

The novel associates Indian history with a wounded memory that simultaneously bears indelible scars from the past. These wounds are a result of the traumatic trans-Atlantic crossing and the father's almost immediate poisoning by a so-called "friend" in Martinique; they also expose a dead-end future without

hope, a possible symptom of trauma's impermanent resolution. As the novel indicates, "Muselé et intégré, le coolie, dans sa solitude sans rêve pour l'avenir" (Moutoussamy 2002, 178). [The coolie was muzzled and integrated in his silence without any dreams for the future.] Trauma's migrating trajectories do not lead to spatial and social mobility; rather, the impermanence of the present provokes deep insecurities betraying the angst of losing one's cultural sanctity in the process of assimilation. Cultural adaptation enforces spiritual desecration in the adopted land as rituals lose their sanctity through accommodation. The novel exposes the falsifying of tradition as a survival strategy thus: "Célébration falsifiée aujourd'hui, détournée dans sa teneur. Et le son du matalon ne résonne plus que pour des rites impurs à notre connaissance" (181) [Falsified celebrations today, deviating from their original intent. And the sound of the *matalon* drum only resounds for rites that are impure to our understanding; my translation]. The idea of ritualistic contamination is related to its diasporic perversions in Martinique when Indians are forced to betray their Indianness in silence as punishment for having undertaken and survived the *kala pani* taboo (this will be discussed in further detail later in the chapter). This betrayal is synonymous with cultural disinheritance, a paradoxical sign of coping and surviving under difficult circumstances.

At the same time, Indian survival strategies also reveal unconscious recreations of the threatened past in the present through the irrepressible traces of memory that take root in the land. The Indian indentures were primarily an agricultural labor force whose connection with the land remained visceral despite the oceanic journey. The earth or *maati* as the divine matrix is an integral part of the rural Indian ethic providing an umbilical connection to life itself. As Torabully indicates, "La maati, pour le rural indien, est trace de son existence, sens de son être sur terre . . . L'Indien aime posséder la terre: dans sa cosmogonie translatée, c'est sa façon de re-créer L'Inde ombilicale, le centre de son être" (1996, 63; my translation). [The maati, for the rural Indian represents a trace of his existence, a sense of his being on earth . . . the Indian likes to possess land: in his transplanted cosmogony, it's his way of recreating umbilical India, the center of his being.] The feeling of being rooted to the land both physically through agriculture, and spiritually through ritual becomes a method to appease the pain of historical uprootedness, even though the politics of cane reveal their disabling intent. Indenture's replacement of slavery was intended to sustain a nefarious sugar plantocracy; the politics of cane alienated both communities from themselves and each other through rivaling albeit unequal territorial claiming.

For the Indians, a sense of immediate identification with the land becomes crucial to survive homelessness in the face of cultural marginality, as depicted

in the novel. The recreation of familiar home space defines the ontological need to establish subjectivity in diaspora as a means of transcending the inescapable cycle of indenture and its non-negotiable routes, a point of no return evoked in the novel (197). The desire to establish umbilical affinity with India indicates a simultaneous confrontation and contestation of exile. Consequently, the creation of a customary landscape of rice paddies (197) carves the displaced geography of the ancestral land onto an unfamiliar territory. These connections between home and diaspora are established via fragrant tracks of memory when comforting spice routes provide well-known points of orientation amid exile's confounding dislocation. Spices represent a similar source of comfort for displaced Antilleans in France as highlighted in the previous chapter. Moutoussamy's novel describes the richness of the Indian spices thus: "L'ambre du massala, le velouté du safran, balayés par les vagues de l'exil ont poussé le coolie à recréer ses odeurs nostalgiques" (Moutoussamy 2002, 197) [The amber hues of massala, the velvety texture of saffron, swept by the waves of exile urged the coolie to recreate his nostalgic fragrances; my translation]. The rich texturing of spices represents the complex layering of Indo-Caribbean history, a memorable palimpsest revealing a community's abjection and corresponding resistance to exploitation and ostracism. The novel compares the Indians to resilient reeds that may bend under pressure. Nonetheless, they refuse to capitulate in total submission at the same time as revealed in this quotation: "tel un roseau, le pauvre coolie pliait sans jamais tomber. Il se redressait après chaque épidémie, aussi solide que le dit roseau" (Moutoussamy 2002, 200) [Like a reed, the poor coolie bent over without ever falling down. He picked himself up after every epidemic, as resistant as the aforementioned reed; my translation].

However, this sense of Indian historical plenitude is minimized by its confinement within negating tropes of Caribbean nationalism and multiculturalism based on partial inclusions and self-centered exclusions, as stated earlier. The narrator bemoans the erasure of the coolie narrative in revolutionary discourses on unstable identity and multicultural opacity promoted by the very ethos of creolization, whereby "in the effort to recover their unrecorded past, contemporary writers and critics have come to the realization that opacity and obscurity are necessarily the precious ingredients of all authentic communication" (Lionnet 1989, 9). In terms of Francophone Indo-Caribbeans in Martinique, the search for obscurity has ironically imposed a degree of historical obscuring, as revealed by the narrator, "Elle regrettait de ne pas entendre d'aucuns, parler de l'engagement du coolie, dans cette grande révolution des îles. Pourtant, il y avait contribué ce pauvre coolie, en crachant poumons et en vidant son âme dans la sueur, pour la prospérité" (Moutoussamy 2002, 186) [She regretted the fact that no one had spoken about the engagement of the coolie during this great

revolution on the islands. However, this poor coolie had also contributed to the prosperity of the islands by busting his lungs and emptying his soul into sweat; my translation]. By contributing to the economic productivity of the island, coolie labor dispels any myths about the peripheral commitment of the early Indians toward regional welfare; it also questions the democratic intent of creolization.

The narrator wonders if the Indo-Caribbean experience and its corollary mixed race permutations will ever earn their rightful place in the racialized spectrum of creolization or whether they will continue to be erased from the departmental imaginary. She affirms, "Ils ont gagné, eux aussi, leur droit au cordage de la créolisation" (Moutoussamy 2002, 190) [They have also earned their right to the cordage of creolization; my translation]. This signifying chain nevertheless exposes its missing links threatening to undermine creolization's truly diversifying intent in relation to Indians and *douglarized* Caribbeans. Is creolization a reflection of the national consciousness? Torabully asks, "Is the development or reformulation of an Antillean national consciousness likely to take place parallel to, rather than to include the rehabilitation of the East Indian component?" (2002, 12). Does the Indian component constitute a separate or integrated track in the creolized imaginary of contemporary Martinique or will Indians be condemned to repeat the traumatic displacement of Otherness experienced by their ancestors? Will memory's associative value keep trauma alive in a series of involuntary reenactments relegating Indian identity to the perpetually irreclaimable? Will an Indian-centered discourse of belonging offer a script of belonging for disenfranchised Indians, just as négritude offered a locus of cultural, political, and ethnic relocation for alienated blacks in diaspora?

These questions betraying Déméta's uncertainty of location prompt her to interrogate the Caribbean's authorizing discourses and their capacity to engage in a truly participatory cross-cultural poetics of identity. While négritude positioned the very "essence" of black cultural and political sensibility as an anticolonial, antiracist discourse espoused by the founding fathers "Césaire, Damas and Senghor" (Moutoussamy 2002, 185) in the 1940s, the exclusion of gender and mixed race identity from negritude's politics of self-determination nevertheless revealed its inadequacy to reflect the Caribbean's gendered cultural heterogeneity.[14] Similarly, the Indian response to cultural affirmation betrayed a similar nationalistic intent by marginalizing women through purist and confining notions of ideal womanhood located in reductive characterizations of Mother India. This reaction also discriminated against other ethnicities, blacks in particular, as a defensive reaction to rapid assimilation and cultural invalidation.[15] The novel reveals the close-mindedness of the Indian community thus: "Dans la 'colonie' indienne où vivait Déméta étant gamine, personne ne parlait des 'autres': ceux qui n'en étaient pas membres" (Moutoussamy 2002, 185–86)

[In the Indian "colony" where Déméta was raised, no one talked about the "others": those who were non-members; my translation]. Neither négritude nor indianité provide Déméta with a self-affirming mirror through their nationalist claims to "pure" origin and unadulterated blood symbolized by "la race pure indienne" (186) [the pure Indian race; my translation] and their myopia in terms of gender. The Indian resistance to racial mixing alienates Déméta further when her *dougla* identity characterizes her as the mother Marguerite's "little black likeness" (186). The Indian community reveals its internalized racism and rejection of alterity in a misguided attempt to preserve the wholeness of culture.[16]

Victimized by racial profiling, Déméta's Indianness is further negated by the community's pervasive racism that ironically deprives her of paternal roots, while criminalizing the mother's blackness through racism. The community refers to Déméta in derogatory terms to accentuate its resistance to difference, distinguishing her from "pureblooded" Indians. These Indians, in turn, further reinforce the idea of the *dougla's* cultural bastardization and racial contamination revealed in the negative appellation *lotchyo*. As the novel indicates: "Ce mot 'lotchyo,' désignait la couleur de la noix de coco trop caramélisée pour la préparation de confiserie. Ce n'était certes pas une parole de bienvenue, ni d'acceptation" (Moutoussamy 2002, 186) [The word "lotchyo" was used to describe the color of highly caramelized coconut used in the preparation of sweets. This was certainly not a word of welcome or acceptance; my translation]. As the sweetened product of her parents' love, "cette amour débordante qui les unissait" (186) [this overwhelming love that united them; my translation], Déméta is nevertheless transformed into an object of communal repulsion when her overt "caramelized sweetness" becomes an unpalatable item to be rejected by local consumption instead. The novel also exposes racism toward Indians in the form of the father's poisoning by a friend who apparently hated his Indianness (171), and the repeated derision and scapegoating endured by Indians as they struggled to cope in a hostile environment. This disdain is reflected in a popular Creole song whose dissonance reveals cultural misunderstandings about Indian life, prejudice, and racialized stereotyping. This song reinforces the prevailing stereotypes about Indians. "Kouli pat fin . . . louli manjé chyen. Yo ka manjé razyé . . . mi yo ka mandé la charité" (183) [Coolies with slender legs . . . coolies who eat dogs. They eat grass destined for beasts . . . they ask for charity; my translation].

The Dilemma of Indianness

The protagonist's exclusion as a *dougla* woman situates itself on internal and external levels. The overt marginalization of Indian history is complemented by an inherent rejection of *dougla* historicity leading Déméta to seek an outer departmental diasporic affiliation with an Indian intellectual from Mauritius

named Khal Torabully and his theory of coolitude. She hopes to find a possible response to her irreconcilable identity within the parameters of coolitude. This theory is aimed at transcending the limitations of local identity politics by embracing a larger diasporic consciousness, while retaining Indian distinctiveness at the same time.

> Coolitude is an aesthetic blend, a kind of mix of a complex culture, bringing to the imaginaire a part of the other. It calls to attention "Indianness" in relation with "Otherness" as a premise which leads to a transcultural awareness. This is in keeping with the fundamental attitude of creolization . . . We must understand that in those texts of creoleness which often do not integrate coolies as fully fledged literary creations—a fact that does not live fully to the promises of creolization—a mirror is held to History, a moment of History, when the struggle between the descendants of slaves and the descendants of coolies was real, each fighting to carve out a place in the plantocracies. (2002, 168)

Based on the interplay of cultural complexity, coolitude proposes to fill in the gaps left by creolization by establishing the necessary parity between converging historicities. Building on Glissant's theory of identities in mutation, coolitude "imagines" the impossible through the possibility of "crosscultural vagabondage" (2002, 194) between and among cultures to eliminate any fixed notions of identity or cultural essentialism. Through the unpredictability of perpetual negotiation and "chaotic" transmutation, coolitude envisages a pluralistic world of unimaginable difference(s) in which racial self-centeredness gives way to transformative relational intersections with the Other. For Torabully, coolitude provides the necessary bridge between negritude, créolité, and indianité through its emphasis on an egalitarian cosmovision. The narrator pays tribute to Torabully for having unveiled the true universality of the islands (186) by formulating a theory that decentralizes the one-dimensional scope of nationalism on the one hand, and rectifies the geographical and historical limitations of creolization on the other.

The optimism of Torabully's theory should not, however, eclipse the fact that Indians in Martinique are still considered a minority culture despite some semblance of social mobility. Can a minority culture ever "imagine" its egalitarian footing with hegemonic power structures in Martinique and France to truly participate in the poetics of coolitude? How do Indo-Caribbeans and *douglas* write themselves into a translocational script without the necessary political agency? While Torabully's work emerges from within a context of Indian cultural and political dominance in Mauritius, can disproportionate historical subjectivities lay claim to a universal decenteredness or the lack of fixed origins in the Caribbean? Are these relations confined to the realm of the imaginary rather than to lived praxis, wherein these associations are "assumed rather than demonstrated"

(Henry 2003, 4)? Can coolitude mediate the exilic tensions between Indians and Africans in a true "poetics of relation"? Can Martinique ever conceive of itself as a *dougla* nation that embraces a politics of reconciliation beyond Indian assimilation and Caribbean departmentalization? In *Tout-monde*, Glissant states that while the combination of Indian spices or *masalè* constitutes an important component of Francophone-Caribbeanness its subsequent insertion into the dynamics of dominant creolization has not led to a creative *massalafication* of cultures (1993, 477). Instead, creolization has revealed its own truncated affiliations with relational theory. Moreover, coolitude's minimal engagement with gender has colluded with the male-centeredness of négritude, indianité and créolité to displace Caribbean women in general, and Indo-Caribbean women in particular from the politics of representation. As A. James Arnold affirms, "the créolité movement has inherited from its antecedents, antillanité and negritude, a sharply gendered identity. Like them, it is not only masculine but masculinist . . . Créolité is the latest avatar of the masculinist culture of the French West Indies, which is being steadily challenged by the more recently emerged, less theoretically articulated, womanist cultures" (1995, 21). Although Arnold highlights the eclipsing of woman-centered traditions within créolité in an essay written over a decade ago, his article nevertheless anticipates the more theoretically sophisticated feminist creolizations of women writers and critics in recent years. These "womanist cultures" expand the limits of the accepted in theory and praxis to engage in their own disruptive textualities. They redefine the gendered scope of intellectual and creative productivity in Francophone-Caribbean literature today demonstrated by the theory of Sycorax historicity in Chapter 5.

By calling for truly relational models of "expanded creolization," Moutoussamy's literary articulations position the *dougla* imaginary as a possible site for these indeterminate identities, revealing their "irreversible duality" (Moutoussamy 2002, 79) in a rich and continually self-perpetuating interchange of potential. Can the *dougla* imaginary provide a politicized healing narrative to appease the brutality of colonization experienced by both Africans and Indians to create a mutual space for dialogue and cooperation among men and women? How do communities deal with internalized trauma before engaging in cross-cultural exchange? Referring to the Indian and African communities in Guadeloupe, the narrator of *La métisse caribéenne* states, "Pourtant, ces deux communautés étaient installées sur ce morceau du globe, exilées, blessées, fouettées, prisonnières, mais encore, esclaves ou engagées, pensez-vous qu'il faille oublier . . . oui ou non, mais il faut surtout panser et couvrir les plaies ouvertes, d'une étoffe de paix" (Minatchy-Bogat 2004, 11) [However, these two communities were installed in this part of the world, exiled, wounded, whipped, imprisoned, but still, enslaved or indentured, do you think it is necessary to forget . . . yes or no,

but it is above all essential to bandage and cover open wounds with the fabric of peace; my translation]. As suggested by Minatchy-Bogat, the covering of festering wounds only leaves permanent scars as violent reminders of a history of inhumanity. These cover-ups provide partial healing without treating the rawness of the very root of trauma. Can the *dougla* imaginary provide the basic vocabulary to articulate the deeply integral pain that resists translation in conventional language even though biological *douglarization* remains a fact of life in Martinique and other parts of the Caribbean? Will French ever recreate itself to become a *dougla* tongue as a possible medium of reconciliation? How can the *dougla* imaginary insert itself into current discourses on creolization to further expand the existing parameters of relation? Will Martinique's *dougla* historicity ever acquire the status of a permitted historicity in which the creolized "*douglaspeak*" becomes another mother tongue? Moutoussamy's novel raises more questions than it answers, indicating that they still remain at a very preliminary and tentative stage of deliberation.

The novel falls short of exploring these questions due to a series of irreparable historical and cultural ruptures symbolized by Déméta's mysterious illness resisting medical treatment and psychological appeasement. This malady assumes the form of an incurable malaise or festering ancestral wound related to a "guilty" historicity written out of the French Caribbean's diasporic opacity. The novel exposes the source of this guilt thus: "Déméta avait toujours pensé que c'était la mort de son père qui avait déclenché en elle la maladie. Elle s'était sentie coupable . . . coupable d'avoir quitté son pays, son père n'était pas d'accord . . . coupable de ne pas avoir compris qu'il voulait lui parler, il avait quelque chose à transmettre" (Moutoussamy 2002, 171) [Déméta had always thought that her father's death was the source of her illness. She had felt guilty . . . guilty for having left her country, her father was opposed to it . . . guilty for not having understood that he wanted to talk to her, that he had something to transmit; my translation]. This guilt is a symptom of the unresolved exilic dispositions that consume father and daughter in a circular trajectory ironically uniting them in death. Death nevertheless provides the essential bridge to launch a *kala pani* life that begins and ends in exile for the father as he leaves India for the Caribbean; the daughter repeats this exilic journey several years later when she immigrates to France.

Torabully highlights the guilt that defines the Indo-Caribbean experience, whereby "the soul of the Hindu who left the Ganges was doomed to err perpetually, as it was cut off from the cycle of reincarnation" (2002, 164). In addition, the crossing of black water was associated with contamination and cultural defilement according to Hindu belief. The traversing of large expanses of water led to the dispersal of tradition, family, class and caste classifications,

and to the general loss of a "purified" Hindu essence. *Kala pani* crossings were initially identified with the expatriation of convicts, "low" castes and other "undesirable" elements of society from the mainland to neighboring territories to rid society of any visible traces of social "pollution;" those who braved the *kala pani* were automatically compromising their Hinduness. Ironically, the *kala pani's* "purification of the pariah" (Torabully 2002, 163) leads to the father's marginality in diaspora, just as Déméta's pariah status as a *dougla* woman in Martinique confines her to the liminality of the racialized and sexualized subaltern in France.

The guilt of exile punctuates the *kala pani* narrative in Moutoussamy's work to demonstrate how Indo-Caribbean communities are born into exile. The traversing of the black waters by the first Indians has come to symbolize the primordial journey into exile, wherein Indo-Caribbean origins have reflected the precariousness of uprooted affiliations, as in the case of their Afro-Caribbean counterparts as well. In the novel, however, the very existence of Indians is defined by their exile and foreignness from which only death can provide the ultimate release. The narrator evokes her father's memory as follows: "Désormais restitué au NIRVANA, Gento tu circules enfin, libéré du grand calvaire de l'exil" (Moutoussamy 2002, 176) [Finally restored to NIRVANA, Gento you are finally in motion, liberated from the immense burden of exile; my translation]. Nirvana represents the transcendence of exile and the ultimate resting place for the father; it is situated at the opposite end of the *kala pani* spectrum. This passage marks the continuum between life and death in a fragmented narrative that translates the anxiety of (non)belonging represented by the ambivalence of losing one's birthplace, and the consequent angst of assimilation in the adopted land. The initial trauma of ancestral separation initiated by the father is repeated in cyclical frequency throughout the novel until death's inevitability confronts the family in a trans-Atlantic movement between India, the Caribbean, and France.

The novel reveals the failure of diaspora in the final musings of the protagonist for whom diaspora's intersectional positionalities have lead to impasses rather than creative cooperation. The narrator states, "Dans la communauté antillaise de France, il n'y avait aucune coordination entre les associations . . . Chacune voulait fêter à sa manière 'son abolition' . . . La diaspora antillaise, par manque d'entente, de consultation, avait sauf rares exceptions, raté quelque peu cette grande rencontre" (Moutoussamy 2002, 203) [In the Antillean community of France, there was no coordination between the associations . . . Every organization wanted to celebrate its own "emancipation" . . . The French Caribbean diaspora, with a few rare exceptions, had missed out on this historic meeting, on account of misunderstandings and a lack of coordination;

my translation]. These exilic histories do not find common cause in their diasporic "double disjointedness," wherein *décalage*, according to Brent Edwards, should provide "a changing core of difference; it is the work of "differences within unity," an unidentifiable point that is incessantly touched and fingered and pressed" (2003, 13). These differences do not inspire bilateral movement through political and cultural linkages; instead, they represent the alienating dissonance of competing subjectivities that favor dominance over Relation in a self-canceling paradigm of isolation and missed opportunities in Moutoussamy's text. The protagonist internalizes this sense of isolation when the novel concludes on a note of introversion and resigned desolation to reflect exile's triumph over Relation: "Déméta elle, est déjà installée dans la sienne, et le monde peut continuer à tourner" (Moutoussamy 2002, 207) [Déméta was already settled in her solitude, and the world can keep turning; my translation]. Her indifference betrays an innate retraction from her surroundings as she waits to be liberated from exile's disorientation and the psychological trauma of truncation.

Passerelle de vie reveals the protagonist's attempts to overcome the physicality of exile as an Antillean woman in Paris as she struggles to mediate her mixed race *dougla* identity in diaspora. The negating factors of immigration, departmentalization, race, and gender bias hinder the process of individuation to suspend the protagonist in an existential vacuum. This point of no return is the very space of exile that presents a nonreflecting mirror of misidentification and cultural marginalization instead. Excluded by creolization's male-centered identifications of cultural pluralism, the protagonist exhibits a profound state of alienation occasioned by historical erasure and exclusive nomenclature. Her search for validation amid the French-Caribbean's multicultural spectrum reveals the limitations embedded in the region's supposedly liberating discourses that lack the necessary semantic power to articulate her intersectional African-Indian identity. She remains trapped within the ambivalent politics of Otherness, a stranger to self and surroundings, imprisoned by the confines of the inadmissible. In this way, Moutoussamy's novel highlights the need for a gender-specific deliberation beyond creolization, a discourse in which a gendered exilic identity can successfully negotiate the bridge of life to find a permanent sense of home.

Moutoussamy and Condé use the figure of the male and female *dougla* to represent the fractured history of the French Caribbean. This history does not find successful accommodation in the region's therapeutic narratives of cultural sameness or mythical idealization when two violated blood streams resist an unproblematic confluence on the subaltern body. While the *dougla* woman and man reveal gendered responses to the machinations of French-Caribbean history, both novels collude in their common acceptance of the *dougla's* "unwritable text" (Lee 2002, 170) in the language of colonization and departmentalization,

despite the subaltern's tenacious resistance to invisibility and illegitimacy. While the *dougla* imaginary creates a space of creative possibility to articulate indeterminate identities unacknowledged by the region's contemporary cultural discourses, it also highlights the need for more inclusive Caribbean positionalities that complicate and extend French-Caribbean negotiations of cultural, gendered, and racial difference.

CHAPTER 5

The Voice of Sycorax

Diasporic Maternal Thought

The gendered wounds of diaspora represent the physical and intellectual aggressions committed against women in the name of Sycorax. As stated in the Introduction, the reclaiming of Sycorax is important to redress and address this violence by reframing the Caribbean in terms of female reason and intellectual thought associated with woman-centered cultural and religious systems. The movement from exotic stereotype to intellectual prototype marks the passage from objectification to Caribbean subjectivity for women writers and the traditions they portray in their work. These intellectual traditions represented by historical revisions, Voudou, Hindu mother worship, and the religiosity of food dispel any myths about women's secondary contributions to the sociocultural and intellectual dynamism of the Francophone Caribbean.

This chapter demonstrates how Sycorax embodies the principle of plenitude or ontological expansiveness through her multiple and cross-cultural textual reincarnations. The collective and regionally defined ceremonies of repossession associated with Sycorax nevertheless raise the following questions in novels such as Lilas Desquiron's *Les chemins de Loko-Miroir*, Myriam Chancy's *The Scorpion's Claw*, Dany Bébel-Gisler's *Léonora: L'Histoire enfouie de la Guadeloupe*, Ina Césaire's *Mémoires d'Isles*, and Maryse Condé's *Victoire: les saveurs et les mots*. How does the trope of "Sycorax historicity" articulate the language of memory by giving voice to the disenfranchised? Can Sycorax provide alternative feminist positionalities in Francophone Caribbean women's writing by enabling the female body to recreate itself through "embodied power?" (Lara 2004, 19) located in the very symbols of alterity seeking to negate women's experiences? How do we read the multifaceted dimensions of Sycorax's woman cultures that resist discursive closure, geographical self-centeredness, and representational essentialism? How do Sycorax's discursive insurrections engender

a process of self-naming through the theorizing of oppression, resistance, and healing from a decolonized feminist perspective "that is not only oppositional, but works to transform relations of power as well?" (Lara 2004, 19) In other words, how does Sycorax, as an agential model, articulate Caribbean feminist epistemologies of reclamation in the "languages" of religion, history, dance, and the philosophy of cooking? How is this epistemology expressed in the multiple tongues of the Francophone Caribbean—French, Creole, Haitian Kreyol, Hindi, Tamil, and more—thereby expanding the scope of the region's engagements with multilingualism?[1]

The Sycorax genealogy uncovers the maternal roots of history through the revisiting of memory and colonial timelines. In Ina Césaire's play *Mémoires d'Isles* (*Island Memories: Mama N. and Mama F.*)[2], two aging grandmother figures from seemingly disparate social, racial, and geographical milieus reconstitute the history of Martinique from a feminine perspective. This act of historical reclaiming is important to establish the subjective authorship of these women whose names are inscribed in memory as valued *conteuses* or female history-makers. Subverting essentialized ideas about a singular, undifferentiated woman's history, these women offer complex perspectives on the history of Martinique and the (auto)biographies of its women through personal points of view as varied as the turbulent waters of the volcanic north, and the more serene ambiance of the south. Anxious to document the life history of her own grandmothers and other wise elders like them, Césaire uses specific cultural inscriptions like *Carnival* and its associated traditions of dance, music, and masquerade as an essential framework for uninhibited expressions of the self.[3] Aure, a light skinned quadroon and retired schoolteacher who takes great pride in her "cultivated" skills in French comes from the temperate south. Her darker skinned, unschooled proletarian counterpart Hermance, also referred to as Cia, is born in the tempestuous north. This region is marked by the tragic memory of Mount Pelée's catastrophic eruption in 1902 that decimated the town of St. Pierre and killed over 30,000 inhabitants. Despite its balmy weather and placid background, the south itself remains rooted in the painful memory of colonialism and the plantation system to highlight the associations between memory, gender, and violence in the process of historymaking.

The trope of *Carnival* suggests that the recovery of history's matrilineal heritage becomes a subversive act in its capacity to overturn the chronological authority of colonial timelines and their narrative fixity. Carnival, as the site of endless possibility, upsets predetermined boundaries and hierarchies in a veritable "masquerade of difference," (Spear 1995, 4) to oppose any absolute claims to officialdom. This reversal, as the politicized expression of a collective

ethos, is particularly significant given that Martinique remains a French department. Aure exposes the colonized mindset of the educated elite as represented by a mulatto schoolteacher named Mlle Rosimond. "I was helping somebody named Mlle Rosimond with her class . . . A mulatto-type who did her hair in two big macaroons over her ears. She was a woman who made her students sing every hour of the blessed day: 'Snow's falling on Paris, snow's falling on Paris . . . '*Ever see any snow fall around here*?" (Césaire 1997, 54). Imposed mnemonic imprints in the form of colonial education lead to a loss of identity through the colonization of memory. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon describes the "nationalization" of education as a process of psychological colonization promulgated most particularly by school teachers who were being assiduously trained by ruling systems of power for their role as colonial intermediaries (1967, 152). School was the ideal location for these mimic men and women who were the eventual transmitters and consolidators of the colonial paradigm, even in the postcolonial period as in the case of Haiti or under departmentalization in Martinique and Guadeloupe.

The play consequently reveals the urgency of creating new memories, as a revised locus of identity, in the birthing language of the quick-stepped *vidé* or *Carnival* strut that suggests an "explosive liberation from conventions and social rules" (Césaire 1997, 50); a form of free play in the expressive body movements of a dance of decolonization termed a "carnival of words" by Pascale De Souza (2002, 123). This linguistic fête favors the verbal virtuosity of orality that reclaims the lost vocabulary of Sycorax's multiple tongues, a precolonial linguistic authority that is as ancient as the art of dancing *Carnival*: "Three hundred years, gentlemen and ladies!" (Césaire 1997, 50) states the first she-devil in the Prologue as she establishes the link between *Carnival* and a precolonized historical memory.

It is therefore no coincidence that Césaire chooses to open her play with an introductory prologue focusing on two she-devils who transform themselves into old women during the opening scene. In misogynist versions of Caribbean folk tales and myths, she-devils were represented as seductresses and abductors of children demonized for their evil intent. As a projection of male fears of female "darkness," she-devils were fetishized in the male imaginary as objects of attraction and repulsion to be eliminated by the hero's transcendental quest for "illumination" in the world. Their elimination from these parables of good and evil through punishment, death, or banishment mirrored the later eclipsing of women's histories in androcentric colonial and nationalist narratives as a disavowal of maternal origins in patriarchal texts. As Makward and Miller suggest, "In *Island Memories* Césaire, therefore, combats the negative mythical heritage of the folktales, with its attendant social consequences, by portraying

women who are the heroes of their own lives" (1997, 47). Negative images of witches and old women transform themselves into positive representations of brave and resilient women who weather life's brutal and painful forces. They search for their own epistemologies articulated in a nonconforming circular language transcending the barriers of time. As the first she-devil comments: "I can hear time; it has no time" (Césaire 1997, 51). This quest for origin locates itself within a progressive-regressive movement beyond institutionalized conceptions of time and misguided colonial voyages of "discovery," where "the past has been trespassed" (Césaire 1997, 51) in a series of chronological violations—colonization, slavery, indenture, and departmentalization.

In *Caribbean Discourse*, Edouard Glissant demonstrates how chronological definitions of time maintain history's colonial roots by creating a disjunction between an imposed Western historicity and local narratives that resist such temporal categorizations. Glissant states, "In such a context, history as far as it is a discipline and claims to clarify the reality lived by these people, will suffer from a serious epistemological deficiency; it will not know how to make the link" (Glissant 1989, 61). The imposition of a colonizing lens to both frame and systematize Caribbean history reveals the simultaneous usurpation and de-formation of land, space, and historical production through a structural power dynamic that negates and erases the atemporality of local timelines. Caribbean history cannot be presented as a well-chronicled archival document but "in the context of shock, contradiction, painful negation, and explosive forces" (Glissant 61–62). The allusion to Mount Pelée's catastrophic eruption by the characters in the play reveals a locally-devised point of reference that "naturally" resists colonial-determined historical positionings, thereby confirming Jeannie Suk's claim that "Glissant sees the Antillean tendency to think chronology primarily in terms of natural disasters as resistance to French historical time" (2001, 73).

Similarly, Ina Césaire bestows the power to undermine history's perverted progression on two women of distinction demonstrated by the appellation "man," a Creole word of respect for an elderly woman. As "women outside of time," and "outside the ages" (Césaire 1997, 50), these women devise their own creation stories by personalizing history in acts of reclamation and revision. To the first she-devil's statement, "the past has passed!" the second she-devil replies, "it passed by here" (51). The passing of time exposes the gaping wounds of history characterized by a primordial rape (58–59) as evidence of the brutality of coloniality and the creation of fragmented genealogies. These fissures and ruptures are nevertheless filled with the stories of ordinary women whose survival skills make them extraordinary historical agents as they negotiate the vicissitudes of life in the form of hard work, poverty, single parenting, difficult

marriages, male chauvinism, and colonial racism. Otherwise silenced in master discourses, these non-elitist, gendered narratives emerge to contest their absence in historical and literary archives, as demonstrated in *Rosalie l'infâme*. In *Framing Silence*, Myriam Chancy stresses the importance of memory in the activation of these woman-centered histories by stating, "Memory . . . serves as the paradigm for survival transhistorically: it is not a claim to an evasion of history but, rather, a challenge to remember that cultures are shaped by what survives from one generation to another" (1997a, 11). As a repository of the collective unconscious, memory shapes personal experience in the form of cultural identity to disassociate women from unfamiliar referents that have resulted in their subsequent isolation and marginalization in history. The play reveals memory's trajectories in an enduring lifeline, whereby "when you think, you can sometimes go a long way," (Césaire 1997, 58) as asserted by Hermance.

The articulation of voice is facilitated by a creative reconfiguration of silence in the form of regional and prediscursive modes of communication such as onomatopoeic *tchipps* expressing "disagreement, dismay, or simple presence" (Césaire 1997, 48), body movement, music, songs, recollections, recipes, jokes, proverbs and other cultural signifiers. These components of popular culture provide an autonomous system of signification independent of patriarchal and colonial mediations. "It was our very own," says Aure (54). Chancy articulates the theory of "culture-lacune" as the necessary script to "read" silence and erasure through an introverted lens. She affirms, "In French, the word *lacune* usually connotes a negative absence. By joining the word to culture, which connotes the positive presence of social collective existence, I am implying that *lacune* can be read into the texts as a space of 'nothingness' that is transformed and affirmed through the politics of representation" (1997a, 17). In this fashion, the double-sidedness of culture-*lacune* becomes a creative strategy of self-positioning. Aure's violated maternal roots in the form of her grandmother Malvina's rape (Césaire 1997, 58) symbolize a legacy of disinheritance, but they also provide a metaphor of female resilience in the face of adversity. Instead of representing an eternal source of shame for future generations, the maternal genealogy becomes a source of pride through the healing power of strong-willed mothers, independent grandmothers, and resourceful homemakers who engage in curative transformations of reality. Aure remembers her mother thus: "My mother . . . They called her Ti-piment . . . 'Hot little pepper'—because she was a tiny but very headstrong woman, with light eyes. A half-sized masterful woman. But a masterful woman just the same! . . . She was born in the south, too, around 1870" (55).

The mother's biography receives the "validation" of dates to counter any claims of illegitimacy, thereby making her story an official part of Martinique's

history. Hermance describes her mother in a similar fashion: "She sure was a character! A grande dame!" (Césaire 1997, 57). These women provide important role models for their daughters and granddaughters by demonstrating how historical venerability is not confined to kings, queens, and the Josephines of Martinique, but to everyday women who create their own exemplary histories of resistance and imminence. These women, as representatives of Sycorax's "lived" historicity, make their own memories in a performing narrative, where they are "irrepressibly committed to the act of living itself" (Makward and Miller 1997, 48). Their personalized subjectivity energized by the dynamic cultural heterogeneity of Carnival resists the stasis of impersonal archival documentation; instead, history constantly regenerates itself in an ongoing cycle of production and participation through the lives of these "granny midwives"[4] who immortalize Sycorax's spirit in acts of mnemonic birthing.

Acts of birthing inscribe themselves within healing narratives that negotiate painful journeys of recovery in conditions of siege represented by the trauma of the colonial past, gender dystopia, and the various dimensions of exile, both physical and psychological. The art of healing goes beyond physical cures to embrace an integrative consciousness including the physical, psychological, spiritual, and cosmic dimensions of existence. Invalidating Western binaries that split the mind from the body, the material from the spiritual, and the temporal from the atemporal, healing narratives reveal a complicated *Weltanschauung* deeply rooted in folk culture. In women's writings, the link between healing and gender provides the necessary space to highlight the primacy of woman-centered belief systems, critique power imbalances in society, and establish a feminist spiritual epistemology as the philosophical basis of *konesans*, or transcendental knowledge. Healing practices in these texts do not collude with the faddish New Age techniques of cleansing and "alternative spirituality" espoused by postmodern Earth Mothers; instead, they are embedded in ancient African and Indian systems of intellectual and ritualistic thought reconfigured in diaspora through the meditative powers of a select minority of "folk scholars" such as mambos and shamans. Healing, as a form of ancestral consciousness, offers the cultural and political potential to cleanse the dark energy of the past through spiritual repossessions, and cauterize festering wounds in the present through territorial reconnections and cathartic reinventions. Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert inscribe the politics of healing within the parameters of "the recovery of self and culture, of the reclaiming of memory as the remedy for rootlessness, of the elaboration of myth as a cure for historylessness" (2001, xxi). Healing represents the search for historicity

within the rootlessness of the Caribbean past to create affirming paradigms of "situatedness" in the present.

Myriam Chancy's *The Scorpion's Claw* focuses on the connection between ancestral memory, remembering, and spiritual transcendence through the *mambo* (Vodou priestess) Mami Céleste, reincarnated as mother Sycorax. As important spiritual guides in Vodou, mambos are intermediaries between the spiritual and material worlds who complement the powers of the *houngan*, or male priest, and ensure the sanctity of female-centered rituals and religious rites. Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert describe Vodou as the oldest and most maligned of all Afro-Caribbean religious systems. It finds its roots in the ancient Dahomean, Congolese, and Nigerian regions of West Africa. These systems were later filtered through syncretic exchanges with Roman Catholicism and liturgical traditions (2001, xviii) to produce a unique symbolic ordering of religious accommodation and preservation. Based on the interconnected links between humans, gods (*loas)*, and community, Vodou follows a strict adherence to the principles of "unconditional dedication, rigorous discipline, and lifelong commitment to a particular deity or spirit" (Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 2001, xviii) through esthetic commemoration in art, music, dance, food, ritual, and folk medicine. The union between the spiritual world and humans is effectuated by the ethos of "service" to the *loa*, a system that "comprises individual practices and creeds, a structure for community justice, a fertile oral tradition, a rich iconography . . . a wealth of metaphors of political affirmation, as well as a complex system of folk medicine" (Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 2001, xix).[5]

Like Man Charlotte and Brigitte in *Rosalie l' infâme* and Ina Césaire's grandmother figures in *Island Memories*, Mami Céleste belongs to a strong tradition of Afro-Caribbean spiritual women responsible for the social, psychological, and spiritual well being of their communities. As respected elders who have achieved a state of existential plenitude, these women have transcended the limits of domesticated gender roles to situate themselves in transgendered spatiality beyond gender conformity and social conventionality. The novel describes Mami Céleste as a formidable person whose strength is not measured in terms of its physicality but as a deep integral power that eludes categorization. "Mlle Dominique looked so delicate in the picture it was impossible to imagine that she was the *mambo* she had been rumoured to be for so many years—able to make grown men cry and even the *madamn-saras* fear" (2005, 96). Her strength extends beyond the confines of the visible to highlight the subtle workings of the female spiritualist who must exercise her powers discreetly in order to be most effective. This discretion is a symptom of the gender disenfranchisement that mambos face in rural spheres, where male priests assert their dominance; it also represents the silent communication the priestess uses to interact with

a spiritual order higher than man. This silent language, Céleste's "secret ways," (2005, 76) represents the mambo's resistance to patriarchal submission. She maintains her core authority that remains intimidating to men, women, and male spirits alike. As the novel indicates, "a mambo, of course, has nothing to fear, not even robbers" (2005, 100).

The mambo's fearlessness is based on her mastery of knowledge described in terms of its Caribbean historicity. Positioned as the spirit that recreates itself to resist amnesia and erasure, Mami Céleste assumes many lives covering the entire expanse of Haitian history from precoloniality to European conquest and the Duvalier dictatorship described in Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*. The novel juxtaposes the important phases of Haiti's history with four successive reincarnations of the mambo: "1400–1492/1784–1800/1934–1976/1979–1991" (128). This historical continuum symbolizes the space of memory. The last two incarnations of Mami Céleste's life are actually connected in that the break in the last years represents a psychological dénouement after her son Delphi's death. Death prompts Céleste to dedicate herself to her work as a healer, linking her power with what is called the "underground" in the novel. *The Scorpion's Claw* thereby makes explicit the association between the mystical aspect of healing and the trajectories of memory. In fact, the mambo embodies historical memory and demonstrates how the female body's ability to metamorphose and regenerate itself across time parallels the subjective capacity of memory to remain in a state of fluidity through flux, repetition, renewal, and accommodations of the mnemonic process. As the mambo states, "I believe in all that is stored in the mind, even what appears to be untrue" (2005, 32). The mind provides its own archive of parallel "truths" concealed within its labyrinthine contours offering alternative forms of consciousness as evidence of history's multiple truths. Memory unravels a sensory text of Haitian historiography by establishing intimate connections between the female body and the land as evidence of two important elements in need of reclaiming. The novel highlights this necessity thus: "And this is Hispaniola. This is the land we are left with, beautiful, violated, dying, struggling to be reborn. A place of constant metamorphosis and contradiction" (130).

The urgency to repossess the land indicates how Haitians have been deterritorialized and deprived of land rights through the machinations of history, as revealed in Chapter 2. Separation from the land through colonial disaffiliation and neo-colonial dislocations results in the inability to make any territorial claims on it. As Chancy asserts, "In systems where people are denied access to the land for their basic survival and are instead exploited for their labor, a very crucial cultural connection is severed" (1997b, 209–10). The deprivation of a psychic and spiritual connection with the land, as a primary source of identification, creates a sense of meaninglessness instead in which dispossessed

communities are isolated by an imposed territorial orphanhood symbolizing loss and absence. The primary loss of land through the violence of conquest inscribes it within a bloody cartography of colonial nomenclature in the novel whereby, "it does not take long for the clear blue sea to discolour with the red blood spilled in the name of naming" (130). As the blood reconfigures boundaries and reshapes indigenous territoriality according to colonial schemes, it also creates an invisible imprint across the seas of diaspora to reveal an original infraction in the form of Sycorax's original eviction from her island home of Argier. This dislocation subsequently denies Caliban's birthright to his mother's property when the colonizing Duke of Milan assumes "natural" control of the island as his inherited right in the name of Europe's *mission civilisatrice*. "This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother," claims Caliban in *The Tempest*. The Shakespearean example underscores women's proprietary rights and their matrilineal genealogies of inheritance disrupted by the appropriating nature of patriarchal laws validating male usurping rights in the name of the father.

In Chancy's novel, women's displacement from the land has mirrored their invisibility in Haitian history as stated in Chapters 1 and 2. Women have been systematically written out of colonial and nationalist scripts as a negation of their identity. Chancy evokes the idea of women's postcolonial effacement as evidence of their suppressed memories arguing that "women whose cultural identities have been plundered by imperialism and colonialism may reclaim the past by connecting themselves to a communal consciousness, the origin of which is the voice of their foremothers" (1997a, 10). Identification with Sycorax's genealogy becomes a method to recenter female historicity through mnemonic excavations of lost roots as a way of reclaiming the sanctity of Origin. The mambo reminisces about the land's preconquest sanctification as follows: "I want them to remember something they cannot recall: that once this land was sacred and one of the most beautiful creations of all this world" (2005, 136). The land's former beauty is a sign of its lost divinity to be recalled through the mambo's spiritual expertise; her skills find their center in earth-related rituals and ceremonies of healing. The disfigured land is nevertheless embedded with the dispersed spirits of the ancestors who must be reclaimed and commemorated through an integral ancestral consciousness. This is a vital first step in any successful process of recovery and decolonization. As the novel indicates, "It is simple: those of us who have stayed close to the land know that it is larger than any of us. We keep alive the ways of our homelands, which so many of us have begun to forget. We resist. We subsist. We recreate ourselves in the name of the ancestors" (139).

The connection between the land and the African ancestors recreated in the form of the Vodou *loas* provides the very core of family oriented

Afro-Caribbean spiritual beliefs inspired by Fon, Yoruba, and Kongo cultural traditions. As Karen McCarthy Brown affirms, "Since the contributing African cultures defined family as including the ancestors and the spirits, the need for family was both a social and a spiritual need" (2001, 45). The disconnection from the land is tantamount to a corresponding loss of spirit and kinship ties symbolized by the African Middle Passage, and the later devastation of family life by ruthless dictators who arbitrarily usurped ancestral plots for their personal use. In Vodou, the reciprocal engagement between the individual and the spirit is mediated by the symbolic powers of the houngan and mambo as communal parents. The absence of such a connection leads to irreparable damage because "to be separated from the land is also to risk one's access to the power and protection that the spirit entities provide" (McCarthy Brown 2001, 46). This state of landlessness is particularly crucial for rural communities for whom the loss of land corresponds both to the loss of identity and subsequent estrangement from the gods and communal life. This loss can be compared to a form of soullessness that resembles zombification. The lack of control over one's life without the protective influence of the gods and the rehabilitating force of spiritual parents becomes the site of a traumatic bereavement, as experienced in orphaning.

In *The Tempest*, Caliban's deprivation is a result of his separation from his banished mother and the denial of his birthright to ancestral land. He is also "possessed" by Prospero's dehumanizing foreign spirit that reduces him to the subaltern status of a "savage" (i.e., someone without parental affiliations and an indigenous language) in the absence of mother Sycorax and her recuperative spiritual and intellectual powers. In Chancy's novel, the mambo Mami Céleste is recreated as the mourning Sycorax who has been separated from her son and home. She expresses her yearning to reclaim the stolen parts of her life in order to terminate her homelessness. She says, "I want to become a priestess of this land. I learn to give my body over to the pleasures of the gods. I learn to expect nothing from others. I learn to see those who are in need and heal their spirits as well as I know how to heal the body. They call me Mami Céleste here, just as Delphi does. I feel at home" (135). A sense of home can only be achieved when the mother regains her centrality in the community's social and spiritual ethos. The reciprocal services between the individual, homeland, pantheon of gods, and family (the son, Delphi) provide the key to these spiritual and territorial relocations, wherein mastery is achieved by repossessing the land as a way of realigning oneself with the primordial territorial and ancestral traces. These traces remain dispersed through time, but they are nevertheless etched in memory. The novel highlights this point of return thus: "I turn to the land, it teaches me patience. I become again one with its secrets, as once I was" (131).

The search for an ontological origin sets up a system of balance that establishes a shared continuum between the material and spiritual worlds further inscribed within the totality of the cosmos as a form of hyperconsciousness. Catherine John describes this cosmovision as "third sight" or insider consciousness represented "by a character's development of the internal resources necessary to survive the oppression of the body and spirit" (2003, 209). The ability to transcend the materiality of physical exploitation and moral pain within repressive colonial, patriarchal, and political structures revives the very historicity of Vodou as a religion that emerged from a culture of resistance and subversion. As Michel Laguerre argues, Vodou-based resistance "became the focus of political and underground activities and served as the channel to carry out the leaders' political ideology which was the total and unconditional liberation of Haiti from France" (1987b, 37). As a medium to contest submission to an external authority, Vodou resistance channeled the energy of the gods in the face of adversity to reveal a reciprocal system of exchange invalidating oppositional binaries between gods and men. The art of working with the god and goddess instead of trying to rival him or her in acts of delusional fantasy involves ego transcendence as a point of receptivity to a higher source. The mambo achieves ego transcendence, as the path to higher knowledge, through grief; the loss of a beloved son represents an outer body experience. Her physical and emotional mortification thereby provides the basis for spiritual elevation. The mambo's "farsightedness" is revealed in her distant looks that place her above earth's temporal plane. "Mlle. Dominique looks at me from somewhere far away" (70). This "third sight" or third eye consciousness represents the culmination of a lifelong search for knowledge or *konesans*, similar to the state of the ecstatic soul in Sufi thought. In Sufism, the body and spirit achieve complete union with the universe through ritual, intuition, specialized knowledge, and meditative practice. In Vodou, this state is called *prise des yeux*, "where the eyes of these leaders are fully opened to the invisible world of the spirits" (Murphy 1994, 19).

The journey toward *konesans*, as the highest form of knowing, requires a special way of conceiving the world by neutralizing reductive mind and body binaries. These dualities impede a more integral vision of life based on the awakening of all the senses. The mambo describes her sensorial receptivity to the universe by claiming "my ears are opened to sounds I could not hear before: the pounding of drums, the soft brush of bare feet against the soil during the ceremonial dances. I see the way in which certain lights are hung to signal that a gathering will take place" (133). *Konesans* implies familiarity with the subtle language of the universe and the ability to decode sensorial impressions created by pulsating rhythms, soft shuffling, and patterns of light. These signifiers provide the necessary clues to affirm the presence of the ancestors who intervene

in the rituals of daily life. Like hieroglyphics, these ancestral markings contain a complicated semiotics providing "information about things which seem beyond understanding" (133). The novel demonstrates how the limitations of Cartesian rationality impede prismatic vision, and why these limitations need to be countered by a more intuitive consciousness that defies ego-defined conceptual thought. *Konesans* thereby represents an altered state of critical cognizance in the form of supra knowledge and ego dissolution.

The Indian philosopher Sri Aurobindo refers to this stage of human perfection as "supermanhood" or as "supramental consciousness." In *The Life Divine*, Aurobindo explains, "Man, because he has acquired reason and still more because he has indulged his power of imagination and intuition, is able to conceive an existence higher than his own, and even to envisage his personal elevation beyond his present state into that existence" (1973, 43). This "supra philosophy" displaces the geography of reason from the materialism of the intellect to include other forms of intelligence located within the creative powers of the imagination, a force beyond the limits of human understanding conceived solely in terms of ego fulfillment. The mambo indicates why this "ultra reasoning" is required to subvert the liminality of materialistic thinking when she refers to some of her children who are incapable of envisioning an ego-transcended world. She says, "They know only their own thirst, the hunger of their stomachs. Their world is limited to their bodies and nothing I can do stretches their minds" (134).

The mambo's quest for knowledge beyond mortality locates itself at the intersection of a diurnal and nocturnal consciousness as the site of spiritual transcendence and birth. She states, "I spawn two lives. One is with the children and the other is cloaked in moonlight. I learn to balance night and day, moon and sun" (133). The reference to the moon reaffirms the legacy of Sycorax who worshipped the moon god Setebos and derived her superior intellectual strength, labeled "witchcraft," from the "magical" powers of the moon. The birthing of her intellectual and spiritual prowess coincides with the physical birth of Caliban to demonstrate how the earth's transitional phases between sunlight and moonlight are a particularly important moment of conception for women. They can realize their full potential as the biological and intellectual mothers of a particular cultural tradition at this particular moment of transition. The moon is thereby associated with the "creative" darkness of the birthing process represented by its regular waxing and waning and the production of knowledge such as the philosophy of life's cycles, fertility and reproduction patterns, non-institutionalized medicine and herbal cures, plant culture, astronomy, astrology, lunar cosmology, the conception of lunar calendars, and the "mathematics of the cosmos." While the access of male priests, shamans, healers, and medicine

men to this specialized culturally inscribed knowledge positions them as venerable scholars and diviners, clichéd associations between the moon and female sorcery reveal the discrediting of women's knowledge; the "thinking" woman's access to transcendence, ecstasy, and other higher forms of consciousness brands her as a witch and hysteric to be punished for this "deviance." For this reason, women's intellectual and spiritual traditions are often located within a culture of secrecy as a strategy of survival and self-preservation, especially when dominant society automatically equates female spiritual exemplarity with madness, fear, and suspicion in an attempt to marginalize this experience, as demonstrated in Chancy's novel (71).

However, the idea of invisibility assumes new meaning through the adoption of the moon's "night vision" as a medium to connect with the invisible forces of the universe. While the sun's radiance visibly illuminates the concrete and tangible manifestations of phenomena, the moon's luminosity exposes the "hidden intentionality" of things. As Murphy claims, "The oungan's or manbo's konesans must ultimately be toward an insight into the invisible causes and ends of things . . . they must develop a second sight which allows them to understand the hidden meanings of human and divine actions" (1994, 19). The capacity to comprehend the visible and invisible workings of the universe mediated by the "absent-presence" of the ancestors represents the ultimate form of knowledge. This wisdom is needed to steer the community toward social amelioration, good health, and improved spiritual energy in acts of ritualistic service to the ancestral deities that respect "all the sacred ways" (Chancy 2005, 76).

The sacred ways of venerating the ancient spirits find their source in nature's animism; nature evokes the environmental presence of the elders and their transcendental wisdom preserved in a natural archive. Consequently, the ability to "read" nature is synonymous with the power of "natural divination," which explains why houngans and mambos are also specialists in the healing arts as "plant doctors" or *doktor fèy* who have mastered knowledge about "the symbolic properties of plants and how these allegorical meanings may be multiplied by their combination" (Murphy 1994, 19). The importance of these naturally trained "eco-doctors" can be gleaned from their centrality in the community's curative consciousness; they are called upon to relieve the community's physical and psychological malaise through homeopathy and noninvasive medical practice. The connection between healing and spirituality establishes a natural connection between the harmony of the mind and body without which spiritual power can be lost or minimized, since both power and spiritual energy emanate from total self-possession.

The intervention of gender adds special resonance to spiritually based healing techniques, according to Carol Shepherd McClain, who asserts that women

are "positioned at the boundary between society and the world of the ancestors. Through a woman the transition of spiritual beings is made. This point is crucial in that it explains why diviners are women and why men must become transvestites to be diviners" (1989, 7). This quote highlights a woman's preeminence in spiritual practices where her powers exceed those of men. The connection between women, divining knowledge, and healing does not essentialize a woman's capacity for mothering and nurturing a community; it demonstrates how, in ancient traditions, women have healed themselves by their spiritual access to "underground" knowledge. This knowledge has enabled them to reclaim their undocumented maternal pasts nevertheless preserved in the lunar repository of the moon. As the novel reveals, "It was at this time, Mami Céleste said, that this story began, the story of one who would write the secrets of our lost memory . . . You are all gathered around Mami Céleste's voice, a tightly-knit circle of what appears to you to be the lost and the forgotten. You suppose that this is why this place is called an underground" (157). The need to heal historical, psychological, and physical wounds, especially the unacknowledged wounds of women, requires a woman-centered *konesans* or a gendered third eye consciousness capable of addressing the concerns of women who have been particularly vulnerable to mnemonic scarring.

In *Searching for Safe Spaces*, Chancy alludes to the need to resurrect Sycorax in Caribbean feminism. She associates Sycorax's revival with the Vodou principle of *desounen*. This rite of passage evoked in Haitian death ceremonies becomes an act of rebirth instead, wherein "this ritual returns the spirits of the departed to their sources: the ancestors and the earth from which they will be reborn. Sycorax, in her silent cloak of death awaits just such a resurrection in current criticism of the condition of Caribbean exile" (1997b, 26). As the very symbol of Caribbean women's spiritual and feminist praxis, Sycorax embodies a "resurrecting praxis," providing "a productive symbol of the need to un-silence and liberate the theoretical potential implicit in Black women's knowledge base." In so doing Sycorax herself becomes "sound uprooted; not in the sense of being cut off from her roots but in the sense of having her spirit liberated from the death-bind imposed upon her body" (Chancy 1997b, 26). Consequently, this repressed maternal heritage assumes new life in transformative Caribbean feminist narratives that heal the wounds of silencing, erasure, and death through spirituality and gender determined *konesans*.

How are women healed from their exilic identities given their triple disenfranchisement along the lines of race, class, and gender? Why has healing become such an important poetics of practice for women to cope with alienation and social marginalization? As Margarite Fernández Olmos states, "Non-orthodox medicine, like its religious counterpart, has been more accessible to

women; there they can claim an authority denied them in mainstream institutions and are more at liberty to utilize female traditions of care-taking to alleviate their suffering communities" (2001, 11). The mambo's sense of authority derived from her intimate knowledge of plants and curative herbs remains divinely inspired; this authority places her outside marginalizing social hierarchies. Her son Delphi wonders, "My mambo mother, whom so many despised, accused of ill-doing, was, in truth, working quietly to make life better for others. Why such fear and hatred of my mother who would never hurt a fly, whose hands were healing tools?" (80) The mother's gentle touch, as a way of animating nature's sensibilities in intimate communication, calibrates the violence of Haiti's heavy-handed political reality of colonization and dictatorship; the country's loss of faith nevertheless projects its negativity onto the mambo's person in a misguided association of healing with fear.

The mambo's expertise consequently rests on her ability to reverse these psychological inversions by "concocting" the necessary healing cures to restore balance though a divinely inspired sense of touch. Delphi marvels at his mother's recuperative touch capable of infusing new life into a tortured soul, represented by a rose plant's weakened thorns and dying branches. The plant's fragile state is a symbol of the spirit's malaise when confronted with lost innocence and prolonged spiritual deprivation. "I cut the dying branches of the rose bushes; I talk to them in hushed tones to encourage them to grow. And they return my attention with new buds, heads filled with thick and veined petals of red, pink and yellow, and sturdy thorns to keep enemies at bay" (133). The reclaiming of innocence is a divine act initiated by the spiritual doctoring of the spirit that responds to the language of love and tender care. As an avatar of the divine mother who restores life with her healing hands, the mambo's hands purify the life span of Haiti's violated history to restore its lost "virginity" as a result of colonial rape, neocolonial terror, and ecological disaster in the form of massive deforestation and pollution. Restoring the pristine nature of the land's preconquest imminence, symbolized by its Amerindian appellation *Ayiti* ("land of beautiful mountains"), the mambo's hands are evidence of Ayiti's revised historicity revealed in her name Mami Céleste, a signifier of celestial origin(s). She represents the mother of decolonization who gives birth to an age of innocence through spiritual practice reflected in "her hands, smooth like a baby's, brown like honey" (76).

The bloody redness of Haiti's sullied past transforms itself into the brown sweetness of honey; damaged blood lines are refashioned into enduring life lines preserved in the veins of history. As the mambo reveals, "My hands are smooth, long, filled with veins showing me that I have caught up with my past. My lives converge here, in these hands. I will live. I will love. I will make children and

tend to them. I will grow every kind of plant imaginable. I will cure the sick; the lonely, the errant spirits. This is the life I have dreamed of since the day the invaders plunged onto our shores like comets" (131). The mambo's hands consequently represent historical palimpsests embedded with implicit knowledge in the form of corporeal markings. Her veins and palm lines trace the visible maternal roots of history and the invisible routes to and from the ancestral world of *Ginen*. These markings testify to spirituality's lived historicity in Haiti, where Sycorax's mother culture manages to survive in the "huge pulsating heart" (131) of a tormented country in dire need of healing today.

Sycorax assumes many human and divine faces in Caribbean literature, where she is also associated with the natural imagery of serpents. Aimé Césaire's play, *A Tempest*, makes reference to Sycorax as "Mother, Serpent, rain, lightning" (1985, 12), while Chancy describes her mambo character as a woman with sinewy limbs and a snake-like body. The connection between Sycorax, serpents, and religion reveals the dynamism of the forked tongue of the serpent as a symbol of its linguistic, gendered, and cultural polyvalence resurrecting the mother goddess culture of the Haitian *loa* Ayida-wèdo. The serpent represents a vital symbol in the pantheon of Vodou gods through its primary association with the male serpent-god Damballah. Endowed with a creative and life-sustaining force, the serpent has been identified as a predominantly phallic signifier of cosmic fusion and sexual transcendence in its "earthly" manifestation of a divine presence.[6] As the very (re)incarnation of the essence of life, the serpent personifies the power of Damballah, the almighty force or primal energy. Damballah's primacy of representation does not however eclipse the fact that his "essential" powers can only be realized and maintained through the complementary positioning of a divine female force, his consort Ayida-wèdo, who assumes the yin-yang balance of life. However, Ayida-wèdo is almost always presented as a "satellite" force whose secondary influence makes her a mere projection of Damballah's omnipresence. On the other hand, she also fuses with him in a kaleidescopic rainbow-like configuration to embrace a certain totality of union. While Dahomean cosmology identifies the snake as an overwhelmingly masculine force, "Sycorax historicity" asserts that, contrary to popular belief, the snake represents a certain transgendered neutrality. This positioning invalidates the sole primacy of the male by conferring the feminine with an autonomous cosmic value. This value positions her as an equal component within a larger framework of reference.

In the ancient cultures of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, Mesoamerica, and Sumer, serpent worship was originally associated with the cult of the mother goddess. Represented as mediators between the physical and spiritual realms of human existence, snakes provided the very "backbone" of human longevity

and spiritually motivated creative energy. The integrative consciousness of the mother principle symbolized the very nexus of life and transcendent wisdom. The serpent's "natural" ability to promote the complementary existence of the divine and the mortal, the celestial and the terrestrial through a process of cyclical rejuvenation ensured the effective elimination of binary forces. Based on the qualities of inclusion and creative expansiveness to embrace multidimensional and bisexual spheres of influence simultaneously, the snake cult guaranteed female agency by the celebration of a woman-centered divine polytheism. These religions provided women with a certain plurality of representation and expression in ancient cultures. The mother cultures influenced by serpent worship facilitated the right to free expression and self-affirmation later negated by the institutionalization of patriarchy. Whereas this culture revered women "since they held the divine principle of creativity within their own bodies" (Condren 1989, 17), patriarchal culture in the form of religious monotheism would use this very same principle of creativity against women by marginalizing them within inhibiting codes of sexuality. These norms prescribed reproduction and confinement as the norms of female social propriety.

The demonizing of Sycorax, as a parallel devaluing of serpent worship, can be traced to the story of Eve as the very incarnation of the diabolical serpent-woman. She supposedly sells the soul of mankind to perdition by collaborating with the serpent-disguised-as-devil, as demonstrated in the Genesis myth. In the context of Vodou, the superimposition of Catholicism onto African systems of belief reinforced the ambivalence toward woman-centered snake cults by perpetuating the phallically-determined misrepresentations found in monotheism. As demonstrated in Lilas Desquiron's *Reflections of Loko Miwa* (1998), the association of woman and serpent, as characterized by her mulatta protagonist Violaine Delavigne and the mambo Mme Chavannes, is condemned by restrictive social taboos of middle-class morality. These taboos identify snake power with evil, a negative force to be eliminated. While Vodou maintains a high level of respect for snakes in their association with male gods, the serpent's corresponding linkage with women becomes a source of disavowal for the Haitian mulatto elite anxious to negate its matrilineal ascendancy to blackness in the novel.

Reflections of Loko-Miwa positions the serpent as a symbol of African blackness created by the cosmic fusion between Damballah and Ayida-wèdo, and represented by the characters Alexandre and Violaine. The associations of blackness with original sin and the ensuing feelings of guilt and shame, as reflected in the Bible, are converted into black power instead. This power symbolizes a politicized force that has provided the basis for resistance movements in Haiti and the African diaspora. In her introduction to the English translation of the novel, Marie-Agnès Sourieau highlights the anti-black racialism demonstrated by the mulatto elite by affirming, "By adopting European intellectual

and aesthetic norms, mostly French, the mulattos progressively began to distance themselves from their African origins, favoring light-skinned pigmentation and encouraging marriages that would 'improve the race,' that is to say, whiten it" (1998, xi). The association of whiteness with a position of distinction by the Haitian elite reveals the consequences of its psychological colonization by French cultural and intellectual indoctrination, whereby the valorization of light skin leads to a corresponding devaluing of blackness. Alexandre, the black proletarian lover of the mulatta heroine Violaine, exposes the inverse logic of denial used by the mixed-race elite of the first independent black nation by proclaiming, "You know better than I the revulsion Jeremiean mulattos have for that Negro they all carry within themselves and have desperately relegated to the most obscure part of their memory. You're aware of their very real fear, which is of course absurd, of falling back into original sin, of regressing to that primitive source, their accursed origins." (1998, 60–61).

Like the fear associated with Sycorax's darkness, the elite identify blackness with the primal fear of confronting the shame of one's "primitive" origins by seeking illusory comfort in the eradication of all traces of their black identity. The Violaine-Aleandre union, as a "natural" fusion of blackness, is deemed unnatural or sinful by racial and class prejudices. Constituting the ultimate violation of middle-class mulatto morality with its strict enforcement of epidermal and psychic whitening, the converse process of delactification represented by the union becomes a valuable model of resistance to social interdictions. In fact, the corporeal fusion of the two lovers merges into a more spiritual union (Damballah and Ayida-wèdo) whose power remains unrestrained. This energy also provides women with an important locus by reinstating Ayida-wèdo's place of distinction as the serpent mother. The mother founds a healing history for Haitian women through a serpentine reconnection with the past. The novel demonstrates how the snake provides the very locus of female cultural claiming through its agile amphibian negotiation of trees and rivers associated with the strong physical presence of roots (trees) that pave the way for a more ambitious spiritual routing through Guinen or the land of *konesans*. In this fashion, the serpent's aquatic culture receives new meaning when its Catholic-inspired connotation of original sin is creatively transformed into an affirming black female subjectivity represented by Ayida-wèdo and her fictionalized followers in the novel.

Karen McCarthy Brown emphasizes the connection between the serpent and the resurrection of Haitian memory when she claims, "The serpent, who gives up its skin in order to recreate itself and thus remain what it is, connects Haitians to their lost African ancestors and, at the same time, shows them how to be flexible enough to adapt to whatever the future brings" (1991, 275). By enabling Haitians to reconnect with their lost roots, the serpent provides the

essential link of intergenerational continuity symbolized by the interconnection of the scales on its skin as a reflection of a larger connection between generations. Each scale represents a generational life span that establishes a continuous chain of influence on successive generations. The circular structure of the scales highlights the idea of a continuum displacing the fragmentation of human existence, especially in terms of gender. McCarthy Brown underlines the snake's dual capacity to move between the opposites of land and water by uniting them and generating life, as well as its ability to tunnel through the earth and connect the land above with the waters below (1991, 274). The serpent's circuitous path to reconcile the two seemingly opposed elements of land and water, as well as the two dimensions of the spiritual and physical, resembles a journey of excavation. This journey unearths "original" knowledge buried in the earth's underbelly by socialized knowledge sustained in the name of bourgeois hypocrisy.

The roots of original knowledge or konesans are symbolized by the sacred *mapou* or ancestral silk-cotton tree, another habitat of the snake. The *mapou* represents both the "tree of knowledge" and the "tree of life." Trees have their roots in the water, while extending themselves upward toward the sky. Characterizing the permanence and rootedness of tradition, the *mapou* becomes a projection of the earth's belly, pregnant with a rich history. Women can be compared to trees in their role as the "branches of tradition" that uphold valuable social and familial values. In other words, women have been responsible for maintaining the social equilibrium of their communities through their intrafamilial and communal duties as caretakers, educators, preservers of society's cultural heritage, and consolidators of the household economy. McCarthy Brown states that by shouldering the burden of the family tree, women uphold and maintain the Vodou principle of dynamic balance in life (1991, 305). This balance is ensured by a root-like connection with the ancestors of the underworld of mythical *Ginen*, or Mother Africa, recreated as a spiritualized feminine force.

Like the regenerative powers of the amniotic fluids of the mother's womb, water possesses a similar mystical power of transcendence in Vodou. The roots of the *mapou* tree are consistently nourished by the biological nutrients of water, just as water represents the birthing place of the serpent. By locating the ancestors as underground spirits, water also supplies the essential spiritual lifeline to the gods who, according to Joan Dayan, are simultaneously present in the human blood stream and rivers (1995b, 33). Water reflects the mirrored form of the ancestors as an immediate and guiding presence, just as the serpent provides living proof of a divine existence. McCarthy Brown establishes the connection between women, water, and *Ginen*, "The connection of mirrors, water and *Ginen*, the home of the spirits, makes a complex, uroboric point. Gazing into the water, a woman sees her own reflection, and through it, simultaneously,

she sees the lwa. Superimposed on the faces of the lwa, she sees the faces of the ancestors, because an ancestor returns to the living in the form of the lwa he or she revered most during life. Thus, Haitians gazing into the mirror surface of the ocean that separates them from Africa see in intermingled reflections the lwa, the ancestors, and themselves" (1991, 284).

In other words, water mirrors back a genealogical timeline that establishes ancestry to counter the alienating forces of geographical dispersal and social fragmentation resulting from colonization and dictatorial oppression also described in *The Dew Breaker*. This sense of continuity has been vital to ensure cultural continuity by tracing the roots of memory. Correspondingly, the "snake symbolizes a bloodline continuous through time, one running along the spine of blood and memory" (McCarthy Brown 1991, 283). Each vertebra of the snake corresponds with a particular branch of history; each branch remains nonlinear in its progression to demonstrate how linear discourses have eliminated the traditional wisdom of the ancestors through the limiting perspectives of chronological vision critiqued earlier by Glissant.

Ancestral wisdom is symbolized by the loftiness of the *mapou* tree whose branches represent vital libraries of knowledge. Women's connections to the roots and branches of the *mapou* are particularly important given the fact that even though they have been mythologized as the branches of culture, they have been simultaneously submerged under the falsities of history, as indicated in previous chapters. Their resurrection from oblivion has depended upon their access to roots as life preservers and instruments of survival; according to the patriarchal requirements of Haitian law and tradition, the father's name and authority establish genealogy and inheritance rights (McCarthy Brown 1991, 16). However, in the novel, Violaine quickly subverts the masculine "origin" of roots when she refers to the *mapou* in the feminine form by describing it as the maternal womb. She exclaims, "It's that maternal womb, that female tree that has engendered us all" (1998, 13). The *mapou* undergoes a symbolic rebirthing in Violaine's narrative to resurrect Ayida-wèdo and Sycorax's maternal genealogy. This symbolic renewal of life parallels the serpent's regeneration in nature and revives Sycorax's aquatic historicity located in her island origin.

As mentioned earlier, women's access to the underwater world of the ancestors is integral to their reclaimed subjectivity. In the novel, the mambo Mme Chavannes acquires her spiritual powers from her contact with water and her participation in a vital serpent culture. Her connection with the serpent is manifested through certain corporeal signifiers symbolized by her arching eyebrows as an overt inscription of snake power on her body. The novel describes Mme Chavannes as "the most famous manbò from Grandans. With just a slight movement of that perfect arch of her eyebrows, she could virtually do anything

she wanted with that mountain of flesh and wisdom" (Desquiron 1998, 38). The overt sexism of the Genesis myth is countered by the positive identification between serpent-woman judging by the position of distinction that the mambo occupies in the novel. The forbidden knowledge provided by the serpent in the Christian text converts itself into the laws of nature in Desquiron's novel, as guiding principles of life imprinted on the female body.

The serpent provides women with a new language of self-expression, a new method of "speaking in tongues, from a space 'in-between each other' which is a communal space" (Bhabha 1994, 17). The in-between language represents linguistic polyvalence in the symbolic form of the serpent's forked tongue. While the forked tongue of the serpent has traditionally been linked with duplicity and untruths, the positive affirmation of the serpent in Desquiron's text represents the forked tongue as an ancestral mother tongue, the language of the foremothers that has "deviated" from male-determined ideologies in a creative uncensoring of expression. Comparable to the spirit language of the shaman, this language also finds expression in Chancy's novel where Mami Céleste "could be heard speaking in an unnatural voice. We thought she spoke in tongues" (2005, 52). This "unrecognizable" language reclaims women's discredited stories and "subjugated knowledge" (Lara 2004, 34) in an uncensored "maternal-speak" as the original voice of the foremother. Her speech is feared because of the accountability she demands for violations against the sanctity of a woman-centered Sycorax worship represented by Ayida-wèdo and serpent culture.

Sycorax's Indianité (Indianness)

Sycorax's cultural polyvalence initiates a truly cross-cultural engagement with French Caribbeanness in Martinique and Guadeloupe through the Hindu mother-deity Maryamma, who is venerated by the South-Indian Tamilian diaspora. As an acknowledgement of the Indian presence in the Caribbean, Sycorax's "darkness" nevertheless reveals the marginalized historicity of rural Indians in Martinique and Guadeloupe disfavored as ethnic and cultural minorities by the more dominant Afro-Caribbean Creole populations. As a symbolic recreation of Sycorax in text, Maryamma personifies the liminality of Francophone Indo-Caribbean identity by giving birth to this experience during the *kala pani*, evidenced in her appellation *amma* or mother.[7] The later creolization of Maryamma's name to Maliémin, wherein the letter "l" replaced the letter "r," according to Ernest Moutoussamy (1987, 36), further revealed the trajectories of Francophone Indo-Caribbeans as they simultaneously accommodated and resisted assimilation to the dominant Afro-Creole and colonial cultures. Maryamma or Maliémin worship thereby gave visibility to the lesser-known past of the Tamilian South-Asian diaspora overlooked on account of the biases

of language, class, ethnicity, skin color, and geography, as indicated in the Introduction.[8]

Hindu caste orderings situated *Brahmans*, or members of the spiritual and religious elite, at the highest level of the social and occupational order, followed by the warrior *Kshatriya* caste, the merchant *Vaishya* class, and lastly, the *Sudra* or "untouchables." The *Sudra* were located at the lowest level in this hierarchy of discrimination. Reduced to a subhuman level of existence by Hindu caste prejudices, objectified in terms of labor and service to a higher Brahmanic authority (hence the terminology *coolie* or menial worker), *Sudras* and working-class Indians comprised the majority of the indentured workers sent to the French Caribbean. Forced to "choose" between overseas migration and rural poverty, prejudice, and abuse in India, indentured Indians nevertheless faced renewed intolerance in the Caribbean through colonial and African racializations of *coolie* or *malabar* identity (as indicated in Chapter 4). These racist epithets confined Indo-Caribbeanness to labor exploitation (*coolie*) and geographical alterity associated with Indian foreignness (the Malabar coast of India). The mother cult was thereby crucial to both validate a disempowered history and humanize a population from its continued abjection in India and in diaspora. At the same time, it is important to note that the Atlantic crossings lead to a dismantling of caste hierarchies maintained in India; indenture reduced all Indians to commodified objects of cane labor irrespective of caste designations, even though certain caste and class orderings were still preserved by the Brahman priests. As Singaravelou states, "The caste system as it existed—or still exists—in India has disappeared in the Caribbean. However, a hierarchy of status exists centered on the Brahmins, in which the Brahmin ideology is reflected through a system of values and a way of thinking (1994, 32).

Maliémin initiates a new historicity for Francophone Indo-Caribbeans by uncovering this religion's non-Brahmanic rural roots located in the ancient Dravidian cultures of Southern India that favored goddess worship. In Martinique and Guadeloupe, the absence of the Brahmanic trinity of Brahma (Creator), Vishnu (Preserver), and Shiva (Destroyer) as the foundational base of patriarchal Hinduism creates a space for the maternal roots of Hinduisim, whereby disenfranchised Indians could affiliate with a strong female figure as the goddess of safe passage and the mother of diasporic identity. Identifications with the goddess enabled lower-caste Indians to survive the dual impact of social orphanhood in India in terms of their ostracism from upper class Hindu society and their existential orphaning in the Caribbean occasioned by the severing of ties with the ancestral land.[9] This dual problematic inscribed the mother's presence within the paradoxical framing of protector and destroyer, evidenced

by her simultaneous characterization in India and the French Caribbean as the goddess of smallpox and the mother of all creation.

As a mediator between life's oppositional forces, Maliémin incarnates the vital energy needed to confront adversity, destroy negativity, and create new beginnings. As the earth's primal force of *Shakti*, a divine energy that infuses life through movement, synchronicity, and harmonious balance between opposites, Maliémin is also represented as Shiva's *shakti* (Moutoussamy 1987, 36). Unlike monotheism, she confirms the maternal derivation of all forms of creation and even provides the motivating force behind the male god's spiritual vigor. Maliémin is therefore responsible for giving birth to a rich Indian heritage, especially in Guadeloupe, where she remains a strong marker of Indian cultural retention and the efforts to contest "deculturation." The powers of creation in mother-worship are directly associated with *shakti's* regenerating force, which underlies the centrality of the mother principle in Tamilian-Hindu divination. This principle does not, however, neutralize male energy in a negating binary. Maliémin's association with her male consort Maldévilin highlights the *Prakriti-Purush* (female-male) energy that sustains the world in a bisexual equation; this is also revealed in the Damballah-Ayida-wèdo pairing in Vodou.

The preeminence of Maliémin can be determined by the fact that in Guadeloupe itself there are over sixty chapels dedicated to her worship (Moutoussamy 1987, 30). In Martinique, she asserts her authority in the more Christianized form of Maria or Mary, culturally assimilated in the name of the Virgin Mother. Maliémin's cult represents the very locus of Indo-Caribbean ethnicity in Guadeloupe, where almost 80 percent of the Indian population practices some form of Hinduism and goddess worship (Moutoussamy 1987, 31). On the other hand, her culturally syncretized face in Martinique reveals the greater assimilation of Indians to Catholicism and Christian values. Sita Swami indicates that when Indians in Martinique were evangelized, Catholic beliefs replaced Hindu theology as an affirmation of their superiority over the "primitiveness" and vulgarity of Hindu rites and traditions; as a result, Indians were irreversibly disconnected from the Indian cultural heritage (2003, 1176). In addition, connections between the Hindu goddess and Christianity were further reinforced by Maliémin's assimilation to France, the "mother" country, thereby representing her spiritual acculturation to the foreign god or goddess of departmentalization. While this allegiance inscribes itself on the "body" in the form of a tricolor scarf that decorates her statues in Martinique (Farrugia 1975, 107), it also reveals Indian attempts to indigenize or Hinduize French dominance in acts of spiritual assertion. The very presence of these shrines testifies to Maliémin's interstitial presence. Her presence is located in these mnemonic traces of the Indian

past, a past that constantly inserts itself "discreetly," although pervasively, in the "absent-present" vestiges of Indian culture which survive in Martinique today.[10]

Swami asserts that in Martinique, statues of Maliémin are adorned in yellow and are almost always made to resemble representations of the Virgin or another Catholic saint (2003, 1177). Maliémin's Christianized façade invites parallels with the Haitian goddess of love Erzulie, who is also identified with the Virgin, thereby creating an implicit connection between three diasporic mothers: Erzulie, Maliémin, and the Virgin. This multifaced spirituality is evidence of Sycorax's spiritual polycentrism that creates a feminized trinity uniting the Francophone Caribbean in a rhizomatic spiritual consciousness. These different positionings of the goddess can be seen as an example of her transculturation in the Caribbean, also indicating the ways in which she negotiates life's polarities though the variables of change, adaptation, and revival.

Dany Bébel-Gisler's novel, *Léonora: l'Histoire enfouie de la Guadeloupe*, positions Maliémin worship as an important aspect of the social functioning of an Indian community in Guadeloupe. In this narrative of historical claiming, the narrator Léonora tells her life story in an attempt to resurrect the buried histories of Afro-Guadeloupean women and, in so doing, she creates a textual space to insert the experiences of Indians as well. Describing the majority of rural Indians as disinherited and marginalized in the community of Capesterre Belle-Eau, the novel nevertheless represents Indians as an integral part of Guadeloupean society, where they occupy a tenuous median position that vacillates between rejection and acceptance. While the rural poor who lived on the plantations were scorned for their destitution and foreign ways ("the Indians were not looked upon favorably in the commune" [Bébel-Gisler 1985, 41; my translation]), middle-class Indians were able to "buy" their respectability and forge bonds of friendship with their Afro-Caribbean counterparts through class-based solidarities; both groups "got along well and mixed frequently with each other" (1985, 41; my translation). For working-class rural Indians caught between discriminating classism and racialized paradigms of difference, the reclaiming of self by monetary mediation and social position was not an option.

In this context, the worshiping of Maliémin becomes an important ritual of repossession and communal rehabilitation, the affirmation of a proletarian Indian identity anchored in the soil. Maliémin's rootedness symbolically reclaims Sycorax's exile from the land in a transdiasporic ceremony worthy of remembrance. As the novel reveals, "The true Indians called 'coolie Malabar,' 'Teïta,' were dispossessed, and worked and lived on the plantations, at Cambrefort and Changi. When they got together in a large group, it always led to a memorable event" (Bébel-Gisler 1985, 41–42; my translation). As two Indian-dominated towns, Cambrefort and Changi establish the Indian sense

of place in Guadeloupe as evidenced in the "grounded" sanctity of land, where the goddess is commemorated in important temples and shrines such as the Temple of Changy. Khal Torabully emphasizes the pre-eminence of the land in the construction of Indian diasporic identity; the first indentured immigrations were an agricultural labor force that toiled the land to make its first impression on non-native soil. The Indian identification with the land was twofold, symbolizing a metaphysical umbilical affiliation with the rural lands of India as well as a politicized inscription of memory in the soil. The duality of the land, representing both spirituality and the abjection of labor exploitation, mirrors the paradoxical positioning of the goddess who keeps the community in check through a system of devotional service. At the same time, she provides the necessary creative force to liberate the tensions of the ego that are manifested in illness, bad intent, avarice, and other maladies of the body and soul.

As a diasporic goddess, Maliémin represents the collective unconscious of the Indo-Caribbean communities who invoke her presence as the protector of the families of indenture. Her innate sense of justice positions her on the side of the social underdog, whereby she represents the dispossessed by bestowing "favors" in acts of kindness and generosity (Moutoussamy 1987, 37). At the same time, she demands absolute fidelity from her followers; they must provide offerings of respect in a reciprocal engagement. As a vegetarian goddess, these offerings include coconuts, bananas, Tamilian rice pudding (*pongal)*, sugar, flowers, incense, and camphor (Moutoussamy 1987, 38) as evidence of an ancestral ethic of devotion inscribed within a rural sensibility of nature worship. Moreover, the use of specific Tamil words such as *pangou panin* (the ceremonial process of preparing rice pudding) and *pongal* (the finished product) (Moutoussamy 1987, 38) preserves traces of an ancient Indian language that contests the linguistic hegemony of French or Creole. Failure to comply with these spiritual codes of allegiance result in the goddess's wrath for violating a sacred pact between the individual and the divinity, a transgression that can seriously harm the community through smallpox and cholera—the deity's final judgment against an insincere congregation.

The novel highlights Maliémin's paradoxical qualities as life-giver, protector, social regulator, and destroyer; she embodies a self-composed imminence bypassing the trinitarian configuration of the male gods. Statues of the goddess depict her with four arms, symbolizing her authority over the four cardinal points of the universe, which mark the convergence of the four realms of existence (physical, psychological, spiritual, cosmic) into her essence. This distinction makes her the most beloved and the most intimidating goddess of the Tamilian diaspora in the French Caribbean. She is celebrated for her maternal qualities and feared for her more punitive aspects, which are revealed in the text

thus: "Malyenmé! You have to be careful of the goddess of the Indians. She is very good, especially if you want to have a child or if you are barren or need to be cured from sickness. But, be careful, friends! If you do not keep your promises, Malyenmé's anger is without respite" (Bébel-Gisler 1985, 168; my translation). At the same time, the threat of an incurable disease for violating an inviolable bond can actually represent a system of social and moral regulation destined to preserve a community's core integrity. This ethos of accountability and selflessness represents yet another method of transcending the ego's self-centeredness, also evident in Mami Celeste's quest for *konesans* in *The Scorpion's Claw*.

The goddess regulates the internal equilibrium of the Indian community through her system of "checks and balances" as a stepping-stone to a more synchronic external harmony with their Afro-Caribbean neighbors. This phenomenon is manifested by the shared commemoration of her worship by Hindu Indo-Caribbeans and Christian Afro-Caribbeans alike in a "*douglarized*" positioning of Caribbean spirituality. Spiritualized *douglarization* goes beyond the variants of biology and race to include an integral consciousness as a search for common ground between Indians and Africans. The worship of Maliémin encourages a "bilateral positioning" of faith, invalidating the exclusivity of racialized binaries that promote antagonism, misunderstanding, and cultural invalidation. The mutuality of this experience demonstrates a unique spiritual symbiosis described in the novel thus: "For the feast of Maliémin, their most important religious feast, the Indians invited everyone to share the curried goat served on banana leaves, without discriminating against anyone on the basis of skin color . . . All the blacks who wanted to participate were invited too" (Bébel-Gisler 1985, 42; my translation). This feast occasions a truly participatory celebration among all members of the community by overcoming the limitations of partisan interest. Maliémin, as the mother of all, favors an antidiscriminatory ethic by giving birth to new forms of cooperation between Indians and Africans. She also embraces the ideal of transcending ego-driven models of Indianness and blackness to achieve an antiracist and spiritually transcendent Caribbeanness.

The language of food is an integral part of Sycorax historicity. Food represents a form of philosophical thought, cultural praxis, and an important aspect of goddess worship as seen in the figure of Maliémin. The link between philosophy and food as a system of semiotics and intellectual production has long been undermined in male-centered Western philosophical discourses that have privileged intellectual reasoning over bodily knowledge in a confining mind versus body, spirit versus matter, male versus female binary. Plato's *Republic* reduces cooking to a minor craft, a distraction and foil to "the genuine knowledge of

the rational soul" (Heldke 1992a, 211) compromised by the banality of corporeal consumption. Focusing on the preeminence of the rational soul as the ultimate signifier of human (i.e., male) perfection, Plato subsequently trivializes all other forms of symbolic and gendered activity that do not conform to the abstractions of rational thought. As Lisa Heldke affirms, "Emerging from the *Republic* is Plato's view that cooking, like all other crafts, is at best marginally relevant to the acquisition of wisdom . . . By carving the soul into reason, spirit, and appetite, Plato separates reason from all other faculties . . . He terms bodily appetites unreasonable, and regards them as things to be controlled by reason" (1992a, 209; 211). By ignoring the intimate synergy between food and reason, Plato fails to recognize their interdependence in the production of knowledge; an unhealthy, overfed, or malnourished body can only produce partial wisdom without the supporting systems of proper nourishment and sustenance.

Plato's philosophical abstractions are undermined by the seventeenth-century Mexican philosopher-nun Sor Juana de la Cruz for whom cooking represents a particular form of "thoughtful practice" (Heldke 1992a, 214). Food symbolizes an ethos of life and ethical praxis located in scientific experimentation, metaphysical reasoning, and critical cogitation. In a letter written to a female patron, Sor Juana states, "Well, and what then shall I tell you, my Lady, of the secrets of nature that I have learned while cooking? I observe that an egg becomes solid and cooks in butter or oil, and on the contrary that it dissolves in sugar syrup. Or again, to ensure that sugar flow freely one need only add the slightest bit of water that has held quince or some other sour fruit" (1994, 75). The reference to the secrets of nature positions cooking as a complex activity beyond mere reason, a form of knowledge based on the synchronic and intersectional workings of the intellectual, physical, and spiritual planes of human existence. Cooking represents a form of alchemy and balance involving a deep understanding of food chemistry, appropriate measuring, and mixing. In fact, the absence of such complementarity leads to decreased productivity and impoverished thought as revealed in Sor Juana's comments about Aristotle. She asserts, "Had Aristotle cooked, he would have written a great deal more" (1994, 75). Moreover, Sor Juana invests cooking with the powers of the transcendent, wherein cooking symbolizes a divine form of communication with God and a creative feeding of the spirit. Cooking becomes the nun's coded language and a discrete form of resistance to Church orthodoxy, while expressing her deep commitment to the intellectual process. The Bishop of Puebla strictly forbade Sor Juana to engage in philosophical thought. Following the tenants of Paul the Apostle, the Bishop strictly believed that women should remain silent in church (Sor Juana 1994, 81). Consequently, Sor Juana used cooking as a form

of writing to demonstrate the link between the "grammatology of food" and the language of philosophical discourse.

Sor Juana elevates cooking to the level of a creative form of dissident praxis, while intellectualizing the domestic space of the kitchen. She demonstrates how women have always created philosophy without necessarily being schooled in the male academy. At the same time, she subverts the loftiness of a masculinist philosophical tradition by recentering it within the ordinariness of home space, wherein women script their culinary "analects" in the laboratory of the kitchen. Equating cooking with the production of discourse or theory, Sor Juana feminizes philosophy and extricates it from its class-coded positionality. The nun reveals how true wisdom is an embodied form of knowledge based on everyday experience. Heldke asserts, "Bodily knowledge is acquired through embodied experience" (1992a, 219). The art of cooking brings women to the forefront of philosophical thought by highlighting and legitimizing their transformative culinary engagements with reason. These critical inquiries problematize and season the blandness of disembodied platonic thought through the innate wisdom of the cook. Her expertise does not depend solely on philosophical abstraction, but on an intimate understanding of *jouissance*, or the art of producing and experiencing sensorial bliss in the kitchen.

* * *

I use Sor Juana as an example to demonstrate how women use symbolic praxis such as cooking to transcend their subaltern status as women who are excluded from mainstream cultural and intellectual production in a transnational context. Marginalized by the Catholic Church because of gender and biological illegitimacy, Sor Juana's experiences bring to mind the similar erasure of Sycorax in masculinist Caribbean thought where she is relegated to the margins in Caliban-centered discourses, as mentioned earlier. However, these mothers of intellectual thought politicize the kitchen on both a literal and figurative level, transforming it into a creative workshop where they experiment with different recipes. These "recipes" are needed to establish their own intellectual authority and preserve the social identity of their communities in the face of diasporic wounds such as colonization, patriarchal orthodoxy, gender disenfranchisement, migration, and exile. In the context of the Caribbean, Sycorax provides the necessary food for thought for generations of women writers silenced by marginality and exclusion. As Kamau Brathwaite states, "We do not have to use only Prospero's language in our efforts to understand ourselves; we still have the mother's milk of language to fall back on" (1984, 44–45). The language of food

becomes a recuperative mother tongue by giving voice to silence through the impermeability of white ink or milk.

The mother's milk engenders a new form of writing and inspires creativity when the immobilized tongue is released from its captivity. Like the invisible ink inscribed on a palimpsest, the mother's ink resists deletion despite years of colonization and the imposition of foreign tongues. The mother tongue consequently represents the *Ursprache* of female intellectual thought as a primary language expressed in the sensorial evocation of food and a pre-Prospero discurvitity. It is articulated in the form of "an epistemological cookbook" (Heldke 1992b, 258). This culinary epistemology contains a complicated internal logic without which knowledge is compromised or lost. In addition, it must be pointed out that the reference to mother's milk does not confine Sycorax solely to the passivity of biological motherhood in her role as nurturer and caregiver. Chantal Zebus mistakenly asserts, "if the primal Sycorax-figure can only communicate through her 'mother's milk' the elements Caliban will need to become the sole gendered agent of change in postcolonial society, then Sycorax is once again pushed back to the inner recesses of motherhood" (2002, 61). Minimizing Sycorax's cultural and intellectual importance in the Caribbean, Zebus fails to recognize her transformative potential. Mother's milk as another kind of ink engenders an antiessentialist, anticolonialist discourse of female creativity and social change in the writings of both female and male authors such as Brathwaite. Mother's milk resists the imprint of coloniality by preserving female ancestral traditions seasoned by orality and the discursiveness of writing.

In her recent book, *Victoire: les saveurs et les mots*, Maryse Condé pays a moving tribute to her maternal grandmother, Victoire Elodie Quidal. Victoire's memorable cooking enables her to brave life's adversities as a working-class black female cook in the service of the white Guadeloupean bourgeoisie. Victoire can be inscribed within the discourse of Sycorax historicity through her life struggles and survival skills. At the same time, she provides valuable insights into the dynamics of cooking as a form of Caribbean feminist thought. Representing the voiceless in society, "à quoi servait cette grand-mère créolophone et illettrée" (Condé 2006, 242; my translation) [what was the role of this creolophone and uneducated grandmother?], Victoire nevertheless adds another dimension to the female intellectual traditions of the Francophone Caribbean by re-sensitizing the mother tongue through the flavors of Caribbean cooking. Like Sycorax, Victoire's life resembles an arduous Middle Passage, complicated by the rupture of maternal ties. As the novel indicates, "Que pensa Victoire pendant l'interminable traversée? Savait-elle qu'elle voyait Marie-Galante pour la dernière fois . . . l'île plate qui abritait la tombe de sa mère et sa grand-mère?" (75; my translation). [What was Victoire thinking about during the

interminable crossing? Did she know she was seeing Marie-Galante for the last time . . . the flat island that sheltered the tomb of her mother and grandmother?] Exiled from her native island due to racism and social prejudice leveled against a young, unwed mother, Victoire faces a life of domestic slavery characterized by housework and back-breaking labor. Her only salvation from anonymity resides in her cooking skills, which acquire a monumental reputation among the gentry of La Pointe.

Ironically, Victoire's story remains silenced within Condé's own family. Her image is confined to a fading print on a sepia-colored photograph (Condé 2006, 13), destined to be forgotten with time. Inspired by the image, Condé asks her mother for details on the grandmother's life. Her questions remain unanswered except for the mother's following statement: "Une cuisinière hors pair, dit ma mère avec emphase. Sa main était celle d'un véritable chef" (15) [An exemplary cook, said my mother emphatically. Her hand was that of a true chef; my translation]. The reference to the masterful hands of the chef reminds Condé of her own mastery of writing. She wonders how her creative imaginary might have been further "peppered" by the grandmother's influence and her strong oral skills. She says, "Je me demande souvent ce qu'auraient été mon rapport à moi-même, ma vision de mon pays, des Antilles du monde en général, ce qu'aurait été mon écriture . . . si j'avais sauté sur le genoux d'une grand-mère . . . D'une grand-mère, ancienne étoile du gwo ka ou de la mazouk me soufflant à l'oreille un mythe doucereux du passé" (17) [I have often wondered what my relationship to my self, my vision of my country, of the Antilles and the world in general would have been, what my writing would have been like . . . had I bounced on the knees of a grandmother . . . Of a grandmother, a former star of *gwo ka* (traditional drumming) or mazurka, whispering a gentle myth of the past in my ear; my translation].

The narrator's regrets highlight her mourning for a lost maternal heritage whose erasure may have compromised her own creative skills, just as Sycorax's excision from Caribbean memory has denied women and men a foundational reference point. The use of the past conditional tense in the quotation indicates unknown possibilities and missed opportunities, thereby furthering Condé's resolve to document her grandmother's life in narrative. The discursive act represents a ritual of commemoration seeking to reinstate the fragmented maternal genealogy through binding ties between food, writing, and memory. Like Sycorax's story, the grandmother's life needs to be "imagined" as an act of recreation, whereby she is willed into existence through the resuscitating power of memory. Condé states, "Ce que je veux, c'est revendiquer l'héritage de cette femme qui apparemment n'en laissa pas. Etablir le lien qui unit sa créativité à la mienne. Passer des saveurs, des couleurs, des odeurs des chairs ou de légumes à celles des

mots. Victoire ne savait nommer ses plats et ne semblait pas s'en soucier . . . Sans parler, tête baissée, absorbée devant son *potajé* tel l'écrivain devant son ordinateur" (Condé 2006, 85) [All I want is to claim the heritage of this woman who apparently did not leave one. Establish the link between her creativity and my own. Transform tastes, colors, the smell of meat and vegetables into words. Victoire did not know how to name her dishes and didn't seem to care about that . . . Without speaking, her head bent, fully absorbed in front of her cooking stove like the writer in front of her computer; my translation]. Writing, like cooking, becomes a highly sensorial ritual of memory when tastes and odors are transformed into words as living testimony of the grandmother's life. The language of cooking as Victoire's symbolic alphabet and medium of expression combines with the writer's words to produce a creative philosophy of the senses. This "gastrophilic" connection between grandmother and granddaughter becomes the common recipe or language uniting (auto)biographical writing and culinary syntax (Roy 2002, 473), an intergenerational script that reinstates the silenced tongue of Sycorax.

The revived mother tongue inscribes its corporeal and symbolic presence in text indicated by the frequent references to the grandmother's inimitable hands as agents of culinary production; the mother tongue simultaneously reinstates the obscured female imaginary as the source of creative consciousness evident in Victoire's legendary cooking. The novel highlights this connection thus: "Pourtant, dès le premier jour, son destin prit forme. Elle révéla sa main incomparable. Elle conquit la famille Dulieu-Beaufort avec un velouté au giraumon et aux crabes noirs" (Condé 2006, 66–67) [However, her destiny was determined on the very first day. She demonstrated her incomparable talent. She conquered the Dulieu-Beaufort family with black crabs in a creamy pumpkin sauce; my translation] Cooking represents Victoire's divine mission; she transforms the kitchen into a temple of production and creation through sensorial knowledge. If kitchen labor represents a site of domesticity for Victoire, it also symbolizes power, energy, and imagination. Cooking reveals the grandmother's secret wisdom, positioned in terms of harmonious creation, a unique philosophy of existence that embraces the harmony of life. "Ses doigts pianotaient, crépitaient, versaient le sel, le safran et la cardamome, coupant, désossant, parant. Elle fut aussi heureuse de retrouver les après-midi résonnant d'harmonie" (170) [Her fingers moved playfully, pattered, poured salt, saffron and cardamom, cutting, de-boning, paring. She was also happy to have found again these afternoons resonating with harmony; my translation]. Salt, saffron, and cardamom provide the basic ingredients to chart a harmonious landscape seasoned with contrasting yet complementary tastes. This complementarity is reversed by sensorial imbalances resulting from the self's extreme dispossession in a racist, sexist, and class

conscious milieu revealed in the conflicting flavors and unpalatable combination of Indian tamarind and old rum (215).

The narrative indicates how Victoire's subaltern status is inscribed on her body as a symbol of its physical enslavement within colonial and patriarchal systems of domination (Condé 2006, 90). At the same time, cooking resists the physicality of subjugation by extending itself beyond corporeality in an ultimate union with the Transcendent. As the novel demonstrates, "C'est l'Eternel lui-même qui s'est manifesté dans ses mains" (170) [It was the Eternal itself that manifested its presence in her hands; my translation]. Communication with the Divine through food requires a certain receptivity to the forces of the universe, an intuitive "cooking by vibration," (Smart-Grosvenor 1992, 294) to demonstrate how women can achieve spiritual transcendence by "vibrating with the universe" in sensorial delight without the mediation of manmade institutions. Smart-Grosvenor describes her philosophy of vibration cooking by affirming, "I never measure or weigh anything. I cook by vibration. I can tell by the looks and smell of it" (1992, 294). In a similar fashion, Victoire articulates her private religion of the senses in a feminist culinary text that provides "practical recipes and examples on the 'how-to' perform a variety of feminist tasks such as deconstructing phallocentric discourses, cooking to the point of *jouissance*, or simply tuning up to the Mother's primal song" (André 2001, 21).

As a feminist act, cooking provides a self-articulated language of identity in the absence of schooled knowledge and colonial education. Cooking represents the grandmother's literacy, a skill that scripts its own expressive language. This language symbolizes a sensual form of *jouissance*, or coming to consciousness in the absence of conventional narrative tools and "academic" knowledge; it remains unmarked by colonialism and patriarchal domination. "C´était sa manière d'exprimer un moi constamment refoulé, prisonnier de son analphabétisme, de sa bâtardise, de son sexe, de toute sa condition asservie. Quand elle inventait des assaisonnements, ou mariait des goûts, sa personnalité se libérait, s'épanouissait. Cuisiner, c'était son rhum Père Labat, sa ganja, son crack, son ecstasy. Alors, elle dominait le monde. Pour un temps, elle devenait Dieu" (Condé 2006, 100) [It was her way of expressing her constantly repressed self, prisoner of its illiteracy, bastardization, gender, and its entire enslaved condition. When she invented seasonings or blended flavors, her personality freed itself, blossomed. Cooking was her Father Labat rum, her marijuana, her crack, her ecstasy. Then, she dominated the world. For a while, she became God; my translation]. Cooking symbolizes an emancipating activity for Victoire when the ego liberates itself from inhibiting repression to experience ultimate *jouissance* or self-possession. This state of awareness corresponds to the subliminal

bliss of "tasting" the mother tongue found in the jouissance of cooking, where "Victoire stupefies her world" (85).

Jouissance evokes a condition of sensorial wonder found in acts of spiritual and corporeal love linked to the search for the transcendent self. French philosopher Luce Irigarary describes this wonder as "a birth into transcendence, that of the other, still in the world of the senses ('sensible') still physical and carnal, and already spiritual. Wonder would be the passion of the encounter between the most material and the most metaphysical, of their possible conception and fecundation once by the other. A third dimension. An intermediary" (1993, 82). Victoire can access this third dimension beyond the marginality of her life by creating wonder in the kitchen. This conjuring act invokes the mother's presence through the power of culinary invention (Condé 2006, 85). The maternal presence reveals itself in the sanctity of food as a holy sacrament, a precious "déballage de trésors" (170) [unwrapping of treasures; my translation] elevating all those who taste Victoire's cooking to the heights of rapture. The power to enamor through the medium of culinary *jouissance* becomes Victoire's secret weapon to bring men to their knees, especially her employer Boniface, who is rendered helpless by sensory excess. As the novel indicates, "Chaque nuit était un enchantement. Chaque repas un festin. —Tu me gâtes, tu me gâtes, répétait-il et on ne savait s'il songeait à ses plaisirs nocturnes ou diurnes" (171) [Each night was an enchantment. Each meal a feast. —You are spoiling me, you are spoiling me, he repeated and one did not know if he was thinking of his nocturnal or diurnal pleasures; my translation]. Each culinary feast tantalizes Boniface with the promise of an impending sexual treat so that his desire remains in complete suspension as he anticipates more gratification. Victoire controls the dynamics of pleasure through seductive culinary and sexual foreplay making her an equal partner in the sexual act. This equality reverses the master-servant dialectic in lovemaking.

Jouissance mediates the language of food and love by situating itself in a three-dimensional transitional space between night and day, a time when Sycorax's powers are felt most effectively. Mistakenly associated with witchcraft, secrecy, and evil, this intermediary moment inspires the sexual consciousness and creativity of Sycorax-inspired characters without disclosing the source of this energy to outsiders, as in the case of Chancy's Mami Celeste. Condé's text describes the inviolability of this sacred space in terms of Victoire's kitchen thus: "Victoire ne supportait pas d'intrus dans le Temple où elle officiait" (Condé 2006, 101) [Victoire did not tolerate an intruder in the Temple where she officiated; my translation]. The kitchen–as-temple trope provides the necessary reflective space to frame the intersectional linkages between thinking, cooking, eating, and lovemaking within a dynamic poetics of the erotic as a source of

embodied reason. Associating the erotic with power, Audré Lorde claims that the erotic represents "an assertion of the lifeforce of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming" (1984, 55). The erotic maintains the body's self-possession amid its commodification within capitalist systems of labor. It provides the key to self-control in disempowering circumstances when cooks and other agents of domestic work become objects of exchange within the economy of consumption and desire (for food) in their function as service capital. "En ce temps-là, les domestiques circulaient, s'échangeaient comme des piécettes de monnaie" (Condé 2006, 101) [At that time, servants were circulated and exchanged as small pieces of change; my translation].

At the same time, the physical dispossession of the body is mitigated by its contributions to an important body of knowledge, namely, the discourses on creolization in the French Caribbean. Through cooking, Victoire problematizes masculinist engagements with creolization by producing meals that represent the entire culinary cosmovision of Guadeloupe based on an ethos of inclusion and cultural dynamism (as discussed in Chapter 3). Combining representative ingredients and dishes from the different cultures that populate the Caribbean, such as East Indian rice, Middle Eastern couscous, French soups, Creole sauces, West African peas, Amerindian tomatoes, and Caribbean callaloo, Victoire's cooking demonstrates its familiarity with the geographical mappings of the Caribbean. Her cooking also dramatizes her sense of control over landscape in the same way that Sycorax ruled over flora and fauna (Zebus 2002, 151) in a natural engagement with the environment. It could be stated that Victoire's meals represent a blueprint for cooperation and cultural exchange, thereby inspiring later discourses on creolization (Condé 2006, 101). Her cooking contests masculinist notions of an absent female imaginary in Caribbbean cultural discourses (as discussed in the Introduction).

Victoire's menus frame the language of creolization instinctively and imaginatively without the aid of a prescribed cookbook, which demonstrates how women, as proactive agents of cultural interchange, do not feel the need to conform to the dictates of textbook theorizing. As the novel reveals, "Loin de se contenter d'exécuter avec brio des plats creoles, elle inventa" (Condé 2006, 85) [Far from being satisfied with producing Creole dishes with brilliance, she invented; my translation]. Victoire's powers of inventiveness expose the limitations of theoretical discourse or cookbook language when guests are rendered speechless by the sensorial perfection of her creative fusions that combine lobster with green mangoes, caramelized pork with old Duquesnoy rum and ginger, fricassee of rabbit with Bourbon oranges, and other "imagined" delicacies (99). These "concoctions" (93) are the source of Victoire's culinary magic, which

seduces her bewitched admirers with sublime tastes, delectable eating, creative improvisations, and the sweetness of the "mother tongue" found in caramelized meat and Bourbon oranges. In other words, Victoire's cooking "imagines" the possible (and impossible) potential of creolization by conjuring culinary spaces across and beyond the limits of créolité s theorizing scope.

Condé is motivated by an act of love for a beloved grandmother and her own love of cooking to produce a memorable biography of the senses. The reader is invited to revel in a culinary banquet of food and words that celebrate the mother tongue and its traditions. At the same time, the text also indicates the dangers of stifling female creativity, depriving women of their inner language, dispossessing the body of its maternal consciousness, and obscuring the primacy of the female imaginary in thought and creative action (Condé 2006, 225). The burden of noncreativity is a form of death from which the mother culture must be rescued by the loving hands of the female writer who commits her art to the permanence of Sycorax historicity in text. "Le menu était là dans sa tête comme l'ébauche du roman qui attestera le génie de son auteur" (184) [The menu was there in her head like the draft of a novel that will attest to its author's genius; my translation].

Sycorax historicity thereby provides the birthing energy for a transcultural Francophone-Caribbean feminist poetics that reclaims the lost "mother spirit" in ancient religious and philosophical practices. Sycorax embodies the process of political, spiritual, and cultural decolonization from the traumatic memory of slavery and indenture; this trauma nevertheless creates new synergies in the Caribbean. As the mother of ancestral knowledge, Sycorax frames the intellectual production of Francophone-Caribbean women writers who resurrect her many faces. These agents of cultural retention inscribe the ancestral presence of the foremother in writing to demonstrate how maternal historicities reclaim themselves through transformative praxis. This consciousness continually endorses the mother presence in woman-centered Caribbean literatures and cultures that simultaneously complement and contest the one-dimensional perspectives of colonial and patriarchal discourses.

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Conclusion

The open-ended textualities of Francophone women writers from Haiti, Martinique, and Guadeloupe provide transnational perspectives on postcoloniality, contemporary Caribbean feminist thought, migration, and the poetics of gender. These writers continue to create new paradigms of representation and location in their novels as they seek to energize contemporary Caribbean theory through an ongoing engagement with gender and transnational issues. For this reason, it seems unfeasible to propose a conclusion to their work; closure will only impede the successful regeneration of the rhizomatic process as a constant site of renewal, disruption, and transformation in Caribbean thought.

Writers such as Edwidge Danticat, Evelyne Trouillot, and Myriam Chancy demonstrate their belief in the inherent humanity of women's writing linking narrative with social and political issues. Authors such as Gisèle Pineau expose the precarious positionality of departmental Antillean subjects in France who do not conform to normative ideals of Frenchness due to the racialized politics of departmentalization. At the same time, Pineau and Danticat also reveal how immigrants and partial French citizens claim a sense of home in the diasporic metropolis through vibrant cultural production as a politicized claiming of space. In so doing, they problematize notions of home space and national belonging by "creolizing the metropolis."

Maryse Condé and Laure Moutoussamy highlight the inadequacies inherent in contemporary Caribbean creolization theory that reveals its partial engagement with the "cross-cultural poetics" of difference by neglecting gender and other Caribbean ethnicities such as Indian, Chinese, and Arab. Denied a sense of subjective particularity, these cultures remain obscured under a blanket characterization of Creole identity, framed exclusively by an Afro-Caribbean literary imaginary in masculinized tropes of the storyteller (*conteur*) or word-scratcher (*marquer de paroles*). Through the figure of the *dougla*, these writers call for the creation of an expanded and more inclusive vocabulary to theorize Caribbean difference as another way of embracing Relation in cultural and literary praxis.

All the writers in this book remain inspired by the possibilities of transnationality, while they reveal some of the more negative aspects of globalization, such as cultural imperialism, over-consumerism, and economic imbalances between first-world and third-world realities. Resisting facile categorization or essentialist identifications, some writers are even contesting groupings such as Francophone writing and its colonialist overtones (the French versus Francophone power dynamic). These writers are calling for a more transnational world literature in French that undermines the overdetermined French identification with linguistic purity. As Alan Riding states, "French literary isolation has, in turn, reinforced the prevailing view that colorful francophone writing set in exotic climes is somehow inferior to more intellectual homegrown fiction . . . few peoples are more identified with their language than the French. They watch over how it is written and spoken; considering it an expression of French power" (2007).

The women writers in this book dispel any notions of exoticism in their humanitarian narratives that contest idyllic representations of the Caribbean that are found in tourist brochures and orientalizing French literature. Their social texts are aimed at decolonizing literature from mainstream French prejudices through a more informed reading of Francophone-Caribbean diasporas. Favoring the use of linguistic transnationality through the use of French, English, Spanish, Haitian Kreyol, French-Caribbean Creole, Tamil, and other Caribbean languages, these writers also look for feminist solidarities across and beyond the Caribbean with women writers from Latin America, the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, the United States, Europe, Africa, and other locations. In so doing, their work also reveals its interdisciplinary potential by crossing traditional boundaries in the Humanities to include Caribbean and Latin American Studies, Diaspora Studies, Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Francophone Literary Studies, among other disciplines. The "diasporic historicity" of these writers frames the French-speaking Caribbean in unique and unconventional ways to constantly update and vitalize Caribbean subjectivity through their specific gender concerns that also include men and children.

Notes

Introduction

1. All quotes from Glissant's work will refer to J. Michael Dash's translation of *Caribbean Discourse*. The French Caribbean refers to Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Guyana, while the Francophone Caribbean includes Haiti, Martinique, and Guadeloupe.
2. Refer to Davies, *Black Women, Writing and Identity*.
3. Consult Elizabeth DeLoughrey's article "Gendering the Oceanic Voyage: Trespassing the (Black) Atlantic and Caribbean."
4. Aujourd'hui les mouvements littéraires martiniquais sont très masculinisants, très "phallo-centrés," si ce n'est phallocrates . . . Ces mouvements ne tiennent pas compte de tout ce que l'on vit en tant que femmes . . . En Martinique, une femme écrivain est cataloguée comme une originale ou une homosexuelle, comme Madeleine Carbet, ou occultée, ou écrasée par l'ombre d'un grand homme, comme Suzanne Césaire, ou stigmatisée, traîtée d'aliénée, comme Mayotte Capécia. Je sais qu'il y a danger, mais je le brave.
5. Consult Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*. It is important to distinguish between the Créolité movement authored by Chamoiseau-Bernabé-Confiant and creolization as a process of open-ended textuality and rhizomatic possibility. This theory formulated by Glissant and Benítez-Rojo forms part of the "repeating process" of endless cultural exchange and transformation. At the same time, creolization itself betrays its limits through partial engagements with subaltern identities such as Francophone Indo-Caribbean, for example. These limitations are problematized in Chapter 4.
6. See Condé's essay, "Liaison dangereuse," in *Pour une littérature-monde*, ed.Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouard (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 205–16. Also consult Emily Apter's interview with Condé, "Crossover Texts/Creole Tongues: A Conversation with Maryse Condé," 89–96.
7. Private e-mail correspondence with the author on Friday, June 8, 2007.
8. This study does not, in any way, conflate the historical and political experiences of slavery and indenture and their resulting psychological traumas. Neither does it advocate a politics of comparative victimhood. Rather, it proposes other ways of mapping the Caribbean beyond colonial cartographies.
9. Also consult Martinican author Fabienne Kanor's award-winning novel, *Humus* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006). Based on historical fact, the novel chronicles the lives and experiences of fourteen women who resisted the bonds of slavery by jumping overboard into the Atlantic Ocean in 1774.

10. The term restavèk comes from the French "rester avec" meaning "to stay with or to remain with." "A common practice in Haiti . . . [it is] a privilege for which children are expected to clean chamber pots, endure beatings, and sleep on nothing more than a cardboard box shoved under the kitchen table" (Wucker 2000, 3).
11. This term is borrowed from Laguerre (1998).
12. See Chapter 2, "Dyasporic Trauma, Migration, and Memory in Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*" for a chronology of Haitian migration to the United States.
13. Consult Freedman and Tarr (2000).
14. The grandmother figures "feed" their grandchildren Creole and Maghrebi food to instill a sense of cultural pride and identity. The mothers "feed" the French economy through their hard labor in the garment industry as shown in Pineau's *Un papillon dans la cité*.
15. The *kala pani* refers to the black waters of the Atlantic. The term has been used to designate the diasporic journeys of thousands of indentured Indians who were shipped to the cane fields of Mauritius, Reunion, Madagascar, South Africa, Fiji, and the Caribbean after the abolition of slavery (1838 in the English colonies; 1848 in the French colonies). According to Hindu belief, the traversing of large expanses of water was a violation of Hindu ethics of purity and religious integrity. Associated with cultural defilement and contamination, kala pani crossings originally identified the expatriation of low castes, convicts, and other "undesirable" elements to rid society of any traces of social pollution; those who braved the kala pani were automatically compromising their Hinduness. I have analyzed this problem in Mehta (2004).
16. For more details on indianté, consult Ernest Moutoussamy's *La Guadeloupe et son indianite* (1987).
17. The major phase of Indian indenture in the French Caribbean lasted approximately thirty-five years between 1853–1889 (Cesar 1994, 91–101).
18. Consult Sméralda-Amon (2005) and Sméralda-Amon (1996).
19. It is interesting to note that both novels were actually written at approximately the same time.
20. The idea of "arche-presence" is inspired by Jacques Derrida's theory of "arche-writing" located "not only in the form and substance of graphic expression but also in those of nongraphic expression. It would constitute not only the pattern uniting form to all substance graphic or otherwise, but the movement of the sign-function linking a content to an expression, whether it be graphic or not" (1976, 60). Arche-writing, as discursive and prediscursive modes of articulation, is the ultimate form of expression that deconstructs fixed origins and meaning to embody the very conditions of plenitude and expansive thought. Sycorax's "arche-presence" represents this state of plenitude as resistance to erasure.
21. Refer to Brathwaite's collection of poems in *Middle Passages*.
22. Paget Henry refers to the excluded woman of color as "Calherban" in his unpublished paper "Ramabai Espinet and Indo-Caribbean Poeticism." Similarly, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting highlights the important contributions of "Caliban's Women" or the women of Négritude such as Suzanne Césaire and the Nardal sisters (Jane and Paulette) who were eclipsed by the overpowering presence of the founding fathers of Négritude represented by Aimé Césaire, Léon Gontran-Damas, and Léopold Sédar Senghor. Sharpley-Whiting traces a feminized historicity of Négritude

in her study *Négritude Women*.She argues, "the masculinist genealogy constructed by the founding poets and shored up by literary historians, critics and Africanist philosophers continues to elide and minimize the presence and contributions of French-speaking black women to Négritude's evolution" (14). These women, according to Sharpley-Whiting, were not only instrumental to the successful evolution of the movement itself, but were also very often in its vanguard offering a gendered perspective on questions of pan-Africanism, black subjectivity, and the affirmation of black cultural and political values, among other key preoccupations of Négritude. Also consult Brent Edward's *The Practice of Diaspora* (2003) and Shireen Lewis's *Race, Culture, and Identity* (2006) for nuanced readings of women and Négritude.

23. See Joensen (1995). Also consult Wynter (1992). The figure of Sycorax is also used to explore the silenced voices of women in African colonial discourses in Busia (1990, 81–104).
24. The fact that Algiers is represented as an island reveals colonial geography's misrecognition or masking of the "other's" geographical subjectivity. For the colonialists, Africa becomes an undifferentiated territory, a "dark continent" of undetermined spatiality revealing the supposed need for Europe's "guiding" routes of morality and spiritual integrity. In addition, the Barbary Coast of North Africa has been associated with criminality and piracy (the infamous pirates of the Barbary Coast) in colonial discourses. The Shakespearean narrative suggests that Sycorax's alleged deviance is linked to her environment and home locale finding its roots on African soil. Algiers and the Caribbean were used as penal colonies in the days of European expansion; consequently, the link between Sycorax and criminality is made even more explicit in the colonial narrative of *The Tempest*. See Garcés (2005). Moreover, as a North African, could Sycorax be a Muslim woman, a further source of alterity in the colonizing Christian narratives in which she represents the gendered others other because of her religion as well? Is she portrayed as a witch for her un-Christian (i.e., evil) ways in the colonial imaginary? Does Sycorax become an object of fear and horror precisely because she engenders the insertion of Islam in colonial and diasporic textualities? This "speculative" thought nevertheless invites further reflection. For a discussion on Islam in the Americas, consult Gomez (2005).

Chapter 1

1. Jean-Claude Joseph's *Rosie Moussa, esclave libre de Saint Domingue* (2003) is another contemporary Haitian novel that revisits the history of slavery.
2. It is ironic to note that Napoleon reinstated slavery in the French Antilles in 1803, approximately one year before Haitian independence.
3. *Femmes des Antilles: traces et voix* (Pineau and Abraham 2006) is a similar attempt to give voice and historical validation to the forgotten women of the French Caribbean, enslaved women in particular, through a collection of first-person narratives (both historical and contemporary). As Renée Larrier asserts, "This collage of real and imagined lives, published in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, seeks to recover voices silenced by history. Because conventional sources are unavailable, Pineau assumes the task of restoring subjectivity to

enslaved women in particular, their only historical trace often no more than a name on a bill of sale or auction notice" (2006a, 80).

4. Article XLIV: We declare slaves to be charges, and as such enter into community property.
5. The 1984 Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment defines torture as "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession." This quote is taken from Susan Sontag's online article in the *New York Times Magazine* dated May 23, 2004, "Regarding the Torture of Others."
6. See Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* for more details on the psychological consequences of colonization.
7. The novel makes veiled allusions to colonial women as enforcers of torture within the colonial household to highlight the complicity of men and women in colonialism's mechanism of torture.
8. Pineau's *Femmes des Antilles, traces et voix* chronicles the torture meted out to an enslaved woman Emeline by her colonial mistress. Referring to Pineau's text, Renée Larrier states, "Emeline recounts being tortured with hot pepper by her 'madame,' who then banishes her to work in the fields after learning that her husband is sleeping with the young woman" (2006, 80–81). Emeline becomes the target of the madame's jealousy; burning chilli peppers disfigure her body under the added intensity of the Caribbean sun so that it becomes "unrecognizable" to the master and a constant source of pain for Emeline.
9. *The Farming of Bones* is the title of Edwidge Danticat's second novel. In this novel, bones represent important archival documents that unearth repressed histories. These histories are buried deep within the cane fields of death in the Dominican Republic. The bones are also inscribed with the testimonial narratives of survivors—exiled Haitian plantation workers reduced to a state of slavery under the repressive dictatorship of General Trujillo.
10. In *Le Discours antillais*, Glissant states that the maroon is the only true popular hero of the Caribbean (1981, 59).

Chapter 2

1. "Legacy to Life." Interview with Rachel Holmes. http://www.haitiglobalvillage.com/sd-marassal-cd/d-conversations.htm (accessed February 9, 2005).
2. Baby Doc's rule commences in 1971 with Papa Doc's death. It ends in 1987 with his "escape" from Haiti, which is aided by the French.
3. The term *marassa* refers to the Vodou trope of spiritual twinning, whereby two soul mates are joined in bonds of empathy, solidarity, and intimacy. These bonds integrate the *marassas* within a cosmic totality of representation making them an integral part of the Haitian worldview. For more details on the ambivalent Haiti–U.S. relationship, see Dash (1997).
4. See Galeano (2004).
5. See Danticat (1996; the short story "Children of the Sea").

6. A specular image is a distorted, inverted, and exaggerated image that deflects (rather than reflects) the likeness of the subject.
7. FRAPH is an acronym for the paramilitary Revolutionary Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti. From 1991–1994, the CIA maintained close relations with Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, the founder of a ruthless paramilitary group responsible for inaugurating a reign of terror under the aegis of a brutal military dictatorship. The regime decimated thousands of Haitians through arbitrary killings, torture, displacement, and rape. Ironically, Constant was not brought to trial for his crimes due to U.S. "protection." In fact, he walked freely in Queens, New York until 2006 without the fear of arrest or deportation. Constant himself has openly acknowledged his ties with the CIA in several interviews, including *60 Minutes* in December 1995.
8. See Cobham (2004).

Chapter 3

1. Consult Ovid (2002) for a detailed introduction to the region's cuisine.
2. Also see Deleuze and Guattari (1987).
3. This essay limits itself to the culinary dynamism of the island of Guadeloupe and does not include the entire administrative unit of smaller archipelagoes such as Les Saintes, Marie-Galante, Saint Martin. Each of these smaller islands has its own culinary particularities, including the Norman heritage in Terres-du-Haut that provided the inspiration for creolized versions of *beignet* in the form of spicy *accras à la morue* or salted codfish fritters.
4. Refer to Loichot (2002).
5. Refer to Benítez-Rojo (1992, 2).
6. This term was coined by Alain Anselin in his book *L'émigration antillaise en France: la troisième île* (1990, 10). Also refer to Murdoch (2001b).
7. The French Dom-Toms are now defined as European "régions ultra-péiphériques" to further emphasize the notion of geographical alterity and ultra peripheral identity.
8. Makward and Githire (2001, 220). These quotes have been translated by Marie-Agnès Sourieu in her *Afterword* to the English translation of Pineau's novel. *L'exil selon Julia* has been translated by Betty Wilson as *Exile According to Julia* (2003). All future references to and quotations from will be this edition.
9. Van Gennep (1960, 29).
10. Sugar cakes are a Caribbean specialty of grated coconut covered in sugar. They are a traditional present from grandmothers visiting immigrant families.
11. "Dans le cadre des récits de Pineau, il s'agit d'une créolisation extérieure aux Antilles, puisqu'elle intervient en France métropolitaine, se superposant à la créolisation culinaire intérieure à la Guadeloupe; c'est une double créolisation ou re-créolisation puisqu'elle met en contact un produit déjà créolisé avec des éléments de la cuisine de la métropole" (26–27).
12. In the United States, Caribbean immigrants often use Mexican products such as hot sauce, chilies, lard, and beans as substitutes in home cooking. Some of these items can also be bought in Asian grocery stores. Indian brand-name mango and

lime pickles such as Bedekar and Patak sometimes replace their Trinidadian counterparts of Matuk's *kuchla* and *achar*. Dasheen leaves used in the making of callaloo are substituted with spinach, mustard and collard greens also found in African-American soul-food stores.

13. The ironic reference to "Ile-de-France," which is not an island, and the "troisième île," which is in fact mostly made up of urban Antilleans away from any "real island surrounded by sea," emphasizes the impact of alienating French traditions that isolate them rather than bind them together through aquatic affiliations with the Black Atlantic.
14. At the same time, it must be pointed out that a lot of Caribbean food is actually not that healthy with its emphasis on heavy sauces, pork fat, trans-fatty oils, and fried foods, which are all identifiable as causes of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, and diabetes.
15. The status of Indians in the Francophone Caribbean is changing over the years with many Indo-Guadeloupeans, for example, having become lawyers, doctors, and members of other legal professions. Ernest Moutoussamy is a writer and prominent politician in Guadeloupe. He served as the former mayor of Saint-François in the commune of Basse-Terre.
16. Crab in France and the United States is not associated with warm waters, but with cold ones as in Brittany, Alaska, and California.
17. This term is borrowed from Freedman (1988, 1). I am grateful to Alfonso Ayala and Arturo Dávila for sharing this reference with me.
18. "Maman a acheté des huîtres et une grosse dinde pour la nuit de Noël. Elle m'a dit que c'était la tradition ici et qu'il fallait s'adapter aux coutumes de la France. Sans mentir, c'était, la première fois que je voyais une dinde en entier." All translations of *Un Papillon dans la cité* are my own unless indicated otherwise.
19. "Au pays, on ne connaît que les ailes de dinde. On en trouve dans tous les lolos. Elles sont congelées . . . En Guadeloupe, c'est la viande des gens qui ont le porte-monnaie maigre. On en vend à 8 ou 10F le kilo. Des fois, dans le lolo qui se trouvait pas loin de chez nous, Man Zizine était obligée de séparer les ailes congelées ensemble en les frappant avec un vieux marteau avant de les jeter dans le plateau de sa balance."
20. Turkey was a royal bird for many of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, most notably for the Aztec of Mexico. The bird's forcible colonial migrations resulted in a further distortion of signification, wherein its original connotations of royalty degenerated into pejorative identifications of imbecility and backwardness as "evidence" of the "New World primitivism" that justified Europe's civilizing mission.
21. Mignolo (1994, 19).
22. For more details on the history of chocolate consult the online article "The History of Chocolate," *The Field Museum* (2002): 1–2.
23. Dávila-Sánchez (1990, 107).
24. The North African presence in France, Algerian in particular, is the result of French colonization and subsequent decolonization that brought waves of migrant labor through flexible immigration control laws. In need of a cheap work force to revitalize its economy after the destructive economic impact of World War Two, "in 1947, France granted a new status to her largest North African colony, Algeria,

which gave the Muslim majority of the population equal freedom of movement alongside the settler minority" (Hargreaves 2001, 9). An overwhelming number of Algerians took advantage of this mobility to go to France in search of work and soon began to outnumber the European migrants of Italian, Portuguese, and other origin, a social phenomenon that was not welcomed by France. Algerian migration ironically increased after independence in 1962 to constitute a significant part of the proletarian labor force in France even today.

25. "C'était quand même beau chez Mohammed. Il y avait plein de plateux en cuivre, de grands tapis déroulés sur le linoléum, et des rideux lourds terminés par de longues franges. Je visitais, comme dans un musée, les narines agacées par la riche odeur de viande en sauce qui flottait dans tout l'appartement."
26. Consult Loichot (2004).

Chapter 4

1. This comment was refuted by a member of the *Association of Indians in Martinique* during a private communication in Fort-de-France on November 23, 2005. I had asked this individual (who wishes to remain anonymous) if Indians were comfortable with the appellation "Creole" to designate their positionality in Martinique or whether this identity was a source of alienation for them. He responded that the term was being used politically to marginalize Indians in the name of assimilation. He reacted more favorably to the use of the term "creolization" as an open-ended process of exchange and collaboration, stating that creolization was an inevitable Caribbean reality. Interestingly, at an international conference entitled *Images de Soi/Self Image, Mirror Image* organized in Martinique (November 22–25, 2005), one of the conference participants, a Caribbean feminist scholar, openly proclaimed before a stunned audience that there were no Indians in Martinique.
2. See Puri (1997) and Reddock (1999).
3. This statement does not conflate the historical specificities of slavery and indenture, as stressed earlier. Slavery was a longer and more brutal form of economic, social, and racial violence than indenture.
4. See Murdoch (2002/2003).
5. Laure Moutoussamy. *Passerelle de vie* (Guadeloupe: Ibis Rouge Edition): 2002. All subsequent references will be made to this edition. All translations into English are my own.
6. While it is a misnomer to characterize Martinique and Guadeloupe as nations as stated earlier, the term nationalist refers to any hegemonic discourse that conceives the French Caribbean in terms of racial or ethnic absolutes. Negritude, despite its political and cultural relevance and urgency at a given moment in history, can be termed a nationalist discourse. Créolité's universal essentialisms also fall into this category. In turn, indianité is based on nationalist assumptions of gender, wherein women are reduced to the conceptual or symbolic value of idealized femininity defined according to patriarchal norms.
7. Condé quotes Miranda from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and uses the expression, "O Brave New World," in the title of her keynote address at the joint meeting of the Comparative Literature Association and the African Literature Association. Austin,

Texas. March 1988: 1–7. http://iupjournals.org/ral/ral29-3.html (accessed July 15, 2006).

8. Fumagalli (2004) is an exception. Fumagalli alludes to Razye's possible Indian ancestry in her analysis of the novel on page 74.
9. See Dash (1998).
10. At first it would appear that Glissant negates the Caribbean's precolonial past by associating the birth of historical production with the colonial encounter. Instead, his work highlights the ways in which the region's indigenous historicity was obliterated by the brutality of colonization and the effacement of local claims to indigenous roots. Vestiges of this past are nevertheless found in cultural and linguistic traces revealed in naming, cuisine, and religion. Several Caribbean novels mention the indigenous names of countries such as *Ayiti* (Haiti), *Karukera* (Guadeloupe), *Madinina* (Martinique). Consequently, the very naming of the Caribbean is a constant reminder of the region's obscured indigenous presence. *La migration des coeurs* itself exposes these traces of indigeneity by also likening Razyé's appearance to "Otaheite the Indian hero you see in picture-books" (Condé 1998, 23). If the indigenous past remains frozen in a picture-book image, it nevertheless resurrects its "absent-presence" within the narrative interstices as a simultaneous affirmation of a pre-Columbian Caribbean historicity and resistance to complete obscurity.
11. The New World Baroque is a postcolonial poetics of transculturation first theorized by the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier, according to Zamora (2006). Also termed the Neo-Baroque, this "aesthetics of cultural difference" examines "the continuities and discontinuities of Old and New World cultures and histories" (Zamora 2006, 116) by transcending national, regional and other spatial boundaries. This poetics of representation seeks "an accommodation of America's plural histories and cultures," (Zamora 2006, 119). Other important theorists of the Neo-Baroque include Edouard Glissant and the Cuban intellectuals Lezama Lima and Severo Sarduy. In *La migration des coeurs*, Condé's transculturalism is even broader in its scope by encompassing Guadeloupe and its neighboring islands Marie-Galante and Roseau, and extending further to include Dominica, Cuba, Africa, and India.
12. The *egun* play an important role in Santeria symbolizing the ancestral spirits or the souls of the departed. They can be compared to the *Gèdè* or spirits of death in Vodou.
13. See Fanon (1967).
14. See Sharpley-Whiting (2003).
15. See Mehta (2004) for a more detailed analysis on the objectification of Hindu women in and by nationalist ideology.
16. In Trinidad and Guyana, *douglas* continue to face the racism of traditional Hindu groups and religious organizations. As a consequence, many of them choose to self-identity as black rather than as mixed race to avoid ostracism and profiling. However, in terms of the contemporary French Caribbean, cultural critic Jean Sahaï affirms that *douglas* or batazindiens are no longer treated with animosity or derision and are welcome members of diverse communities. In addition, the term batazindien seems to have lost its pejorative connotations of inherent bastardization to reflect the multicultural scope of these societies today (private communication October 29, 2008).

Chapter 5

1. The Créolistes position the Creole language as the very basis of an "authentic" or "pure" Creole subjectivity in Martinique as opposed to French, the language of colonialism and departmentalization. This claim has been contested by women writers such as Maryse Condé, Suzanne Dracius, and Gisèle Pineau in particular who assert that since language is not the only determinant of identity, writers must have the freedom to express themselves in languages that most inspire their creativity, be it French, Creole, or a combination. They also affirm that writers should not be censored by the ideological debates on language initiated by the Créolité movement, especially when the dogma of theory impedes creative activity and linguistic experimentation in multiple tongues. As Condé states, "What is far more important for me as a writer is that the language one writes must be forced open, subjected to a certain violence, made strange, so that it becomes the writer's own singular language (une langue à lui)," regardless of whether the language in question is French or Creole (Apter 2001, 4).
2. All references will be made to the English translation of the play (Césaire 1997).
3. Refer to De Souza (2002) for a structural analysis of the play.
4. Term borrowed from Lee (1996).
5. For more details on Vodou, consult Dayan (1995b). Also consult Michel and Bellegarde-Smith (2006).
6. An earlier and significantly modified version of this section appeared in Mehta (2002). The English translation of the novel will be used.
7. Forty thousand Indian workers were brought to Guadeloupe and more than twenty-five thousand to Martinique between 1853 and 1885 (Gamess and Gamess 2003, 14) to replace the newly liberated Africans on the sugar estates.
8. The five French settlements in India were located in Pondichéry, Karikal, Yanaon, Chandernagor, and Mahé.
9. Studies indicate that over 69 percent of the indentured workers were Hindu. Indians constitute 3 percent of the population in Martinique and 15 percent of the population in Guadeloupe today (Ponaman 1994, 68).
10. Consult Gamess and Gamess (2003) for more details on the Indian presence in Martinique. Also see Ponaman (1994).

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Index