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Structures of Terror in Caribbean Women's Writing

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STRUCTURES OF TERROR IN CARIBBEAN WOMEN'S WRITING

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Situated within the transnational feminist movement which has gathered in response to the historical process of enclosure and regulation associated with capitalism, Caribbean women writers are uniquely positioned to bear witness or create resistance to the exploitation of their bodies and the environment under this system of slow violence. This dissertation takes up a queer eco- materialist feminist framework to explore the critiques and the methods of resistance to this system offered by Caribbean women writers.

Materialist feminists Maria Mies and Cynthia Enloe have contributed greatly to understanding how women's labor has been exploited on a local and international scale. These writers have addressed the gaps in Marxist research addressing women's domestic, affective, and reproductive labor. Transnational Caribbean queer feminism, such as the work of M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, provides analyses of citizenship that naturalizes state violence against women by incriminating homosexuality while relying on heterosexual women's complicity in perpetuating gender ideology through virginity testing. In untangling the co-construction of gender and environment in the development of scientific discourse, this dissertation expounds four related social and economic processes that together form the structures of terror communicated in Caribbean women's fiction in the 1980s and 90s. Domestic and mundane scenes from literature by Jamaica Kincaid, Maryse Condé, Erna Brodber, Edwidge Danticat, and Shani Mootoo reveal the terror experienced by women and transgender people in the Caribbean.

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INTRODUCTION

NIGHTMARES: TERROR LIVED AND FELT BY CARIBBEAN WOMEN

“I dreamt, continuously it seemed, that I was being chased down a narrow cobbled street by bunches and bunches of those same daffodils that I had vowed to forget, and when finally I fell down from exhaustion, they all piled on top of me, until I was buried deep underneath them and was never seen again.”

-Lucy, Jamaica Kincaid

“The nightmares. I thought they would fade with age, but no, it’s like getting raped every night. I can’t keep this baby.”

-Breath, Eyes, Memory, Edwidge Danticat

Nightmares appear often in Caribbean women’s fiction, and as these two examples from Jamaica Kincaid and Edwidge Danticat reveal, terror felt in these nightmares is a complex emotion tied to the embodiment of gender, nature, and subjectivity. The first passage from *Lucy* follows her recitation of Wordsworth’s famous poem at school and her disgust afterwards. Lucy describes terror in a dream about suffocation: a metaphor describing how postcolonial societies suffer when a foreign standard of beauty and cultural signifiers like the daffodil supplant native culture. Although, the idea of native culture is not clear-cut in Lucy’s Caribbean; it has been transformed by centuries of exploitative trans-Atlantic migrations of people, nature, and knowledge. This historical record is mentioned and felt by Lucy, informing her narrative consistently. In her dream, Lucy is literally buried by British culture, signifying both Wordsworth’s poetic legacy and the flora (*agriculture*) of its temperate climate. The second passage, from Martine in Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, illustrates the terror experienced by women in a patriarchal police state. Martine was raped in a sugar cane field as a young woman and is terrorized by nightmares of it for the rest of her life. These passages may seem as though the only commonalities they share are the presence of nightmares and the gender of the narrator, but reading them in excerpt only obscures the strongest connection between them: the

interconnected-ness of gender ideology, affect, and labor. When Lucy explains that her presence in her homeland is the “result of a foul deed,” she references trans-Atlantic slavery as the source of labor and wealth for Europe, which is continued by the migration of domestic workers into the homes of western societies (135). Likewise, Martine explains the virginity testing which she performs on Sophie as a continuation of standards of sexual purity meant to police women’s sexuality and labor to remain that of the “good housewife” and “respectable mother” (170). That her rape occurs in a cane field also links the monoculture of sugar on plantations and the history of slavery to modern practices of patriarchal state power. Both domestic labor and the ideology of the respectable housewife also require affective labor, which involves “the strategic management of emotions...that helps sustain cooperation and civility...[but is] unacknowledged as labor and undervalued” (Hennessy *Fires...* 61). A pattern develops in reading several novels by Caribbean women from the 1980s to the early 2000s; women feel and express their terror in day-to-day activities, like dreams, which draw attention to a few processes that together are experienced as a structure of terror organized by global capitalism. Narration of mundane and domestic activities allows women of the Caribbean to voice how these global processes affect their daily life, and nightmares are just one important narrative feature suited to revealing this structure.

Labor does not appear as the foremost subject in these novels, yet the experience of terror, which does feature prominently, results from social processes that organize and regulate labor. Each of the four chapters that follow develops a single process that collectively forms the structure of terror. These social processes are developed through engagement with materialist feminist theory, which posits the integration of capitalism and patriarchy as central to understanding the oppression of women. Historical materialism has developed the ways that

economic and social structures have developed hand-in-hand, but materialist feminists critique the focus of more traditional historical materialist lenses for limiting the scope of economic processes to that of waged labor. Understanding patriarchy and capitalism to include coordinated processes allows us to consider unpaid domestic labor that makes wage labor and its exploitation possible. Rosemary Hennessy asserts in *Fires on the Border* that “Indeed, one of the most important contributions of marxist feminists to feminist theory is their redefinition of work and their elaboration of domestic labor as a key source of capital accumulation” (59). Perhaps Martine’s perpetuation of ideology surrounding sexual purity does not seem to be related to labor on the surface, but ideological formations of motherhood in Haiti and state sponsored violence against women can be traced to a parasitic relationship between the state apparatus occupied by those made wealthy by foreign governments and the citizens whose labor is appropriated, not least of which is women in the form of unpaid domestic work. The colonial economy, as it developed historically and in its current neocolonial formation, has created lasting social processes constructing gender identity.

At the same time, coordinated processes have shaped the Caribbean landscape and its uses in late capitalism. Identifying the ways in which gender and environment have been co-constructed in imperial narratives—especially those masquerading as objective scientific discourse—reveal striking patterns of silenced knowledge, social and land enclosures, and flattening of experience to fit circumscribed epistemologies, all in the service of a constant accumulation of wealth. Taking up this queer, eco-, materialist feminist lens centers the interrelated processes by which women and non-normatively gendered people of the Caribbean experience terror. This dissertation argues that such a framework is not too many theoretical perspectives to juggle; instead, this position highlights co-construction of ideologies as

particularly useful. This introduction develops the theoretical foundations established by materialist feminist scholars, ecocritical projects, queer and queer ecological scholars, as well as those critiques of marxism that argue for more analysis of the interplay between economic and social processes, especially those affective attachments that are just being felt and articulated into structures themselves. These feelings of terror that converge around mundane or domestic experiences identify ways in which economic processes are felt and lived. I argue that the terror felt in Caribbean women's writing, as illustrated in the opening examples of nightmares, reveals connected social and economic processes of global capitalism that register in domestic and daily activities in the Caribbean as the structure of terror.

Materialist Feminism

As women's movements have grown over the last five decades, it has been the analysis of housework under capitalism which has, according to Maria Mies, "provided the first theoretical understanding of the political economy of capitalist patriarchy" (ix). In order to understand the particular processes by which capitalism has coincided with patriarchy to form invisible labor, Mies traces the violence of ongoing primitive accumulation through examining the colonization of women, nature, and the people and lands of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean (x-xi). Immanuel Wallerstein has described capitalism as a world system right from the start, predicated on the incorporation of new labor sources and infinite resources for the constant accumulation of wealth. Historically, colonization has provided the wealth of Europe and later North America; this wealth has been accumulated by the enslavement of people of color, the commodification and theft of the natural environment, and the alignment of women with nature and the body through Cartesian epistemology. Mies argues that "the church, the state, the new capitalist class and modern scientists collaborated in the violent subjugation of women and

nature. The weak Victorian women of the nineteenth century were the products of the terror methods by which this class had moulded and shaped ‘female nature’ according to its interests” (88). My second chapter focuses most heavily on analyzing the integration of those interests across law, science, religion, and domestic ideology in the historical witch hunts and Maryse Condé’s imagining of Tituba’s (a black witch in Salem’s) story, which connects this history to the black feminisms developing in the 1980s and 1990s. All of the novels examined here were written during this timeframe, a tumultuous but prolific one for women of the Caribbean. While describing the experience of women through their fiction, these writers invite an analysis of the processes devaluing their labor and condemning their bodily autonomy. Each chapter describes a particular social and economic process that accomplishes this devaluation, invisibility, or regulation felt in the narration, which as a whole I describe as the structure of terror.

In the introduction to *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference, and Women’s Lives*, Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham write that, “The tradition of feminist engagement with marxism emphasizes a perspective on social life that refuses to separate the materiality of meaning, identity, the body, state, or nation from the requisite division of labor that undergirds the scramble for profits in capitalism’s global system” (1). No feminist movement can successfully address the oppression of women without considering in its articulation the relationships between race, gender, sexuality, and labor. This is what a materialist feminism asserts. As feminism has gained a mainstream status, being co-opted by institutions and professions which obscure the predatory nature of capital, the most dominant voices often denigrate ways of understanding that demonstrate the construction of difference. What has been labeled and critiqued as white feminism ignores race and class difference, often engaging in heteronormative white supremacy under a naïve call to sisterhood that assumes

white, hetero-, middle-class problems and solutions, effectively silencing women of color, non-normatively gendered individuals, lesbians, and working class women. “Class objectively links all women, binding professional to her housekeeper, the boutique shopper to the sweatshop seamstress, the battered wife in Beverly Hills to the murdered sex worker in Bangkok or the Bronx” (Hennessy and Ingraham 3). Our feminism can only aim to improve the lives of all women if it recognizes the differential relationships between them, seeing how they are pitted against each other in a capitalist system. Combatting women’s exploitation and ending the practices which divide us necessarily calls for a feminism that opposes capitalism. Materialist feminism offers us such a critique for just social change.

Materialist feminism has approached classical marxism critically, identifying limits within it, but finding useful concepts that could explain many social structures through which women are exploited and oppressed as well. Different names that have developed to describe the engagements of historical materialism and gender oppression stress different emphases and sometimes differing concepts as well. Rosemary Hennessy, for example, revises her own language between publications using *materialist feminism* to discuss the ways “economic, cultural, and political facets of life are mutually determining” earlier in her career, and then using *marxist feminism* in *Profit and Pleasure* because she saw “how systematic the effort to suppress consciousness of capitalism as a class system was becoming, and [she] suspected that [her] own position might be helping to support this trend” (12). For Hennessy, the inclusion of Marx’s name was important to reassert the centrality of class critique, lest her work be misread or depoliticized. With all of the language choices available, socialist feminism, marxist feminism, etc., I chose materialist feminism because it emphasizes knowledge-making as a material reality taking place within a class system. Hennessy and Ingraham write, “Knowledge-making is an

integral material aspect of this arrangement because knowledges—what is considered true or the ways things are—can legitimize how labor and power are divided. For this reason, culture—the domain of knowledge production—is both a stake and a site of class struggle” (4-5). Because so much of my analysis in this dissertation will critique imperial knowledge systems, this emphasis seems most appropriate. This framework, similar to Hennessy’s, challenges the postmodern cultural politics which view the social as primarily textual, where meaning is premised on the slipperiness of language. Though many examples in the following chapters require discussion of representation, social life cannot be reduced to it. Materialist feminism insists on the historicity of postmodernism itself, its prominence in academic institutions, and the purposeful obscuration of capitalism as a class system.

As many materialist feminist collections do, including *Materialist Feminism: A Reader* and Cynthia Enloe’s *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, we begin by asking *why*, not just by describing *effects*. In the preface to the 2000 edition, Enloe gives the example of the protests in Seattle of December 1999 where several feminist organizations from around the world gathered to draw attention to the exploitation of women by the World Trade Organization’s policies. Very few people in the US at the time knew what “such a seemingly remote agency as the WTO [had] to do with most of our personal lives” (xi). Only when news of the demonstration reached people’s homes did they gain any interest in the WTO and its decisions; however, even the information made available following the event “tend[ed] to portray these debates as having virtually nothing to do with gender” (xi-xii). Enloe’s preface justifies the need to ask feminist questions about labor if we are to understand how gender has historically been a powerful construction of difference to arrange labor. She argues that “if we act as though manipulations of ideas about femininity and masculinity are not political, but merely ‘cultural,’ we risk, I think,

underestimating how much of our lives are indeed political” (xiv). Without using terms like “materialist” or “marxist” in front of feminism, Enloe is still able to communicate—through her distinction that we are not solely talking about culture—that she is asking the questions that lead to revealing the capitalist patriarchy. This becomes a constant struggle for those researchers working under this framework. We must continually assert that feminism cannot be practiced exclusively in a cultural register; as Selma James writes in her introduction to her article with Mariarosa Dalla Costa, “there is nothing in capitalism which is not capitalistic, that is, not part of the class struggle” (35). This theoretical framework of materialist feminism is the starting point for this dissertation as it provides a clear foundational premise through which to analyze terror felt by Caribbean women and non-normatively gendered people. The next sections build on the concept of gender created as a site of difference which queer and ecocritical engagements extend. I turn to developing a queer and then an ecological extension of the materialist framework begun here.

Queer Critique and the Caribbean

If gender is constantly constructed as a site of difference by which labor is divided and regulated, then producing and reproducing such a binary system onto which it can be divided remains paramount to global capitalism. Creating and maintaining a binary gender system and heterosexual norms have been identified as important structures on which the idea of a nation rests.¹ Much of queer theory takes this concept as a starting point, and many critics themselves are critical not just of how heteronormativity and binary gender upholds ideas of nationalism, but also reproduces the labor force and capitalism as a mode of production on a global scale.

¹ Lauren Berlant’s *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* offers well-developed critique of the role of heterosexuality in upholding nationalism, especially concerning affect attachments.

Ideologies surrounding gender and sexuality, especially in the Caribbean, have developed within colonial economies, which have had complex and sometimes contradictory effects on post-slavery societies. The re-articulation of colonial gender and sexual ideologies accompanies intense surges of homophobia and patriarchal roles for women. Gender and race have also been co-constructed: Barbara Bush's extensive historical work on slave women in the Caribbean becomes central to understanding the changing motivations of plantation owners based on slave markets and women's strong resistance to such regulation. This specific context will get a much closer examination in chapters 2 and 4. In the modern Caribbean—nearly half of a century after independence for most places—many islands face mechanisms of debt and foreign owned enterprises that consistently threaten their status as independent, viable nations. Tourism as the new form of the plantation gets constantly repeated to articulate how neocolonialism continues to shape the region. That national identity is in crisis further heightens domestic concern for a unifying nationalism. As we will see, this insecurity often results in legislation privileging gender and sexual identities that will result in nuclear families, and at the extreme, outlawing sexualities outside of this narrow definition. These forms of legislation and ideologies belie a legacy passed on from a colonial past.

The colonial ideological legacies regarding race, gender, and sexuality make the Caribbean a unique context for questions of gender and labor, but this dissertation is not alone in making this query. Transnational queer feminist scholars from the third world have established powerful critiques of the making of non-citizens defined by regulatory discourses of gender and/or sexuality. In their introduction to *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty describe a “citizenship machinery” which naturalizes privileging of the heterosexual, white, nuclear family in the practice of law:

The citizenship machinery is not ‘blind’ to differences; in fact, it uses a legal apparatus to transform difference into inequality. In its efforts to remain ‘blind’ to differences in the name of equal treatment, the law often perpetuates the naturalization of heterosexuality and production of psychic economies that conform to the dictates of the ideological superiority of the heterosexual family. One effect is a foreclosing of the possibilities of same sex desire. (xxxii-ii)

Pressure to conform to compulsory heterosexuality and the absence of any queer gender identity in the Caribbean results from the criminalization of lesbian acts, prostitution, and in some cases, failure to report domestic abuse. Such regulation and creation of non-citizens registers as terror in the literature that I examine. As Alexander asserts in *Pedagogies of Crossing*, “citizenship is premised in heterosexual terms” and “lesbian and gay bodies are made to bear the brunt of the charge of undermining national sovereignty, while the neocolonial state masks its own role in forfeiting sovereignty as it recolonizes and renativizes a citizenry for service in imperial tourism” (11). In this way, Alexander argues that erotic autonomy is a strategy of decolonization.

Heterosexuality and tourism often go hand in hand for Caribbean nations:

Making the nation-state safe for multinational corporations is commensurate with making it safe for heterosexuality, for both can be recodified as natural, even supernatural. Thus, tourism and imperialism become as integral to the natural order as heterosexuality, and are indispensable in state strategies of recolonization. (Alexander 26)

Citizenship becomes defined by heterosexuality and servitude, both important to reproduce Caribbean economies; Alexander refers to this as renativizing—creating an imaginary native culture nostalgic for the “idyllic Bahamas, free from Western decadent incursions” of lesbians and gay men (Alexander 47). The nation casts itself as the savior of the people, bringing citizens

jobs and uniting them against a polluted foreign culture. Homophobia and welcoming smiles for tourists organize a national identity. Public discourse from government officials has created this resurgent homophobia in the Bahamas, Trinidad, and Tobago, at the same time that a “Smile Campaign” was launched, obscuring the ways that the state relies on the reproduction of labor and the affective, unpaid labor of its citizens for tourism to accumulate wealth for the mostly foreign stakeholders. Alexander argues that the state positions itself as “heterosexual patriarch” and “economic savior” by creating citizenship that is determined by heterosexuality and servile-ness (60-1).

Where citizenship is defined by heterosexuality, non-normative sexual and gender identities are lived as resistance, especially in these texts—when given the narrative space to fully develop, that is. So far, in tracing my theoretical foundations a tension has surfaced in the very language that I have chosen to employ regarding gender and women as a category of analysis. First, after Mohanty’s explanation of the elision between “‘women’ as a discursively constructed group and ‘women’ as material subjects of their own history,” I recognize that the discursive homogeneity of women as a group is often mistaken for the historically specific material realities of groups of women (23). Mohanty warns feminist scholars of the dangers of constructing a monolithic image of third world women that ignores specific oppressions and choices in particular geographic, cultural, and political contexts. I also recognize a building tension in continuing to use the category of women while simultaneously challenging the colonial construction of binary gender throughout this dissertation. While woman as a category of analysis and for organizing labor has historically been significant in the Caribbean, perhaps the time has arrived to challenge the category’s centrality. Peggy Antrobus chronicles the history of political organizing of women both in her personal involvement in Jamaica and on a global

scale in DAWN² beginning in the mid-1970s in *The Global Women's Movement*. Organizing around the category of woman has been effective through the 1980s, particularly during the UN's Decade for Women (1975-1985) (Antrobus 37). The most well-known women's organization in the Caribbean, perhaps, is the Sistren Theater Collective, a group of working class women using individual storytelling to critique neocolonial patriarchy in Jamaica. Today, the group performs for the community, educating the public on issues such as domestic violence and gender ideology. The first three chapters of this dissertation feature novels created out of this era of organizing in the 1980s, and despite *Lucy's* publication date in 2002, it seems much more aligned with the politics and ease of use of the category of woman shared with the other novels. While these collectives and organizing efforts have given reason to continue to utilize woman as a category in analyses of the Caribbean, the feminizing of labor throughout my argument becomes a detriment to other gender identities as well. By the time *Cereus Blooms at Night* is published in the mid- 1990s, activist discourse has witnessed a shift that is more critical of the binary gender system. As Cressida Heyes writes in 2003, "Despite the fact that most transgendered people are daily the victims of the most intense and public attempts to discipline gender in ways feminists have long criticized, 'trans liberation' and 'feminism' have often been cast as opposing movements" (262). When feminists have insisted on organizing around woman as a biological and social category, it becomes an ugly exclusive term that denies how devalued labor and expression of non-normative gender still marginalize those excluded from the category. Truly anti-capitalist frameworks need to confront how binary gender is reproduced even in organized resistance, and our new forms of resistance question categories that seek to divide us. An anti-capitalist framework must therefore confront the possibility that the binary

² Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era: www.dawn.org.fj

gender system can no longer contain the identities necessary for organizing and critiquing feminized, devalued labor. While we cannot leave behind the category of woman as it still reverberates with cultural meaning, we can recalibrate our feminism to interrogate gender and labor as it affects all people. The first three chapters of this dissertation take up the vocabulary of the contexts in which they are written (the late 1980s and early 90s with one exception), relying on the category of woman and materialist feminist theory, but the final chapter embraces materialist transfeminisms critiquing colonial race and gender oppression. *Cereus Blooms at Night* by Shani Mootoo features a non-normatively gendered narrator limited to the conventions of binary pronouns and narrative conventions but seeking to escape them.

Processes that privilege the cis-gendered heterosexual narrative can reveal a limit to narrativization norms as well, by keeping a non-normatively gendered narrator confined to the margins as I explore further in chapter 4. Outlining the processes by which non-normative sexual and gender identities are limited or labeled non-citizens requires analysis of the construction of gender categories within a history of colonial expansion and violence. This history is shared by humans and non-human life as European explorers, scientists, and merchants worked towards similar ends in developing what they found and brought to the new world for their consumption. Colonization caused unspeakable violence on indigenous people and environments in easily recognizable ways such as war, slavery, and disease, but what has passed as objective “natural science,” culled from pages of European travelers’ journals and “experiments” has been less recognizable as an unspeakable violence wrought by colonialism. The collection, dissection, categorization, and often display of indigenous peoples, animals, and plant life created a body of knowledge that reflected European-created hierarchies of race and gender, transferring these ideas onto non-human specimens as well (DeLoughrey et. al.). Understanding this process as a

source of violence and the intentional correction of such wide-reaching knowledge has come to be known as decolonial science. The creation and reproduction of the western gender binary and the pathologizing of non-normative genders and sexualities were violent knowledge-building activities within global capitalism in order to create non-citizens. That these epistemologies were applied to non-human life in the “natural sciences” reenacts this violence on the environment, which I will explain further in the next section. This co-construction of gender and nature for exploitation illustrates how interrelated are the frameworks for this dissertation.

Caribbean Landscapes

Mimi Sheller’s analysis of the multiple kinds of consumption of the Caribbean, *Consuming the Caribbean*, argues that “The Caribbean” is a constructed assemblage made from European explorers’ logs, scientists’ drawings and collections, colonists’ descriptions of plantations, and early travelers’ tourist guides. Sheller writes that, “The Caribbean is consumed both in travelling representations (texts, images, signs) that bring the Caribbean to the consumer, and by travelling consumers who organize their experience and perceptions of the Caribbean through existing visual regimes” (38). She traces a historical process of creating the contemporary Caribbean, beginning with nature writing of the kind that widely circulated England by Francis Drake. The Drake Manuscript contains dozens of drawings of plants and animals, often surrounded by white space in an attempt to isolate the object for identification and study. This early mode of consumption allowed the immediate products of nature to be commodified and used in Europe: quinine, milk chocolate, and other products entered the European market through early contact between explorers and indigenous scientists (Sheller 39-40). That Drake’s contact with the Caribbean came about on slave voyages in 1567-8 should not go unnoticed. The representations of Caribbean landscapes responsible for creating this

assemblage were created within expanding capitalism, so it should come as no surprise that representations encouraging further intervention and justifications for doing so multiplied.

Colonialism's manipulation of the social fabric of the Caribbean through forced migrations of African slaves and the later movement of many Indian workers to the islands was paralleled by its manipulation of the environment to produce consumer goods for Europe. The monocultural plantations damaged and recreated the landscape of the Caribbean islands over the course of a few centuries. Sugar, coffee, bananas, and cacao were export crops grown on large single-crop plantations on many islands. Not only did soil depletion and erosion become serious concerns on these tiny islands, but also, according to Stuart McCook's extensive study on Spanish Caribbean agriculture, monocultural plantations "unintentionally created an environment ideal for the spread of disease and pests" (21). Crop epidemics easily spread back to Europe as well because of the development of railroads and steamships. In addition, single-crop plantations charged a nascent attack on Caribbean biodiversity. The reality of plantation environments, however, was in stark contrast to the portrayal of such environments by European colonists and travelers in the Enlightenment period. The neat, organized patterns that single crop plantations created in the landscape were admired for their beauty. Sheller writes that

If the appreciation of Caribbean landscapes began from a pursuit of survival, medicine, and natural science, the flow of tropical flora, fauna, and forms of cultivation across the Atlantic soon fed into a new 'scenic economy.' I refer to these ways of representing and viewing 'scenery' as an economy because they involved modes of accumulation, exchange, and consumption through which landscape was fetishized and turned into a commodity. (46)

Sheller traces the eighteenth century's representations of Caribbean plantations as "triumphs of cultivation" set off by *terra nullis*, wild land that could be legitimately seized (47-8).

Considering many colonists' writing of the time, which remarks on the beauty of cultivation and the quaintness of slave huts, she concludes that, "Ignoring the ugliness of slave labour that went into making these 'beautiful' scenes of well-cultivated land becomes a justification for slavery" (51). The aesthetics of the plantation in the Caribbean became a justification for the modes of production which created it, along with an emotional investment in the civilizing of land and people. This feeling was to change when Romanticism entered Europe's aesthetics. Whether Romanticism allowed colonists to view the tropics in a new way or the encounter with the tropics helped develop the new aesthetic is debatable, but this aesthetic proved to be very influential in producing new modes of consumption in the Caribbean and the way its landscapes are consumed (Sheller 53).

Criticism of filthy cities and pathologized culture as opposed to pristine, healthful representations of nature rose in the nineteenth century and had lasting effects on the way that the Caribbean is consumed. In "The Tourist Crop," a chapter from John Gilmore's *Faces of the Caribbean*, Gilmore writes of Barbados:

While the island had once been known for its 'fatal climate', by 1886 the Rev. J. H. Sutton Moxly, author of *A West-Indian Sanatorium and a Guide to Barbados* was claiming that it was 'one of the most salubrious places in the world,' so much so that antiseptics were not used in surgery at the General Hospital in Bridgetown, as the air was too pure to require it. (38)

The new representation of the Caribbean as a site that could restore a traveler's health recast its sights as paradisiacal, justifying new modes of consumption through larger hotels and the

beginning of a resort boom. These representations carry over into today's contemporary Caribbean imaginary, which will be discussed at length in chapter 1 through Jamaica Kincaid's novella *A Small Place*. Colonial impacts on the Caribbean hastened to be downplayed so that the area could reclaim its wild, primal status; however, the environmental destruction cannot be completely erased—more evidence that the Caribbean is an assemblage created in the European imaginary as Sheller argues.

While this return to the Edenic representations of the Caribbean was portrayed as a welcome escape from industrial European centers by some, others cast this as a descent into barbarism. Especially during anti-abolitionist debates and following emancipation in the colonies, representations sought to naturalize racial hierarchies, centering a recurring trope of aligned wild landscapes with indigenous peoples or slaves. Sheller writes,

The post-emancipation decline of plantations in the old colonies was coded as the fall of civilization and regression into barbarism through the racist visions of lazy 'darkies' and unmanaged nature crowding in on once cultivated and productive colonies. Thus the imagery of sublime primitive nature, and accounts of European adventure in the island wilds, served as pleas for renewed European intervention in its economically and socially decayed colonies. (58)

U.S. intervention used this representation of the Caribbean as justification for occupations of Haiti and Puerto Rico before the end of the nineteenth century. That representations of Caribbean landscapes can be utilized for rationalizing military occupations says a lot about the importance of literary representation in constructing and reifying ideology which supports the mode of production. That literary representation also has the power to resist such ideology demonstrates the power in the political form of narratives.

These competing images of the Caribbean landscape are, as Sheller asserts, products (in its most materialist meaning) that exist in the mind of the west. The Caribbean environment has been discursively constructed by its colonial past. However, its reality is much more complex and hybrid, and increasingly available to us in contemporary women writers' work. The chapters that follow engage in how these women writers allow Caribbean environments broader understandings and critique the multiple ways that nature and gender are subject to processes of regulation under global capitalism.

Structures of Feeling

Putting together a queer, eco-, materialist feminist approach to these texts foregrounds how constructions of gender and environment are closely related. These constructions allow for gender and environment to be readily manipulated for processes of global capitalism. The effects of this regulation are felt in women's experiences, but those experiences can be difficult to access. This section develops how literature provides a particularly strong archive of women's experiences, especially those that convey a surprising feeling embedded in those experiences. Literature is an ideal vehicle for identifying and analyzing affect as it attaches to experiences and larger structures that create those experiences.

In *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams describes how culture consistently converts events as they unfold into the past. This immediate process misinforms our perception of institutions or social formations to be articulated as somehow already over and complete:

The strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity is this immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products...Analysis is then centered on relations between these produced institutions, formations, and experiences, so that now,

as in that produced past, only the fixed explicit forms exist, and living presence is always, by definition, receding. (128)

Instead of perceiving institutions, formations, and relationships as having formed completely prior to our discussion of them, Williams asserts that they must remain active, “the undeniable experience of the present” (128). In order to recognize this constantly occurring present, Williams argues that we must develop ways to express this thinking: “more active, more flexible, less singular terms—consciousness, experience, feeling” (128). Disappointed that even these new ways of understanding will be casualties of the habit to make a fixed past, Williams relates this process to the way that we discuss art, and specifically literature. He writes that “works of art, which really are, in one sense, explicit and finished forms...[in order] to complete their inherent process, we have to make them present, in specifically active ‘readings’” (129). In reading these texts by Caribbean women, I navigate the present relationships and institutions as continually unfolding and being articulated. While social formations of the past must necessarily inform the present, the formations continue to be read as currently being formed because we are *in process* of interpreting them, even now. That is why *processes* is used to describe how women’s lives seem to be affected within these texts. To limit causality to past institutions, social formations or relationships is too simplistic and fixed, and according to Williams, a misinterpretation of historical materialist practice. This type of reading outlined by Williams offers a useful method of interpretation for examining the dreams from Kincaid and Danticat’s novels; both Lucy and Martine feel terror in response to processes that are as yet, unable to be named by them. These processes are new, affectively registered, connected ways that conflict, the body, subjectivity, and environment are embodied and confronted. I attempt to name and describe each process, which together I collectively call the structure of terror influencing

Caribbean women's and transgendered persons' lives. The language that I use, structures of terror, owes much of this idea to Williams' theorization of structures of feeling.

Feelings, as theorized by Williams, signal the commencement of a yet-to-be formalized institution or social ideology. Its lack of definition springs from the fact that the change is being lived at the time it is being described, as I describe above for Lucy and Martine. These feelings “do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action” (Williams 132). The writing of Caribbean women portrays terror in domestic and mundane activities as a way of communicating this lived experience as conscious thought. They feel, as something happens, a process in which they are involved, and in which their subjectivity—ability to feel and think—must be asserted. Rosemary Hennessy, in describing the affect developed in organizing in the Mexican *Frontera*, posits that affects are a crucial part of capitalism: “Under capitalism the full meeting of human needs is structurally foreclosed for the simple reason that labor is organized so that profit margins grow as workers' needs are reduced to the barest feasible minimum” (*Fires on the Border* 58). This pinch (or sometimes more dramatic terror) that is felt in unmet needs uniquely positions Caribbean people, especially women and non-normatively gendered individuals, to attest to the terror of global capitalism. Williams similarly describes a political consciousness raised through affect:

We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity. We are then defining these elements as a ‘structure’: as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension. Yet we are

also defining a social experience which is still *in process*, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies...Methodologically, then, a 'structure of feeling' is a cultural hypothesis actually derived from attempts to understand such elements and their connections in a generation or period, and needing always to be returned, interactively, to such evidence. (132-3)

What at first is recognized in a single novel as perhaps specific to a character in their feeling of terror, is revealed by analysis to be shared across many women's and transgender persons' experiences. A set of "elements and their connections" can be recognized as a structure of terror that includes several nodes, each its own process with its own discourse and specific hierarchies. Thus, this dissertation is a large cultural hypothesis identifying and describing a structure of terror attempting to understand each processes' elements and precursors, which must be revisited with new perspective in the next generation. I attempt to read these authors within Frederic Jameson's "final horizon," "...a space in which History itself becomes the ultimate ground as well as the untranscendable limit of our understanding in general and our textual interpretations in particular" (100). Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* argues for a re-reading and re-writing of texts, not just within their own historical and political specificities, but as symbolic acts themselves, containing within a mode of production and simultaneously the narratives of those that precede it and values against it. Marxist concepts, for Jameson, are "defended as something like an ultimate *semantic* precondition for the intelligibility of literary and cultural texts" (75). The Caribbean women's texts analyzed here employ some of these concepts similarly, insisting

on the narrative acts of these authors encompassing a mode of production as it organizes social processes and environmental processes particular to gender, but no less totalizing.

While terror is experienced by the women and transgendered people in these texts, it is attached to varying objects and relationships, and confronted in different circumstances across several novels. Each chapter focuses on a specific process by which terror is felt, including anywhere from one to three texts to illustrate its elements and analyze the experiences of terror. The chapters begin with historical background and theoretical development of the processes themselves, revealing present dialogic constructions of gender, subjectivity, and environment. The development of the process identified precedes careful analysis of the literature that expresses terror, both that which is expressed explicitly in characters' description of feelings and that which is felt in narration itself, in censoring, hesitating, or in the lack of semantic structures in which to communicate such terror. Chapter descriptions for each of the processes and the literature examined follow.

The Structure of Terror in Four Processes

The first chapter, "Domestic Labor and Daffodils," introduces the central process of housewifization as the ideological and economic process of creating the housewife to perform the free labor of domestic activities, at the same time framing emotional labor as "love" and constructing the female gender to be naturally suited to such tasks. Housewifization marks the first process in the structure of terror, extending the terror experienced in the home into the social organization of the nation at the historical moment of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Jamaica Kincaid's novellas, *Lucy* and *A Small Place*, portray domestic items and activities as embedded within two competing narratives—the dominant structure, a "structure of happiness," revealed as a veil behind which is a structure of terror. Kincaid's strong critique of housewifization and the

international division of labor is often read as engaging in identity politics; however, I argue that her critique is emphatically demanding recognition of the ways which the dominant subjectivity of western Man has been overrepresented. Sylvia Wynter's work on the category of human provides a strong case for reading Kincaid as a transnational feminist, much more aware of the social formations affecting all women and pitting them against each other.

While the social formation of the housewife traveled overseas and across continents to affect women in Europe's colonies, related gender ideologies organized around concepts of knowledge-building as well, which would have devastating effects globally. Women's role as nurturer and caretaker would easily serve as justification for their exclusion from intellectual life as well as their right to property and sexual/reproductive agency. In the second chapter, "Witches, Ghosts, and Zombies, Oh My!," I trace processes of colonization and expanding global capitalism shaping knowledge production, suppressing indigenous knowledge, especially that of women. Arguing that colonial epistemologies are a second node in the structure of terror, I examine Erna Brodber's *Myal* and Maryse Condé's *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* for the terror felt by the systematic eradication of anti-capitalist knowledge. The image of the witch features centrally in analyzing the torture suffered by resisting women in both fiction and nonfictional accounts. The zombie creates a powerful image for this argument as well, embodying a commodification of one's subjectivity for the consumption by the colonizer, becoming also the *living dead*, those whose lives are expendable in processes of primitive accumulation. Women's bodies, in both of these novels, become the grounds of contestation between anti-capitalist sexual agency and imperial regulation required for the reproduction of labor.

De-legitimation of women's knowledge through terror is illustrated in Brodber's and Condé's novels, but they both challenge this process as well, creating methods of resistance in the style of narrative chosen. Tituba is able to "speak" to contemporary Black feminist issues through a reimagined Hester Prynne, and *Myal* reads as a nonlinear, multiple-voiced double narrative in both a particular story of Jamaica and farm story allegory of colonialism. Both of these examples illustrate how literature provides a particularly rich vehicle for understanding and describing feelings attached to social formations as they are lived and felt. The most well-known Caribbean author to write feelings, and especially those of terror into stories, is Edwidge Danticat, whose work I examine in the next chapter.

The third chapter, "State Violence in the Structure of Terror" examines state violence mobilized through ideology of gender, devalued domestic activity, and patriarchal "right" to women's bodies. Analyzing the historical construction of the Haitian state as it repeatedly pits landowning state officials against their agrarian citizenry, I trace the ways in which the Duvalier regimes formalized state violence against citizens, especially women, in sanctioning rape as a weapon of the state. The ideology of "respectable women" as the mothers of the nation reveals how the state is able to regulate women's bodies and sexuality through the threat of rape to incite terror. Three of Edwidge Danticat's novels are explored to illustrate state violence as a process felt by women in the space of the home. *The Farming of Bones* uses the motif of scars to illustrate the processes creating them and inflicting terror while the novel narrativizes the nation's racial scars felt in the 1937 Massacre of Haitians living and working in the Dominican Republic. Scarring in a psychological sense appears in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, as terror is constantly experienced by Martine, the rape survivor in the dream described earlier. Rape executed by the Tonton Macoutes parallels the psychological scarring inflicted on the narrator

Sophie by her own mother in the form of virginity testing. Such a parallel highlights the elements of this process where women are complicit in perpetuating terror across generations because of internalized patriarchal values. Martine is positioned as both victim and oppressor, a theme explored in even greater detail and complexity in *The Dew Breaker*.

Spanning generations and the Haitian diaspora, the characters in *The Dew Breaker* express terror as victims and torturers, sometimes at the same time, through the process of state violence. The Dew Breaker himself most notably narrativizes the process of both inflicting terror and feeling terror in coercion to perform this role due to a lack of choices. State violence as a process reveals multiple layers to the terror of which it is capable of inflicting through different interpretations of rape and kinds of scars. This node in the structure of terror is perhaps the most visible and readily available reading of terror in writing by Caribbean women. If this process marks the high point or the brightest star in the constellation of the structure of terror, I turn lastly to a process which is the least accessible, available for development and analysis only through a project of recovery or reading against the text itself: absence is remarkably a form of terror.

Building on the terror felt in colonial knowledge production in chapter two, this final chapter continues to analyze knowledge production, this time specifically scientific discourse of gender in both humans and nonhuman nature to denaturalize the limited expression of a non-normatively gendered narrator. In Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*, terror is felt by Nurse Tyler in holding back their own story while their identity becomes feminized by the devalued status of caretaking labor. The inability of the narration and the other characters to fully develop and recognize their in-between-ness defines the limits of western conceptions of narration and gender that are felt as terror. In addition, the binary construction of gender is often

projected onto understandings of flora and fauna, especially as the knowledge about them is constructed by a western scientific discourse prone to commodifying all that it encounters. I identify this process of flattening and centering heterosexuality within the text and across human and nonhuman contexts heterocapitalism. The limits and inability to express outside of the constructed binary and for value other than product value are felt as terror in *Cereus Blooms at Night*. The novel challenges conceptions of the people and environment of the Caribbean while it also traces the limits often imposed on storytelling and language. As the final process located in the structure of terror, heterocapitalism appears as the most emergent, expressing terror in marginal comments because trans- experience has historically been silenced.

These chapters together describe social formations in process that register in the literature as a structure of terror. Women writers of the Caribbean are uniquely positioned to articulate and critique the processes affecting women, transgender people, and the environment, using mundane and domestic experiences to illustrate how this terror is lived and felt. Returning to the opening passages from Kincaid and Danticat, the most striking feature of them in comparison, is the repetition of such nightmares and terror for Lucy and Martine. While they have similarities regarding the loss of agency and its connection to social construction of gender, perhaps what is felt most deeply is that the nightmares are “continuous” and happen “every night.” Recurring articulations of terror portray what is felt as something more systematic and structural than a personal or idiosyncratic fear: without theorizing the source of such terror, Caribbean women writers make the processes included in the structure of terror felt and felt as a structure. Only when we consider the feelings attached to domestic objects and experiences do the social relationships become clearer, and ideologies reveal underlying economic processes simultaneously. These continuous nightmares produce a feeling of these processes inciting terror

being rearticulated across time as well. Each time re-encountered, the nightmare and the social formations shaping it should be re-examined. These chapters that follow offer one reading available in its own historical context.

CHAPTER ONE

DOMESTIC LABOR AND DAFFODILS: THE STRUCTURE OF TERROR

IN THE HOME IN JAMAICA KINCAID'S *LUCY* AND *A SMALL PLACE*

The home and the domestic sphere are not typically associated with terror and violence, at least not in the literature of the first world. However, Supriya Nair asserts that “With the legacy of slavery and indentured servitude in the Caribbean, by contrast, many homes in the literature do not function as cozy settings of bourgeois domesticity” (49). The home has historically been a significant and largely invisible site of exploited labor as well as sexual violence in the Caribbean, especially for women. The home is one example of a specific social formation that, combined with others, forms the structure of terror that I have set out to name and examine. This structure of terror is a constellation of social formations with corresponding ideologies that are felt in daily life. As the nuclear family becomes the building block of the nation in the historical moment of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the pathology of the home as a site of terror and violence extends to the social organization of the nation as a whole. Hierarchies of gender, race, class, and sexuality are legitimized and constantly rearticulated to perpetuate terror through patriarchal authority, though it does not act alone. As Stuart Hall argues, “Capital has always been quite concerned with the question of the gendered nature of labor power...It has always been able to work between the different ethnically and racially inflected labor forces” (180). This chapter will explore two novels by Jamaica Kincaid that reveal domestic space as a structure of terror. Kincaid accomplishes this through focusing on certain domestic objects and tourist activities that her narrators encounter which, through two competing narratives, expose the dominant structure of feeling—in this case, a “structure of happiness”—as veil behind which is a structure of terror. This ideology on the dominant subject’s part also manifests in the critical

debates about Kincaid's writing; recent critics have attempted to read her transnational feminist novels as evidence of the impasse of identity politics. In contrast, I argue here that she does not practice identity politics but rather critiques the process of housewifization and the pervasiveness of the international division of labor as witnessed through her narrators. Furthermore, as I explain in this chapter, such a critique allows for an assemblage conception of the human rather than a transcendent imperial version of Man. This vision of the human, influenced heavily by Sylvia Wynter's theorization, remains embedded within a non-human environment.

Jamaica Kincaid's writing is notable to critics for the many instances of dysfunctional homes she creates. The mother-daughter relationships, oscillating between intense love and utter loathing, are written about at length, and the relationship as a stand-in for the colonizer/colonized relationship is also a much discussed theme. Moira Ferguson deciphers the interrelated portrayals of mothers and motherlands within several of Kincaid's works in *Jamaica Kincaid: Where the Land Meets the Body*. In *Mother Imagery in the Novels of Afro-Caribbean Women*, Simone A. James Alexander also explores a gendered conception of motherlands in novels by Maryse Condé, Paule Marshall, and Jamaica Kincaid. The trope has been explored extensively. Carole Boyce Davies summarizes the significance of this inquiry within Kincaid's repertoire in her chapter in *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*: "the necessity to identify with, yet separate oneself from, the mother is a central issue" (65). While a lot of attention has been given to the mother-daughter relationship as a metaphor for colonialism, not much has been paid to Kincaid's narratives as encompassing the contradiction of her historical moment in global capitalism. The narratives within both *Lucy* and *A Small Place* demonstrate the location of the home and nuclear family within the structure of terror by dramatizing how domestic objects and

tourist activities re-articulate the presence of terror within cultural institutions, ideologies, and relations of production that bourgeoisie narratives attempt to silence or overwrite.

Considering the history of the island of Antigua briefly will provide a deeper context for this argument. A former British colony, Antigua's small size led to only a handful of sugar plantations, but it has suffered similar effects as the larger islands like Jamaica. As the sugar economy faded, Antigua's rising business, similarly exploitative of its newly freed citizens, was banking, followed immediately by tourism. The combination of debts and foreign-owned resorts funneling the largest profits to be had on the island limit the majority of Antiguanans to service jobs without any hope of upward mobility. Though Antigua is not named in *Lucy*, Kincaid writes explicitly about her homeland in *A Small Place*. While her writing remains grounded in a specific island's history and examples, Antigua may be considered synecdochically for many islands' struggles in the Caribbean.

There are several steps necessary to make this argument. First, I plan to describe how domestic space becomes a specific ideological and cultural site helping to form a larger structure of terror that is reinforced and re-informed by a mode of production. The major process by which domestic space is regulated and ideologies surrounding it are reified is housewifization, which I will outline next, as it takes place in both imperial centers and as it travels to colonies and former colonies. Next, I will identify the process of housewifization as it applies to the immigration of domestic workers to imperial centers like the U.S. as well as how it influences the gendered service work affiliated with tourism. Then I will identify in both *Lucy* and *A Small Place* specific narrative moments that dramatize and make accessible the process of housewifization and the objects about which two contradictory narratives are formed with Kincaid emphasizing the non-dominant narrative that places such objects and activities within the structure of terror. Finally, I

will examine how Kincaid's use of this counter-narrative in her subject positions is an appeal to a transcendent humanity devoid of race, class, or gender divisions, grounded in a false universal biological representation of the human.

The Home and Structures of Feeling

Feelings of happiness and comfort surrounding the home and family have been influenced by historical and economic processes and cannot be viewed as naturally stemming from the social arrangement. In *The Promise of Happiness*, Sara Ahmed argues that "Attributions of happiness might be how social norms and ideals become affective, as if relative proximity creates happiness" (11). She describes at length the family as a happiness object which gets passed around, "accumulating positive affective value as social goods" (21). These affects attached to the family appear alongside economic and social processes which create a structure of happiness as a norm. Within historical materialist theory, culture is constantly produced and reproduced as an ongoing process, not a static category, amidst a class struggle. At a specific historical moment, any society is influenced by dominant social formations as well as residual or emergent ones, though Raymond Williams would be quick to point out that the separation and creation of abstract categories to describe a universal social law creates a Marxism "that was never materialist enough" (92). Williams' work is important in reestablishing what is meant by "productive forces" within historical materialism to include that which precedes ideology or a clearly defined belief system, structures of feeling:

The strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity is this immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products... Yet the actual alternative to the received and produced fixed forms is not silence: not the absence, the unconscious, which bourgeois culture has mythicized. It is a kind of feeling and thinking which is

indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and defined exchange. (128-31)

Before the language of an ideology is formed, a structure of feeling exists within the activities and thoughts of daily life that “exert[s] palpable pressures and set[s] effective limits on experience and on action” (132). Structures of feeling are in process, constitutive of the confrontation between dominant, residual, and emergent social formations, and often described as personal or idiosyncratic as a dismissal. The production of art (namely literature) within a society is necessarily produced out of its social formations. Structures of feeling emerge within culture as un-wholly formed ideologies, affective thoughts organized around traditions, institutions, or objects that stand in for process. My conception of a structure of terror springs from the need to name a narrative pattern that emerges in a few Caribbean women’s novels to enact the relationship between and mediation of culture, ideology, institutions of law, and the economic base, which is always in sight, in their daily lives at a moment of Reaganomics-inspired neoliberalism.

The structure of terror materializes in contrast to the established dominant ideology and associated affect of happiness surrounding the home, creating in these texts a central contradiction. The feelings associated with objects and activities in the literature do not match the feelings expected to be felt in dominant ideologies of the domestic space. According to Frederic Jameson, the identification of such a contradiction is a Marxian literary criticism proper, and “requires this multiplicity to be reunified, if not at the level of the work itself, then at the level of its process of production, which is not random but can be described as a coherent functional operation in its own right” (56). If the texts by Caribbean women that I examine produce conflicting narratives about such concepts as the home, then they also reveal their

unifying structure in the process of their production. The home, or more specifically, the nuclear family, is both a valued cultural practice and the manifestation of gender ideology. To limit its conception to superstructural categories, however, denies the economic foundation for its existence. Thus, an account of the family's historical production is crucial in establishing how the capitalist mode of production influenced (and continues to influence) the cultural value of the home and family. The major process by which the home is regulated and ideologies surrounding it are reified is the process of housewifization. The narratives of *Lucy* and *A Small Place* unify, as Jameson suggests, the competing structures of happiness and terror in tracing the process of housewifization. Understanding this historical process explains the dominant structure of feeling, a "promise of happiness" suggested by Ahmed, associated with the home in both *Lucy* and *A Small Place* as it becomes infused with happiness and love.

Housewifization on an International Scale

The term housewifization comes from Maria Mies' classic materialist feminist study, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* where she traces the social construction of the sexual division of labor and the role that colonization has played in creating an international sexual division of labor. Housewifization refers to the process in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of producing an image of "woman as mother, and housewife, and the family as her arena, the privatized arena of consumption and 'love,' excluded and sheltered from the arena of production and accumulation, where men reign" (103). The development of this social construct of the housewife developed at the same time when female slaves in the colonies were forbidden any sense of womanhood. Slave marriages were unrecognized by owners and pregnancies were not allowed because they interfered with the productivity of a female slave (Mies 98). Mies argues that the reservation of respectable domesticity for white bourgeois families was causally

linked to the denial of family relations for slaves and natives under colonial rule (98). Mimi Sheller traces the purposeful restraint in consumer studies which “deflect attention from the enslaved bodies producing the empire of things, and thus also from the consumer’s potential accountability for their enslavement” (76). The wealth consumed in white European households was created at the expense of slaves’ lives and freedoms; the “civilized” scene of white domesticity is available only through the dehumanizing practices of slavery. Though bourgeois white families were at first the only people able to afford this sexual division of labor, it was forced into the white working class by ethical codes inscribed into laws and religion, and later held as the standard against which single parent homes were pathologized (Mies 105-6). Familial arrangements other than the nuclear family were viewed not as resistance to heteropatriarchy, but instead were cast as a racialized stereotype of black infidelity and irresponsibility. Such stereotypes were created in order to justify slavery, largely through scientific racialism. Robert J. C. Young’s seminal *Colonial Desire* examines how discourses of race developed within an expanding economic system:

Racial theory cannot be separated from its own historical moment: it was developed at a particular era of British and European colonial expansion in the nineteenth century which ended in the Western occupation of nine-tenths of the surface territory of the globe. There is an obvious connection between racial theories of white superiority and the justification for that expansion, which raises questions about the complicity of science as well as culture: racism knows no division between the sciences and the arts. (91-2)

Racist stereotypes about irresponsibility and infidelity developed so that slave owners could assuage their own guilt over splitting up families through the sale of slaves, and such stereotypes persisted long after emancipation. Roderick Ferguson’s *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer*

of Color Critique is foundational in understanding the nature of black citizenship as it hinges on proximity to white bourgeoisie sexual, familial, and economic embodiment. White European culture named itself as the standard by which all cultures it encountered (and created through the slave trade) were judged, installing its values in varying ways.

The extension of the housewife ideal into the working class not only demonized the single parent, but it also established the acceptable and the unacceptable methods of controlling family size. Proletariat women previously exercised control of pregnancies based on their ability to care for children; however, the new ideal of women as angels in the household also stripped them of the ability to terminate unwanted pregnancies. This is the subject of much of the next chapter on the demonization of female reproductive autonomy, but it is related to the creation of the image of the housewife. Good wives accept all children they are given and are expected to make the home their foremost occupation, but without the benefit of any other occupation: pay.

Silvia Federici's essays, collected in *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, describe the process of hiding the exploitation that is hidden by the creation of the housewife. She writes,

[Housework] has been transformed into a natural attribute of our female physique and personality, an internal need, an aspiration, supposedly coming from the depth of our female character. ... Capital had to convince us that it is a natural, unavoidable, and even fulfilling activity to make us accept working without a wage. (16)

Federici critiques the biological essentialism apparent in the creation of the housewife. Though she is writing in the 1970s as part of a movement for Wages for Housework, she illustrates Mies' overall thesis that the production of life through non-waged labor performed mostly by women throughout the world is the basis upon which waged, productive labor can be performed and

exploited. Housewifization, as it has been exported to the colonies, and disproportionately black bodies, has been responsible for the exploitation of subsistence farming done by women, as well as the creation of many products (like lace) that become defined as a leisurely activity. Mies explains the strategy in naming kinds of labor as “activities” or “supplementary” rather than work to justify this exploitation.

By universalizing the housewife ideology and the model of the nuclear family as signs of progress, it is also possible to define all the work women do—whether in the formal or informal sectors—as *supplementary* work, her income as *supplementary income* to that of the so-called main ‘breadwinner,’ the husband. The economic logic of this housewifization is a tremendous reduction of labour costs. (118-9)

Because women’s labor has been articulated as a free resource, housewifization has been instrumental in developing the international division of labor. Women in the third world are often housewives whose labor outside of the home is invisible, being labeled a leisurely activity or supplementary, while first world women are pushed into the home where they are bombarded with advertisements to be the consumers of these products. “[T]he new IDL divides the world up into producers and consumers, but it also divides women internationally and class-wise into producers and consumers” (Mies 120). Colonization and housewifization have worked in tandem to create this international division of labor, which did not end with colonization but has been perpetuated by austerity policies instituted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as part of Structural Adjustment Programs to qualify for loans following independence (Sunshine 112). Austerity policies tend to de-fund social programs linked to education, childcare, and care for the elderly, all of which are utilized mostly by women. By cutting these programs,

the labor which was done by them then falls onto the shoulders of women within the private home setting, as part of housework. Even more invisible labor becomes unpaid.

Domestic Workers in the International Division of Labor

The appearance of international domestic workers in the first world can be attributed to two factors. First, the women's movement of the late 1960s and 1970s in the US increased the number of women choosing careers outside of the home. The point needs to be made here that at first it was a choice for middle class women (most working class women never having this choice), but by the 1980s it was necessary for two incomes to support a middle class household. Cynthia Enloe describes how the expectation of a career and children led first world (mostly white, middle class) women to hire domestic workers when the state cut back on daycare services:

Superwoman was replacing Angel in the House as the quintessential middle-class woman...When their husband or employer or government didn't move to reduce the stresses imposed by the double burden, women began looking for private solutions...Despite the ideological contradictions and political unease, many middle class women have hired domestic servants...[They] have been able to rationalize away their initial embarrassment: hiring a domestic servant seems like a response to political forces outside one's control. (178-9)

In addition to the first world demand for domestic workers, the second factor leading to the trend in such work is the international debt crisis forcing women in the third world to find private solutions to the cutbacks in social programs made through austerity policies mentioned previously. Enloe writes, "International debt politics has helped create the incentives for many women to emigrate, while at the same time it has made governments dependent on the money

those women send home to their families” (184). Food subsidies are cut, making it more expensive to feed a family, while wages are driven lower. Sending wages home from a domestic work position becomes a way to support a family from afar. The stability of a government adopting the IMF’s Structural Adjustment Programs then depends on the willingness of women to make the food stretch, to take care of children and the elderly without coming to the public facilities, in short, to be superwomen (Enloe 185). Domestic workers from the third world leave their families, sometimes their own children, to alleviate the call for first world women to be superwomen. Jamaica Kincaid’s novel *Lucy* brings this very contradiction to the forefront, dramatizing the process of housewifization in the characters of Mariah, the first world middle class white woman, and Lucy, the black West Indian domestic worker that she hires.

The novel is narrated by Lucy, and through hearing her account, the bitterness, fear, and isolation that many domestic workers encounter surfaces throughout. These feelings that surface around domestic objects and everyday activities reveal the home to be part of a structure of terror. Enloe describes the plight of domestic workers of color through isolation and fear of abuse or deportation: “the domestic worker’s place of employment becomes a prison as well as a sanctuary” (186). Domestic workers are often only legal residents as long as their employer will vouch for her as a guest. Racial stereotypes about certain ethnicities being docile or very hard-working may stem from the beholden status many workers feel to their employers, therefore putting up little resistance to increased hours or more work (Enloe 187). Isolation may be caused by language barriers or the hours expected to be worked around mealtimes; these have both contributed to the difficulty that domestic workers face when trying to network or organize.

Organizing has been difficult for domestic workers for a few reasons. The scheduling of meetings can be hard when evenings are rarely available, but the biggest setback has been having

male union leaders recognize their labor as work because “their work looked too much like what their own wives did every day without pay” (Enloe 193). Male trade unions have been quick to dismiss domestic workers because they fail to see their labor, and their status as immigrants, has also led to their marginalization. Despite these difficulties, domestic working women have begun to build their own organizations, largely through solidarity with working class women at home, not through the unions or feminist organizations in their host-countries (Enloe 194). Kincaid’s novel portrays this isolation and distrust of organizing alongside those exploiting one’s labor, yet an uneasy friendship develops between Lucy and Mariah. Kincaid’s own experience as a domestic worker has allowed her to illustrate the international politics of a sexual division of labor and debt-reducing programs with a powerful narrative of these processes and a sharp critique of the home’s place within a structure of terror.

Lucy: A Narrative of Housewifization

Applying the effects of housewifization to *Lucy* produces two radically different standpoints from the two main characters; as they interact with domestic objects and converse in daily activities, Mariah’s narrative of home and family is one of happiness while Lucy reveals its place within a structure of terror. I address the characters’ positionality in order to address the complex positions from which both Lucy and Mariah speak, seeking to avoid labeling their positions as oppositional when in fact they share certain oppressions but also embody varying degrees of privilege. Their contradictory narratives of home and family can be read as part and parcel of the mode of production which they recreate: the international division of labor of late capitalism. In order to highlight these conflicting narratives, I will examine the contradictory ways that home and family are articulated by both women, followed by the objects and everyday domestic activities that they express their feelings towards in very different ways.

Lucy follows the story of a young West Indian woman as she travels to the US to become an au pair for Mariah and Lewis who have four young girls. Mariah and Lewis' family is most likely upper-middle class, as they have a summer home on the Great Lakes in addition to their house in New York City. Significantly, "Kincaid uses no patronymic for Lewis and Mariah in a telling reminder of the erasure of African names" (M. Ferguson 108). The consequence of this lack is a homogenizing effect of "the family" as a stand in for any white middle class family. Lucy is a forceful narrator, always the agent rather than the sheepish newcomer. Ferguson argues that Kincaid "dramatizes authoritarian treatment of those regarded as native others" with Lucy's character, "adopt[ing] a more explicitly counter-hegemonic stance" (109). The very narration of Lucy demands that what has been rendered invisible by the international division of labor and the devaluation of housework and childcare be seen and acknowledged as structures of feeling—or, as I am arguing part of a structure of terror—internalized as ideological mechanisms in daily life.

One core ideological mechanism to be revealed by the novel is the family. As the family's domestic worker, Lucy is responsible for walking the girls to school, making them lunch, and reading and playing with them in the afternoon (9). She eats dinner with the family, admiring, "[h]ow nice everyone [is] to me, though, saying that I should regard them as my family and make myself at home. I [believe] them to be sincere, for I [know] that such a thing would not be said to a member of their real family" (7). This encouragement that Lucy should feel as though she is a part of the family attempts to incorporate her presence and her labor within the structure of feeling that surrounds the family. Her activities should be done out of love and affection; labeling her one of the family attempts to conceal the employer/employee relationship between Mariah and Lucy, a relationship that Mariah would want to forget out of

guilt. Lucy reveals this surface pleasantness as a veil—“that such a thing would not be said to a member of their real family”—implies that Lucy recognizes inclusion as an act. In this way, the idea of the family becomes a structure of terror as it attempts to deny Lucy’s labor as work. As Enloe argues, the family home becomes both a prison and a sanctuary for Lucy.

Lucy refuses this incorporation into the family at times, and at other moments she is misunderstood, which leads to her alienation. The family begins to call her the Visitor one night at dinner. “They said I seemed not to be a part of things, as if I didn’t live in their house with them, as if they weren’t like a family to me, as if I were just passing through, just saying one long Hallo! And soon would be saying a quick Goodbye! So long! It was very nice!” (13). The family’s disappointment with Lucy’s separateness narrates the dominant ideology’s association of the family with happiness. At one point, furthermore, Lucy’s attempt to share a dream indicates this alienation but also this larger structure of terror. In the dream that she had about both Mariah and Lewis, she was running naked with Lewis chasing her and Mariah cheering him on. At the end of the dream she falls down a hole with snakes at the bottom. After recounting the dream at the dinner table, Mariah and Lewis assume her dream has a sexual undertone and murmur a joke about Dr. Freud and Visitor, which Lucy does not understand. Lucy explains to the reader that, “I had meant by telling them my dream that I had taken them in, because only people who were very important to me had ever shown up in my dreams” (15). Interpreting her dream through a western imperialist understanding of psychology, Mariah and Lewis effectively silence Lucy’s attempt to make a connection and live down her nickname of Visitor. This alienation occurs so soon upon her arrival in January that it solidifies her outsider position to the family through the spring. The dinner discussion of her dream is just one example of the everyday occurrences which Kincaid infuses with historical and economic significance. In her

chapter on Kincaid's novels in *Caribbean Writers and Globalization*, Helen Scott writes, "Kincaid's work places the history and continuity of imperialism at the heart of everything, even the most seemingly innocent of circumstances" (58). Prioritizing the western psychology of Sigmund Freud over Lucy's intended meaning of the dream exemplifies Kincaid's critique of imperialism in seemingly innocent circumstances. Simply sharing a dream, meant to communicate fondness, is instead experienced as terror when Lucy is ridiculed by the "knowing glances" of Lewis and Mariah for missing western cultural references. What was meant to draw them together becomes isolating instead.

Lucy's own home in the West Indies becomes an example of how two dissonant conceptions of the same place are operating within the ideologies of Lucy's and Mariah's cultures. Purposefully vague, Kincaid does not reveal which Caribbean island is Lucy's home, though the other autobiographical details of the novel suggest Antigua. It is a very small island, formerly colonized by the British, and like many other islands, relies on a tourism economy. Tourism or the vacation is revealed to be another core mechanism internalized as a source of happiness for the first world but part of the larger structure of terror by those outside of it. Mariah and Lewis' friends also attempt to make Lucy seem like one of them in bringing up their familiarity with "the islands" at a dinner party. The generalized way that Dinah and others refuse any specificity to which islands and that they exist for anything other than fun vacations denies Lucy individuality and personhood. She explains, "it made me ashamed to come from a place where the only thing to be said about it was 'I had fun when I was there'" (65). When Hugh, Dinah's brother introduces himself and asks her, "Where in the West Indies are you from?" she immediately likes him because he does not try to find a false similarity with her. What calls to mind sunny beaches to Mariah and Lewis' friends is a source of pain and violence to Lucy as she

recalls the neocolonial tourism institution in the Caribbean. The guests' attempts to find a connection with Lucy deny her difference and the international sexual division of labor that has brought her to the lake house in Michigan. The conception of Lucy's home by their friends belies an ideological injustice; tourism in the first world becomes a structure of happiness, tied to images of honeymoon, family vacations, and relaxation, while in Antigua and many other tourism-driven island economies it becomes a structure of violence, tied to servitude, racism, and depleting resources. The shame that Lucy feels as she narrates this episode highlights the difference in conceptions of her home and how it creates a structure of terror through an entitled practice that erases third world people's subjectivity. These contradictory narratives of tourism will be revisited later on as the prominent subject of *A Small Place* as it more completely illustrates the negative impacts of tourism on Caribbean citizens.

Contradictory narratives associated with structures of happiness and those of terror are located within a few domestic objects in *Lucy* where the juxtaposition of Lucy's and Mariah's positionality reveal ironies in Mariah's wish for "sisterhood" across an international division of labor that denies Lucy's subjectivity. Scott attributes Lucy's position to her identification with the immigrant working class in the U.S., "and therefore of a different world than her employers" (73). In these objects, Lucy keenly observes how the family becomes a tool for deciphering the structure of happiness to which it belongs for Mariah and uses it to illuminate the erasures of people of the Caribbean that produce this happiness. Though Lucy stays quiet about this erasure narrating only to the reader, she voices her anger to Mariah when another erasure takes place in the gardens filled with daffodils. This part of the novel is one of the most heavily analyzed sections, as it so poignantly illustrates the violence of colonial educational practices in the Caribbean. Kincaid's autobiographical story of memorizing and reciting Wordsworth's poem

about daffodils without ever having seen one makes her hate them. In *Lucy*, Kincaid has Lucy remember how she recited the poem for an audience of parents and teachers, but afterward made “a vow to erase from my mind, line by line, every word of that poem” (18). She then dreams of being chased and buried by the daffodils, clearly a metaphor for being buried and having her existence wiped out by an imposed colonial culture. Lucy explains, “I had forgotten all of this until Mariah mentioned daffodils, and now I told it to her with such an amount of anger I surprised both of us...as soon as I had finished speaking, without a second of deliberation we both stepped back” (18-9). Again, the stepping back is a recognition of difference—class and race—that must make itself known in Lucy and Mariah’s pseudo-mother/daughter relationship. Mariah reaches out, touching her cheek, and says, “What a history you have” (19). If it seems that Mariah has become understanding and more attuned to their different feelings surrounding the daffodils, it only lasts that moment.

As a surprise in the spring, Mariah takes Lucy to the garden one afternoon, blindfolded. When she removes the blindfold, Lucy describes the sight and her feelings:

I looked. It was a big area with lots of thick-trunked, tall trees along winding paths.

Along the paths and underneath the trees were many, many yellow flowers the size and shape of play teacups, or fairy skirts. They looked like something to eat and something to wear at the same time; they looked beautiful; they looked simple, as if made to erase a complicated and unnecessary idea. I did not know what these flowers were, and so it was a mystery to me why I wanted to kill them. Just like that. I wanted to kill them. I wished that I had an enormous scythe; I would just walk down the path, dragging it alongside me, and I would cut these flowers down at the place where they emerged from the ground. (28-9)

Her feelings toward the flowers are just the same, but Mariah's pleading that "I'm sorry about the poem, but I'm hoping you'll find them lovely all the same" shows her lack of understanding. Even when she has been let in to Lucy's past to try to empathize, Mariah insists that her feeling toward the daffodils is the universal one. Lucy feels badly about "cast[ing] her beloved daffodils in a scene she had never considered, a scene of conquered and conquests; a scene of brutes masquerading as angels and angels portrayed as brutes" (30). Lucy tries to avoid blaming Mariah, granting her the understanding of which Mariah does not seem capable. Lucy realizes that the daffodils must remain a site of contestation between them, belonging to a structure of happiness for one of them, and a structure of terror for the other: "But nothing could change the fact that where she saw beautiful flowers I saw sorrow and bitterness" (30). Lucy embodies the effects of a colonial education that continues to erase her subjectivity and the validity of her responses to domestic objects like flowers that in western imperialist culture are assumed to incite happiness and warmth.

Another domestic object in the novel that Lucy deciphers as an everyday item forming the ideological mechanism of the family as a site of happiness is the kitchen table. Privilege is identified by Lucy in her sheer amazement at the circumstances of how Mariah and Lewis acquired it. She describes the story around how they came to have it:

the kitchen table, [was] a table she [Mariah] had found in an old farmhouse in Finland when she accompanied Lewis on a business trip to Scandinavia and liked so much that she bought it and had it shipped back home (when she told me this, it amazed me to think that someone could find an old piece of kitchen furniture at one end of the world and like it so much they would go to so much trouble to make sure it was always in their possession)...(58-9)

Lucy describes her feeling as amazement, but her use of the words “trouble” and “possession” reveal a more negative judgment on the process of acquiring this kitchen table. Traveling and the practice of bringing home souvenirs that Mariah’s position associates with the happiness is rewritten through Lucy’s counter-narrative, questioning the self-importance she sees in the act and identifying it as an immense luxury to ship such a large object. Surprisingly, this anecdote is not followed by Lucy’s refrain throughout the novel of “How does one get to be this way?” Instead, the anecdote is situated within her musings on how she loves Mariah when she reminds her of her mother, but also how she does *not* love Mariah when she reminds her of her mother. Perhaps Lucy’s denouncing of the entitlement involved in acquiring this kitchen table is avoided because she thinks of Mariah lovingly in that moment. To align Mariah with the colonizer at this moment reflects adoration, allowing her flaws to go unnoticed. It is a complicated relationship between Lucy and Mariah indeed. The table’s story and presence in the home bewilders Lucy, alluding to the worldwide division of producers and consumers without inciting the kind of anger and resentment of the daffodils. Yet these scenes are also significant in describing the nature of the relationship between Lucy and Mariah, a subject that requires much more analysis since it continues in the novel after the employer/employee relationship between them ends. As a transnational feminist novel, *Lucy* both pits these two women against each other as producer and consumer within the international division of labor, yet Kincaid develops the relationship between them to probe shared oppressions as well at times.

Veronica Majerol analyzes the uneasy friendship between Lucy and Mariah at length, arguing that it “is one that appeals to Lucy *because*, rather than in spite of the fact that, it is infused with ambivalence and contradiction; the ambivalence surrounding this relationship becomes the impetus for Lucy’s sense of disidentification with her surroundings” (18). Majerol

cites the daffodil scene and the party at the lake house as moments where Lucy disidentifies with Mariah's experience of the same object, and she adds to it the train ride where Lucy remarks that she is thankful for not having plowed the field that Mariah marvels at, alluding to the history of slavery that provided the U.S.' agricultural industry (20-21). Lucy also remarks in this scene how the other passengers look like Mariah while the staff members of the train look like Lucy, again disidentifying with Mariah's experience of train rides. Majerol explains that scenes like these are an "attempt to draw Lucy into a narrative of inclusion [that] opens up occasions for Lucy to remember feelings of exclusion" (20). Mariah's form of feminism is also that universal, western conception illustrated by her reading suggestion of *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir after Lucy confides in Mariah concerning her childhood on the island (132). While Mariah and Lucy may be united by gender oppression in patriarchal societies, their similarities seem to end there. The race and class divides which Mariah tends to overlook provide the very space where Lucy develops her identity, not as subject of her mother, christened Mrs. Judas, nor as a convert of Mariah's immigrant inclusion, but her own in-between-ness. Edyta Oczkowicz explores the growth of Lucy's identity as a process of "abandonment of her former self [as] the necessary condition for [her] liberation, the consequent exploitation and appropriation of her past and present [as] the vital formative determinants in the process of inventing her new self" (143-4). For Oczkowicz, Mariah acts a surrogate mother of sorts, being the mother that she can share her sexual encounters with and allowing her freedom in her choice of friends (Peggy). This pseudo-mother/daughter relationship helps Lucy through her moment of self-invention (Oczkowicz 148). I want to argue that Lucy's "self-invention" is opposed to Mariah's—not out of some refusal to be assimilated into first world culture—but because the objects and experiences that they both encounter are already part of a structure of terror for Lucy.

The complicated relationship between Lucy and Mariah draws out the extent to which gender is only one variable within the international sexual division of labor. Mariah's well-meaning kindness and attempts at inclusion serve as an identity and position to which Lucy can form her own against. Her racial and class differences are "the result of a foul deed" i.e. the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and need to be incorporated into her identity, but should not define her. In *Lucy*, Kincaid takes western feminism to task through this relationship, showing how the process of housewifization has affected both first and third world women, but insisting on the very different experiences between them. Mariah and Lucy create contradicting narratives of this process and show that solidarity is somewhat possible among women.

The complex friendship of Lucy and Mariah and the power given many domestic objects in Kincaid's writing is what makes *Lucy* such an effective critique of housewifization and the international sexual division of labor. Juxtaposing objects that are traditionally located within the home as signs of happiness and togetherness with the very cost of that image reveals the nuclear family in the first world to be a structure of terror, requiring the exploitation and sacrifice of black bodies, especially those that the structure of feeling connecting happiness with the home seeks to mask as "part of the family". The narratives of the process of housewifization through Lucy and Mariah allow for a transnational understanding of feminism that illuminates how both women are oppressed by the process in different ways, but Mariah's attempted "sisterhood" reinforces the hierarchy between them. Reading the conflicting narratives in this light allows the reader to understand the novel as a synchronic production of late capitalism. Jameson writes that, "everything about class struggle that was anticipatory in the older dialectical framework, and seen as an emergent space for radically new social relations, would seem, in the synchronic model, to reduce itself to practices that in fact tend to reinforce the very system that foresaw and

dictated their specific limits” (91). At the moment when it seems that there is the possibility of solidarity between Lucy and Mariah that would cross the boundaries of consumer and producer, the re-articulation of white bourgeoisie femininity as the default feminist position reinforces the hierarchies on which late capitalism rests.

Just as *Lucy* demands attention to the price of the first world home image, so *A Small Place* arrests its readers by focusing on the cost of the first world’s image of tourism in the Caribbean. The “vacation” undergoes the same revisionary placement as the home in Kincaid’s narration, from happiness object to structure of terror.

Housewifization in *A Small Place*

In *Lucy*, Mariah writes and illustrates a book about the vanishing countryside near her lake house, giving the money generated by its sales to a conservation society. Lucy muses that, “I couldn’t bring myself to point out to her that if all the things she wanted to save in the world were saved, she might find herself in reduced circumstances,” a statement she would normally enjoy making, but she loves Mariah too much to tell her (73). This moment in the novel serves to segue to the commodification of the environment in *A Small Place* as well as admonish Kincaid’s audience of first world conservationists. Only when the effects of environmental degradation or city sprawl occur in one’s own backyard do first world citizens take notice and act, and then often without a concern for the consumption practices that cause the degradation and depleted resources. In this one line, Kincaid alludes to a long history of environmental movements in the first world functioning alongside the privilege of exporting pollution and disappearing resources as opposed to those in the third world. Rob Nixon’s *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* methodically explores this history in several postcolonial locations including the Caribbean. The tourist in the Caribbean is “guaranteed full immersion in

the eco-archaic, which is not to be confused with the historical. To enter this refuge is to enter a charmed space that is segregated, among other things, from the history of its own segregation” (Nixon 184). The eco-archaic, as Nixon calls it, helps create the structure of happiness in which family vacations and honeymoons involving tourism belongs. The Caribbean must be a location of forgetting history to be enjoyed by white tourists; *A Small Place* interrupts this forgetting, embodying the reader as an ugly tourist and consumer, while creating a narration that identifies largely with the native population but draws attention to the ways in which migration complicates this positionality. Kincaid again develops a counter-narrative of tourism to the first world feelings of happiness and relaxation that accompany it as part of a structure of happiness by locating objects and everyday activities where these ideologies are felt. Only by revisiting these objects and activities in this counter-narrative are they revealed as a structure of terror.

Tourism and Housewifization

Tourism in the Caribbean has a long history, one predicated on the production of images of the region circulating Europe. Whether these are images created by those who have traveled or those enticing others to travel, images of the Caribbean are one of its most popular products. The transformation from plantation society to all-inclusive resort service economy is rooted in the image produced in the European imaginary, according to Mimi Sheller. She argues that the landscape of the Caribbean becomes fetishized and turns into a commodity through the writings of explorers and merchants (46). Images of ordered, cultivated plantations, once marveled at for their beauty in “civilized” engineered modifications to the environment, were replaced by images of wild, natural rainforests and palm trees on beaches. “Untouched nature” of the Caribbean became its most valued product, especially with the rise of Romantic aesthetics in Britain. Sheller writes, “in the Romantic era, . . . much of the Caribbean was again ‘renaturalized’ as virgin

wilds, to become a ‘second nature’ seemingly ‘untouched’ by man” (53). Much of the islands, however, had been drastically changed by plantations and European agriculture. Sheller describes French Romantic writers’ work to analyze how the images of the Caribbean portray pristine environments:

This imagery of colossal and impenetrable tropical forests dwarfs the scale of human intervention in the Caribbean, as if plantations had hardly made an ecological impact, and again it is the disembodied ‘European eye’ which ‘sees’ this scene, rather than a particular person. Cassagnac’s work, like others, was also a defense of slavery and a critique of the use made of natural productivity by supposedly improvident free people of color, both in Guadeloupe and in Haiti. (54)

Sheller describes how writing about the landscape was often closely associated with moral judgments and creating lasting racial stereotypes and boundaries. While images of the Caribbean often portrayed the lack of human impact as positive, other accounts likened its uncultivated-ness to barbarism, a barbarism in need of human (and capital’s) development. “...[T]he imagery of sublime primitive nature, and accounts of European adventure in the island wilds served as pleas for renewed European intervention in its economically and socially decayed colonies” (Sheller 58). Thus, scenery and landscapes in the Caribbean have been used to justify intensified colonial intervention and neocolonial enterprise in the region. At the same time, these islands need to appear “untouched,” as the very picturesque qualities are the product commodified. This is accomplished by creating barriers, physical and social, which allow increased mobility and access for some, but highly regulated mobility for others.

In *Strange Encounters*, Sara Ahmed theorizes stranger fetishism, the desire for proximity to difference, a concept that I argue is part of the product involved in tourism. Ahmed considers

how borders mean more for citizens of some locations than others: “The assumption that to leave home, to migrate or to travel, is to suspend the boundaries in which identity comes to be liveable, conceals the complex and contingent social relationships of antagonism which grant some subjects the ability to move freely at the expense of others” (86). Sheller develops this idea within the Caribbean resort context: “Thus the ability of the tourist to enjoy moving within and through the Caribbean requires limits to be placed on the mobility of ‘local’ people, who are barred access to resort areas except in so far as they perform service work” (30). Islanders are barred from tourist spaces unless they are there to service tourists. As we will see in the analysis of *A Small Place*, airport security makes travel easier for tourists than for natives as well. The consumption of the Caribbean is made easy for tourists because (neo)colonial economies and associated visual representations have centuries invested in creating the carefree image of the Caribbean on travel guides today.

Creating a location of forgetting is work in itself. According to Cynthia Enloe, “Tourism is promoted today as an industry that can turn poor countries’ very poverty into a magnet for sorely needed foreign currency...Foreign sunseekers replace bananas. Hiltons replace sugar mills” (31). Enloe describes the tourism industry as labor-intensive from an economist’s standpoint, meaning that it requires a high ratio of employees to customers (34). Laborers are needed to build hotels and electronics, serve in restaurants and bars, and do washing, cleaning, and cooking in hotels. Tourism companies (largely foreign-owned) benefit from the process of housewifization in this way. Because “women in most societies are presumed to be naturally capable at cleaning, washing, cooking, serving” tourism companies, which need exactly those jobs done, [foreign companies] can exploit native women by labeling such jobs as “women’s work” (Enloe 34). The majority of these jobs, as services, require a positive disposition on top of

the exploitation as employees interact with customers. Not only are the racial scars of slavery supposed to be forgotten, but white tourists are to be welcomed with big smiles. Nixon argues that

Given this anguished history [of violent labor and forced removals], all these writers [including Kincaid] are angered by the labor-intensive production of labor's illusory absence, an absence critical to the eco-archaic's role in producing a sweat-free, soft-focus, natural tranquility that appears at once effortless and untouched by human history. (184)

A Small Place is a focused response to the tourism industry, especially effective in addressing the complicity of first world individuals in perpetuating it through the structure of happiness organized around vacations. It is Kincaid's most straightforward indictment of neocolonial development, and published prior to *Lucy*, the first time she tackles the international division of labor. Scott argues that *A Small Place* does so much more than condemn European colonialism in its comparison of tourism to slavery; "it lays bare the fundamental continuity of imperialism as an integral feature of capitalism, and reveals the class interests served by it" (65). The following section analyzes the narrative of *A Small Place* to identify how tourism is experienced by Caribbean citizens as a structure of terror.

Tourism as Structure of Terror in *A Small Place*

A Small Place is divided into four sections, each describing Antigua in a different time period, except the last, which ruminates on human nature and history in the abstract. This succession, from the view of a late 1980s tourist to the island, back in time to colonial Antigua and finally independent Antigua, tells a story by starting with scenes of contemporary tourism and then backtracking to show how Antigua became as it is. If in the first sections of the novella

Kincaid succeeds in drawing a stark contrast between the “you” meaning white North American tourist and native mostly black Antiguan (aligning a structure of happiness around tourism for the former and a structure of terror for the latter), then the last section effectively blurs the distinction creating the power hierarchy of neocolonialism which implicates the corrupt Antiguan government officials alongside foreign capital. The multiple positions that are implicated are so diverse and varying, that the narration in the final sections cannot be said to be contrasting two antagonistic narratives at all. Kincaid’s purpose in doing so is to fully humanize and fill with complexity the population of the Caribbean (previously dehumanized by slavery and currently limited to service jobs by racism) and neutralize the parasitic nature of the tourist. Both peoples seen as nothing more than human is an attempted strategy Kincaid employs to call for social justice, but I want to argue that it remains an impossibility within the international division of labor and the way “the human” is constantly rearticulated as a category outside of identity politics yet formed by racialized and gendered discourses.

The early narration of *A Small Place* divides “you” being addressed from “they” signifying the native people of Antigua, with which the narrator identifies herself at times, though this is a more complicated identity than it seems at first. From the beginning then, this division in subjectivity begins to embody the power structure of imperialism and the international division of labor. Several instances of tourist activities and objects, not least of which is the paradisiacal landscape, are narrated to reveal the violence behind the expectations of tourists. Kincaid identifies the ignorance and ignoble hopes of the tourist regarding rainfall to set “you” in opposition to the native people: “...since you are a tourist, the thought of what it might be like for someone who had to live day in, day out in a place that suffers constantly from drought, and so has to watch carefully every drop of fresh water used...must never cross your

mind” (4). The plentiful sunshine, expansive aquamarine pools, and heat that make up the image of the happy Caribbean vacation for tourists is revealed as a structure of terror as drought and water scarcity are narrated as the cost. The racism suffered by native black Antiguan at customs in the airport further divides the “they” of the natives and “you” the tourist, narrating a scene of easy access and mobility for white tourists but painstaking identity checks and rummaging through personal items for the black native (4-5). The first section continues through the activities practiced by tourists, including sunbathing (done by “incredibly unattractive, fat, pastrylike-fleshed” people), dining on seafood (mostly coming “off a plane from Miami”), sightseeing (“ugly” buildings that “if it were not for you, they would not have”), and even taking a bath and brushing your teeth (10-14). While all of these everyday tourist activities belong within a structure of happiness in the typical narrative of a Caribbean vacation for the tourist, Kincaid’s narrator creates the counter-narrative that enlists them all as part of the structure of terror to which tourism belongs. The history of colonialism is never far from sight in this narrative, as well as its continuation as imperialism that has made the tourists’ countries rich while enslaving and now impoverishing the natives. Scott describes these passages as a

‘constant flow’ narrative technique [that] provokes emotional response through successive graphic and often visceral images, and also persuasively reconnects the social forces and events that are habitually atomized in bourgeois consciousness: There are causal relationships between wealthy elites and impoverished majorities, profits and poverty, tourism and sweatshops...Kincaid’s prose, characteristically consisting of long, often internally repetitive and rhythmic sentences broken up by many parenthetical asides, works to reconnect the pieces so ardently kept apart by bourgeoisie ideology

while constantly reminding us to rethink, or un-think, the platitudes of colonial myth-making. (62-3)

Scott finds Kincaid's style of writing particularly suited to making these connections with her use of repetition interrupted by factual asides. The most striking example of Kincaid's integration of economic processes with the everyday activities and objects in which they are felt is in the ocean and beach itself, the main draw to the Caribbean.

In one of her recurring linguistic structures (which I have italicized henceforth), Kincaid warns the tourist *not to think about* where their bath and toilet waste might end up because Antigua does not have a proper sewage-disposal system: "...the contents of your lavatory might, just might, graze gently against your ankle as you wade carefree in the water" (14). She assures the tourist that the Atlantic is big and *not to worry too much* because "it would amaze even you to know the number of black slaves this ocean has swallowed up" (14). The not thinking about and not worrying too much are examples of the kind of forgetting Nixon describes as necessary in the tourist attraction, yet Kincaid means them ironically. She does actually want to bring to the forefront just such thoughts in order to rescript the narrative of tourism as part of a structure of terror. The resurgence of the history of the island in the midst of a beach scene illustrating Nixon's concept of the eco-archaic is an important reclamation of the recreational space—read structure of happiness—as a graveyard—read structure of terror. Moira Ferguson suggests that the placement of this history next to the section on waste disposal is purposeful, "elid[ing] sewage with African deaths...and underlin[ing] the metonymic shift from tourists to colonizers...sewage (what the colonizers thought of the Africans) will dissolve into the Caribbean" (84). Exploitation is embodied in the corpses thrown into the ocean; what equates as excrement to the colonizers is humanized in Kincaid's representation of the ocean as graveyard

rather than recreation area. The tourist however, relaxes at the beach “being a person visiting heaps of death and ruin and feeling alive and inspired at the sight of it” (16). Such visual representation has been naturalized by the centuries of preceding accounts of other tourists choosing what to see and not see as Sheller argues. The tourist as consumer resides in the eco-archaic, pushing aside this history of racism and exploitation that Kincaid calls to attention. An entire list of things *you must not think about* draws attention to the process of censoring that a tourist does of their own experiences to reside in timeless space of the eco-archaic. You must not think about the unsafe driving of your guide, what might happen to you if you need a hospital, or the library in need of repair for decades (7-9). Exactly what a tourist is expected to see but not see is what the narrator describes as part of the structure of terror.

In order to reside in the eco-archaic, tourists must elide material circumstances, aestheticize, and self-interpellate, a method of tourist-reading that Lesley Larkin describes in “Reading and Being Read: Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place* as Literary Agent.” Larkin identifies both the way the tourist reads selectively his environment and how Kincaid reads the tourist audience. “Kincaid’s tourist is an active agent in the practices of elision and aestheticization that ultimately bring him into being. Significantly, she presents the tourist formation as a process of *self*-interpellation, whereby the tourist initiates his own becoming” (199). Scenes of poverty must be read as quaintness, and the tourist must always see himself as part of the picturesque environment. Kincaid disrupts this process of tourisization (as Rhonda Frederick names it) by utilizing the very process by which tourist subjectivity is created. Tourisization is trying on the colonizer’s “speaking for” persona, creating a white male stereotype for all tourists, where Kincaid reverses the colonial gaze. Kincaid even “becomes the colonizer” as she “speaks for the native” and “writes and interprets her audience through the

body of the tourist” (McLeod 92). Nearly every critic mentions this reversal as a narrative strength of the work in lambasting would-be tourists.

However, both Larkin and Allison Donnell argue that Kincaid is not critiquing tourism alone: “This is not to say that the book shies away from a condemnation of tourism, but rather that it probes more thoroughly and painfully the question of responsibility for postcolonial failures” (Donnell 109). I agree that the second and third sections of *A Small Place* examine colonial and postcolonial Antigua just as critically as contemporary tourism practices, but what Donnell seems to gloss over is the causal relationship that these two sections have to the first. In fact very few of the responses to *A Small Place* analyze these sections at length, preferring to highlight the more polemic language of “you” and “they” through the visceral images of highly commercialized tourism in the first section, when the middle sections create the real contradiction of the text. The central contradiction in the novella becomes the position of the narrator, clearly sympathizing and identifying with the native Antiguan, but also displaying the privilege of mobility and financial security of the tourists. Kincaid’s narrator creates a counter-narrative to colonial myth-making about the rule and independence of Antigua to place the everyday objects and occurrences like street names to hotel training schools within the structure of terror, but at the same time, the narrator expresses a good deal of displeasure (not exactly disgust, as V.S. Naipaul expresses) towards natives, especially leaders, which complicates her subject position.

Helen Scott critiques the narrator’s position throughout the novella, stating, “For most of the first section, tourists are ‘you,’ Antiguan are ‘they,’ and the speaker is indeterminate” (70). Scott quotes the passage at the end of the first section about natives having the potential to be

tourists and all tourists being a native of somewhere (18-9) in order to explain the complicated position of the narrator regarding mobility:

The very fact of the narrator's subject position—one who leaves and returns with ease—again places her in the category of 'tourist' (mobile) more aptly than that of 'native' (immobile/constrained). At the same time the suppressed fury that runs throughout the passage (and the book) is an expression of protest against the world's inequalities and injustices that, in drawing attention to these realities, implicitly posits the possibility of an alternative, even though none is available in any explicit way. In other words even while expressing the absence of any model of mass social movement akin to those that animate the literature of national liberation, the text names and decries the new forms of imperialism that continue to delimit people's potential and necessitate substantive social change. (71)

This undecided narrator is a symptom of the lacking in-between subject position, the diasporic citizen who both champions the working class interests and has the mobility and privilege of the tourist without the ignorance. I will return to the complicated subjectivity of the narrator as this alternative position after explicating the middle two sections as Kincaid's development of the history behind how objects and occurrences become the site where the structure of terror is felt in Antigua.

The second section of *A Small Place* describes colonial Antigua through the childhood memories and experiences of the narrator. She recalls, "we lived on a street named after an English maritime criminal, Horatio Nelson," and that other streets were named after other English maritime criminals (24). Tracing the economic interests in the Caribbean region by referring to the early interest in gold before sugar and slavery, Kincaid draws out the history to

reconnect the contemporary objects which hold within them the memory of exploitation and terror. Scott writes, “The text makes sense of the contradictions facing contemporary Antigua by returning us to the primitive accumulation of capital that was the driving force behind European plunder and conquest. Europe’s nascent capitalism was fed by the region’s gold...” (63).

Barclays Bank serves as another example of a physical object in which terror and injustice is felt as the narrator rewrites the colonial myth of development:

The Barclay Brothers, who started Barclays Bank, were slave-traders. That is how they made their money. When the English outlawed the slave trade, the Barclay Brothers went into banking. It made them even richer. It’s possible that when they saw how rich banking made them, they gave themselves a good beating for opposing an end to slave trading (for surely they would have opposed that), but then again, they may have been visionaries and agitated for an end to slavery, for look at how rich they became with their banks borrowing from (through their savings) the descendants of the slaves and then lending back to them. (25-6)

Just the placement of the bank on High Street within her narrative prompts this historical anecdote that recasts a building symbolic of European progress and development as a node within the larger structure of terror. The banking system as a predatory establishment is unveiled to be an unjust institution, and then alluded to within the international debt and aid practices³ a few lines later: “Do you ever wonder why some people blow things up? I can imagine that if my life had taken a certain turn, there would be the Barclays Bank, and there I would be, both of us in ashes” (26). The narrator alludes to the overwhelming poverty that many Antiguan suffer at

³ Stephanie Black’s documentary *Life + Debt* provides a detailed introduction to the debt mechanisms impoverishing the Caribbean region beginning with independence for many nations in the 1960s and spiraling to current conditions under austerity policies.

the hands of not just the local banking system, but the international politics of debt and structural adjustment. This is also an interesting line to consider how the position of the narrator is defined by the “certain turn” somehow avoided that has led to a different class standing for her from the majority of the natives that she identifies with off and on. While the bank is a mundane building, part of Kincaid’s description of the island, it both portrays the banking practices as experiences of terror and complicates the narrator’s subject position.

The third section of *A Small Place* opens with the description of the present-day (1980s) library in Antigua followed by the memories of the old one damaged by an earthquake in 1974. Again, a physical building and the everyday occurrence of visiting the library are the places where terror is felt as part of the process of neocolonial rule. The narrator remembers a strict, suspicious librarian and a beautiful wide yellow building, then compares it to the current “dung heap that now passes for a library” on top of a dry-goods store (43). In this building, the terror and sadness of a failed postcolonial society are felt by the narrator: “...can you see why it is that the library might mean something to me, why it might make me feel sad to see it reduced to its present condition?” (46). The third section connects objects and activities like the library to the corrupt government, the residual colonial legacy that Kincaid indicts through illustrating the refrain, “The government is for sale” (47). She makes the strongest connection when using the example of the hotel training school.

The narrator labels Antigua’s obsession with emancipation and slavery “like a pageant,” with emancipation having occurred “just the other day” (54-5). Next, the narrator bemoans the lack of awareness of the similarities between slavery/emancipation and the “celebration of the Hotel Training School” whose graduations are broadcast on radio and television (55). The point of highlighting the similarities is to express the continuation of colonial hierarchies through

neocolonialism: "...people cannot see a relationship between their obsession with slavery and emancipation and the fact that they are governed by corrupt men, or that these corrupt men have given their country away to corrupt foreigners" (55). Graduation ceremonies, typically a cause for celebration and belonging to a structure of happiness are unveiled in this instance to be a part of a structure of terror that reifies racially defined servitude and the betrayal of those in positions of power. The narrator appears significantly frustrated with Antiguan in this section, which complicates her position as she simultaneously defends them and condemns their complicity. At the end of the third section, the narrator describes the complacency of Antiguan: "...as if having observed the event of tourism, they have absorbed it so completely that they have made the degradation and humiliation of their daily lives into their own tourist attraction" (69). Though Scott compares this passage to one of Naipaul's in *The Middle Passage*, I think Kincaid's narrator shows dissatisfaction with Antiguan, not outright contempt as Naipaul expresses. This frustration does complicate the subjectivity of the narrator, especially as the final section abstracts humans and environment to call for more just relations between the Caribbean and the rest of the world.

Finally, the fourth section of *A Small Place* reflects on the people and the environment of Antigua in the abstract. Donnell sees Kincaid's ending, the throwing off of roles as colonizer and colonized, as a path to transcend the discourse within postcolonial criticism that creates cultural paralysis. This interpretation treads dangerous ground as its attempt to shake off old categories of power, essentially wiping away class and race differences to suggest that those uncomfortable distinctions hinder true exchange. My aim in utilizing positionality throughout this analysis has been to avoid just such an erasure of class and race difference. "*A Small Place* is pointing to an unhelpful reliance on fixed models of cultural experience and an entrapment within forms of

analysis that ultimately deny the possibilities of different forms of cultural interaction” (Donnell 112). Both Larkin and Donnell insist on reading *A Small Place* as an act of exchange, a creation of a new reading position outside of power relations. This way of praising Kincaid’s incorporation of a transcendent humanity is actually a condemnation of postcolonial writers who insist on bringing race and class to the forefront in their writing, charging them with practicing identity politics. Reading “outside of power relations” more often than not allows for the substitution of a Eurocentric reading as the universal one.

Such scholarship on *A Small Place*, the most limited of any of Kincaid’s works, has both interpreted the economic and social histories that underlie the international division of labor and interpreted them as limitations to postcolonial theory. Neil Lazarus’ *The Postcolonial Unconscious* makes a definitive intervention into this conversation. However, I want to argue that the work’s effectiveness in getting to subjectivities beyond those of colonizer/colonized is only possible after the first three sections which embody the tourist and the native within history and the international economic power structure. Such an erasure of history and power aimed at reducing the guilt of a white western subject allows the exchange to take place only by ignoring the material conditions that separate the stereotyped white male tourist, the corrupt Antiguan government officials, the diasporic emigrant Kincaid herself, the black washerwomen in the hotels, and the white or black American college student assigned the text. When the practice of tourism belongs to one culture’s structure of happiness and another’s structure of terror, the suggestion of dialogue devoid of race and class histories can only come from a place of privilege, the very privilege that Kincaid critiques. This lesson is hardly a new one; black queer feminism has been fighting this marginalization within criticism since the early 1980s. The lines at the end of *A Small Place* (“once you cease to be a master...once [the slaves] are no longer

noble and exalted...they are just human beings”) have been interpreted as a call for universalist humanism and licensed critics to discontinue materialist readings, but this decision to not see what is highly visible imitates the very process allowing the tourist to read Antigua within his or her own structure of happiness. This is a dangerous interpretation of the ending. Instead, I think it is important to read the last lines as Kincaid’s continuing effort to historicize relations and bodies. Long after slavery has ended and we have thrown off the labels of master and slave, power relations have *not* shifted, and the understanding of “humanity” without race or gender has been the subject of much current criticism within the field of black studies.

Most recently, Alexander G. Weheliye critiques bare life and biopolitics discourse in *Habeas Viscus*, as these terms from Foucault and Agamben “are deemed transposable to a variety of spatiotemporal contexts because the authors do not speak from an explicitly racialized viewpoint” (6). In other words, white European theorists can speak of a universal “humanity,” while nonwhite theorists speak from a specifically positioned identity and are therefore barred from the same credibility and widespread audience. Weheliye takes up the projects of Sylvia Wynter and Hortense Spillers to illustrate the sidelining of conceptions of the human made by nonwhite women scholars and the centrality of race in these conceptions. The readings of Kincaid’s last lines offered by Larkin and Donnell participate in the western, white conception of the human as something transcendent and universal, rather than the assemblages of the human laid out by Wynter and Spillers, and traced by Weheliye.

The statement by Kincaid at the end of *A Small Place* about both the former slaves and masters (“they are just human beings”) is troubling because of the indeterminate subject position (and therefore conception of the human) that the narrator occupies (81). Wynter identifies Man as the overrepresented Western bourgeoisie conception of the human, “as if it were the human

itself, and that of securing the well-being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves” (“Unsettling the Coloniality of Being” 260). She outlines how the hegemonic system of knowledge at any given point in history has guided the conception of the human, moving from *homo religiosus* to *homo politicus* as the medieval Christian knowledge base was secularized, and then moved to *homo oeconomicus* in the second half of the nineteenth century, which signals the “processes through which the empirical and experiential lives of all humans are increasingly subordinated to a figure that thrives on accumulation” (McKittrick 10). When Kincaid appeals to understanding each other as “just human beings,” under what conception of the human is the narrator operating? Wynter has argued that “Humans are, then, a biomutationally evolved, hybrid species—*storytellers who now storytellingly invent themselves as being purely biological*” (McKittrick 11). Kincaid’s call to throw off old power relations and see each other as “just humans” participates in the storytelling that we are purely biological, an indication that the narrator has more in common with the tourist than it might have at first seemed. Wynter instead theorizes the human as hybrid—both *mythoi* and *bios*—informed by a new form of knowledge: humanness not as a noun, but as a praxis (McKittrick 23). This reconceptualization of the human would deepen the analysis available of Kincaid’s abstract section of *A Small Place*. Rather than appealing to a universal concept of all people, the particularity of how a people defines and redefines themselves better exemplifies the point that she makes about the fluctuations and extremes that she identifies in the “unreal” appearance of the landscape: “No real sand on any real shore is that fine or that white (in some places) or that pink (in other places); no real flowers could be these shades of red, purple, yellow, orange, blue, white...” (78). If variety and plurality were constitutive characteristics of defining that which is biological, the relationship between people, and between people and the

environment, could be radically different. There is so much room for new inquiries along these lines of argument, but it is not the focus of this chapter. My argument must be bound by the ways that the articulation of Man as I think Kincaid employs it, figures as an over-simplification of the factors in determining one's positionality. The erasure of race, class, and gender in cross cultural confrontation, as she suggests in the closing lines of the novella are a violence:

overrepresentation of Man is part of the structure of terror. Kincaid's narrator is dual-voiced, serving both the interests of working class Antiguans and North American tourists at times. We must be careful not be limited to only the available analyses of Kincaid's writing that fit most conveniently without scrutinizing the very construction of those lenses. The chapters remaining will examine knowledge production as it has been implicated here in producing ideologies closely informed and re-informed by capitalist modes of production.

Both *Lucy* and *A Small Place* create conflicting narratives of economic processes that devalue women's labor, exploit third world women's labor, and create environments segregated for use only by white foreign tourists. Domestic and everyday objects and activities associated with the home and happiness—a structure of happiness—are unveiled as a structure of terror. The major process of housewifization is illustrated through Lucy's narration and her complicated relationship with Mariah. The tourism industry is also shown to be heavily reliant on the process of housewifization as well as the suppression of racial and social histories in the creation of the eco-archaic space. Kincaid's works of fiction pointedly criticize the development of the international gendered division of labor as it has created a structure of terror surrounding the domestic sphere especially for women of color, yet an indeterminate narrator reproduces the very universalizing rhetoric which women of color have fought against.

CHAPTER TWO

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND DELIGITIMATION AS STRUCTURE OF TERROR

“Them tacky ships have dropped their sails and turned to steam; have dropped their ships and turned to books.” (Erna Brodber, *Myal*, 1988)

This passage from *Myal* invokes the relationship between colonialism and education, between conquest and epistemology. As illustrated in Jamaica Kincaid’s novel *Lucy*, discussed in chapter one, the colonial education system is part of the structure of terror as it imposes standards of beauty and overwrites indigenous knowledge. Lucy’s memories surrounding Wordsworth’s poem about daffodils evoke a traumatic response from her when Mariah insists that she sees live daffodils. However, the colonial education system is just one example of how colonization paired with the development of global capitalism delegitimized indigenous knowledge. The family structure and process of housewifization covered in the first chapter was the first node in the constellation that constitutes the structure of terror. This chapter, focusing on knowledge production as a lens for viewing the interrelated effects of colonization and the development of global capitalism allows for an understanding of the suppression of indigenous knowledge, especially that of women, as another node within the structure of terror in its justification for the persecution and torture of women’s bodies. In *Feminism Without Borders*, Chandra Talpade Mohanty articulates the reassertion of women’s sexual autonomy and knowledge of plant and animal life outside of the western medical and biology cannon as “an anti-capitalist critique.” She suggests that these assertions must be anti-capitalist because “capitalism is seriously incompatible with feminist visions of social and economic justice” (9). Witches have become a rallying symbol of rebellion for women against the tide of western imperial regulation and the scientific epistemologies that legitimize such regulation while the charge of witchcraft carries with it a historical association of torture, imprisonment, and the

systematic eradication of anti-capitalist knowledge. This chapter will examine the figure of the witch through Maryse Condé's novel, *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, where Tituba narrates her experiences within the structure of terror as it is felt in capitalist knowledge production.

While the image of the witch features centrally as the subject of much of this chapter and one of the novels, other supernatural beings, including ghosts and zombies, circulate as further evidence of the structure of terror felt through capitalist knowledge production in Caribbean women's literature. The presence of supernatural beings is at once a point of departure from white western (male) conceptualizations of history, similar to their employment by writers within the magical realism genre made popular by Latin American and other Third World writers, while a reassertion of the flesh (especially demonized flesh) becomes an assemblage of socio-political hierarchies in its very articulation of the Human. More simply, racist, gendered, and heteronormative ideologies central to providing the conditions for primitive accumulation are embedded in the methodologies of our scientific knowledge of the Human. The zombie, an image originating in the Caribbean, becomes an ideal image in literature where this structure of terror in knowledge production can be felt. Zombification is felt through two processes in Erna Brodber's text, *Myal*: the emptying of individuality by commodifying one's experience of the world, as well as the embodiment of Achille Mbembe's necropolitics, the real *living dead*, or those labeled expendable populations. This chapter focuses on the images of the witch and the zombie in two Caribbean women's novels as the narratives make capitalist knowledge production felt as a structure of terror. Women's bodies become the territory of contestation between anti-capitalist sexual autonomy and imperialist regulation required for the reproduction of labor. Witches, ghosts, and zombies in Maryse Condé's *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* and

Erna Brodber's *Myal*, narrative-ize the process of demonization necessary to exclude and delegitimize knowledge produced by women.

Demonization of women's bodies as a structure of terror is evident in three connected material sites. Colonial education, reproductive agency, and collective histories of violence and enclosure are highlighted by the presence of supernatural beings in these Caribbean women's novels. Central to these feminist novels is the critique that similar processes are enacted on the environment of the colonial site as on women's bodies. Western science renames and rewrites the nature of the flora and fauna of islands, granting hypersexualized and proliferative qualities to all species, meanwhile misreading variety for fertility. The one way exchange of knowledge from colonial center to the New World regarding biology, botany, and other sciences defines the roles of colonizer as the producer of knowledge and the colonized as people in need of knowledge, which in turn demonizes and suppresses knowledge created in colonies. Condé's and Brodber's texts reveal this structure of terror as it developed through the historical interconnectedness of colonization, scientific development, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and global capitalism.

Both of these novels take place in former British colonies: Brodber's *Myal* in Jamaica, and Condé's *Tituba* in Barbados and the U.S. Barbados was one of the few Caribbean islands which was uninhabited when Europeans arrived, but tobacco plantations and eventually sugar plantations flourished with the combined efforts of the African slave trade and one of the earliest tourism spots at Bridgetown. Jamaica, on the other hand, followed the more typical path of conflict with indigenous people and some of the most violent and constant uprisings of enslaved people (Sunshine 11). The resistance was so strong that many groups of runaway African people formed "maroon" colonies that, after several battles with the British forces, became sovereign

communities. However, part of their peace treaties often required maroons to return any new runaway enslaved people. A national symbol of this resistance appears in Nanny, the maroon woman so strong and capable that the folklore about her is sometimes difficult to separate fact from fiction. These islands have many differences in their historical specificity, but in general, their trajectories were similar: both had sugar plantation economies that brought enslaved African people to their shores, both educated their children in colonial schools, both became independent in the 1960s, and both have contemporary tourism economies. This shared colonial history lends these novels to comparison, especially concerning how knowledge production and de-legitimation of knowledge regulated women's lives in the Caribbean.

The steps that I will take to build this argument follow. First, I will trace the de-legitimation of women's knowledge of the environment and their bodies through the struggles of the Middle Ages when capitalism replaced feudalism. Second, I will establish how the triumph of a mechanized world view was applied to the biological with dire consequences for women's reproductive agency. Next, I will examine how the colonial power structure influenced the knowledge production within the natural sciences, which in turn overwrote, or in some cases erased, indigenous peoples' (largely women's) knowledge. Then, applying these historical materialist lenses to *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, I will demonstrate Tituba's story as narrating her experience of the structure of terror as it is felt in her anti-capitalist knowledge being demonized, which results in her celebration as rebel and transnational feminist. Next, I will apply similar lenses to Erna Brodber's *Myal* to draw parallels between the demonization of the witch as a way to suppress certain knowledge and zombification to empty colonial subjects, especially women, of their anti-capitalist cultural knowledge and create an unthinking labor force. Localized knowledge production within the Caribbean community is portrayed as a

creolized antidote to the delegitimizing forces of colonial education and cultural appropriation that the protagonist faces. Lastly, I will explore how *Myal* itself enacts a counter-narrative to the singular-voiced, linear narrative of the imperial genre of the novel as an edificatory tool, having a cacophony of voices form a narrative from even their spiritual alternative identities.

Tituba: Literary Aesthetics of Inter-Disciplinarity and Dual Political Contexts

Because Condé's novel takes place in a century following massive social and economic reconstructions, *Tituba*'s narrative allows a reading of her experience as the process of demonization of women's bodies and knowledge itself. She narrates the interconnected discourses of medicine, race, gender, and environment to produce a critique of how all of the discourses work together to delegitimize non-western, non-white, or non-Christian epistemologies. Raymond Williams writes in *Marxism and Literature* that, "Marx's original criticism had been mainly directed against the separation of 'areas' of thought and activity (as in the separation of consciousness from material production) and against the related evacuation of specific content—real human activities—by the imposition of abstract categories" (78). Only by considering the discourses simultaneously and recognizing their fluidity as process can these forms of regulation be identified by *Tituba* and her audience. Yet, *Tituba*'s narrative satisfies a just need in its aesthetics by creating a rich life for a woman who is known through only marginal notes in a colonial document. Condé's imaginative biography of *Tituba*, therefore, illustrates that the aesthetic function cannot be separated from the ideologies of the society in which it is created. While *Tituba* identifies the economic and social processes of the early colonial period, it is important to recognize that Condé wrote the novel in the 1980s, a decade that saw significant strides in feminist projects decentering hegemonic epistemologies, especially by women of color. *Tituba* is a very unique novel because of this double politicization, though

this doubling serves as the unity of its central contradiction: Tituba is tortured and killed, yet her voice incites rebellion long afterwards, especially now, in her reincarnation through Condé's text. Understanding Tituba's struggle and the structure of terror that she identifies allows us to see how the struggle continues for women's reproductive agency in the more contemporary context. I begin with the process of replacement of feudalism with capitalism in order to trace the regulation of women's bodies to its beginnings.

The Mechanization of Capitalism and the Feminization of Poverty

The roots of the process of demonization of women's knowledge are found in the violent struggles of the Middle Ages, when capitalism began to replace feudalist systems as the main framework of commerce. As Sylvia Federici explains in *Caliban and the Witch*: "the rise of capitalism was coeval with a war against women" (14). Within the hierarchy of faculties produced by male science, the body ranked as the lowest, and motherhood delegated women to possessing mainly this faculty, yet the body has historically been the targeted site of power relations in Europe and then colonies (Federici 15). Federici traces multiple ways that the new logic of capitalism as it was applied in social and economic arrangements was especially violent for women, including the enclosure of the commons and the criminalization of abortions. Land privatization and the enclosure of the commons affected women in a few different ways. First, women were rarely named as owners: "women...in all classes, were most negatively affected by the increasing commercialization, for their access to property and income was further reduced by it" (Federici 30). Women were also deeply affected by the enclosure of the commons because it was the site of much of their activities: "Women worked in the fields, in addition to raising children, cooking, washing, spinning, and keeping an herb garden; their domestic activities were not devalued and did not involve different social relations from those of men..." (25). The

enclosure of the commons denied access to subsistence farming for those who could not afford land-rent; doubled with legislation granting land rights only to men, this marks the beginning of the feminization of poverty. The commons had also been a site of collective decision-making, work cooperation, and sociality that disappeared, isolating the nuclear family unit (71). Federici debunks the modernist argument that communal agricultural practices were inefficient and backward. She writes,

...the communal use of agricultural fields had many advantages. It protected the peasants from harvest failure, due to the variety of strips to which a family had access; it also allowed for a manageable work-schedule (since each strip required attention at a different time); and it encouraged a democratic way of life, built on self-government and self-reliance, since all decisions—when to plant or harvest, when to drain the fens, how many animals to allow on the commons—were taken by peasant assemblies. (70-1)

Capitalism, by contrast, creates competition and food insecurity under the guise of efficiency. The enclosures have been framed within historical accounts as a step toward progress, yet their effects for women were devastating. The enclosure of the commons and male privilege of land ownership began a long process of privileging marriage and nuclear family arrangements.

At the same time that the commons were being dismantled, the plague killed many of the workers required to operate newly privatized farms. Prices for food dramatically increased when owners could store food and control its distribution; this caused widespread famine, and made the poor even more susceptible to disease (Federici 76). Federici argues that this population crisis in the 16th and 17th centuries “turned reproduction and population growth into state matters...[and] the intensification of the persecution of ‘witches’ and the new disciplinary methods that the state adopted in this period to regulate procreation and break women’s control

over reproduction” can be traced to this population crisis as well (86). In other words, when women refused to have children, especially when famine left them unable to feed any children they did have, the state stepped in to criminalize their refusal. With the criminalization of ending unwanted pregnancies came the demonization of knowledge that made a woman capable of abortion. It was in effect, a social enclosure: women were isolated from one another through the enclosure of the commons and forced into the role of mother in the private sphere through this criminalization. Not only was it a loss of reproductive agency, but it was also the beginning of the devaluation of domestic work, as discussed in chapter 1, since women did not receive wages for this work.

How did women become merely wombs and free labor? The landmark feminist query into science, nature, and gender, Carolyn Merchant’s *The Death of Nature*, offers an alternative reading to the age of enlightenment as developments in both science and capitalism went hand in hand to provide a less organic and holistic view of nature and a more mechanized one in which nature (and by extension, women’s bodies) must be tamed and made to function for human benefit. “Because it viewed nature as dead and matter as passive, mechanism could function as a subtle sanction for the exploitation and manipulation of nature and its resources” (103). The organic conception of the earth needed to be “killed” and women, historically associated with nature through menstruation and childbirth, needed to be devalued in order to elevate order and mechanization. Debates over mining, which was earlier thought to be violating a sacred earth, were resolved with this mechanization: the earth and environment could be mined and drilled without any guilt. Merchant argues that this new worldview is also responsible for the split between nature and culture that has long dominated the humanistic disciplines. She suggests, “Nature-culture dualism is a key factor in Western civilization’s advance at the expense of

nature...If nature and women, Indians and blacks, are to be liberated from the strictures of this ideology, a radical critique of the very categories *nature* and *culture*, as organizing concepts in all disciplines, must be undertaken” (143-4). Recent publications within Black Studies, Ecofeminism, and Queer theory have undertaken this critique to challenge the mechanical model necessary for global capitalism to flourish.

Colonialism, Capitalism, and the Production of Knowledge

One such project exploring the terrain between nature and culture in a Caribbean context is *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture*, a collection edited by Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley. In their introduction, the editors argue that “addressing the historical and racial violence of the Caribbean is integral to understanding literary representations of its geography” (2). The history of colonialism, the plantation, and its contemporary counterparts are inseparable from the landscape, and writers from the region “refuse to depict the natural world in terms that erase the relationship between landscape and power” (DeLoughrey et. al 4). The plantation surfaces as the epitome of dehumanizing regulation and mechanization, and the cane field functions especially in *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* as the location of terror and suffering from which Tituba’s story begins. The overlap between nature and culture is palpable in the violence penetrating the cane field, which will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 3.

Knowledge production has affected our understanding of both nature and culture—not to mention reinforced the division between them—as a result of colonialism. Because it touched every existing branch of knowledge, colonialism has shaped all knowledge that we have in some way. The very classification systems we use, and what we call “natural history” especially, has been tainted by the scientific exploration of the west’s contact with and re-articulation of the

non-west. In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba describes colonization's role in knowledge production:

Western science...developed both as an impulse to master the globe, and by incorporating, learning from, as well as aggressively displacing other knowledge systems. Through the 'objectivity' of observation and science, European penetration into other lands is legitimized. Natural history is thus as much a form of writing and representation as it is a discovery of something already there in the natural world. (57)

Linnaeus' classification system, for example, overwrites many indigenous names for local non-human life. This violence may seem small, but when similar classification systems formalized the concept of race as a result of colonialism, the effects have been unimaginable violence and terror. Robert J.C. Young's work catalogues the construction of "Englishness" through the nation's imperial impulse, especially as interracial desires and fears shaped it. English culture, it seems, articulates and re-articulates itself against what it encounters in "others." The "science" produced in colonization is unparalleled racism that endures culturally. Young's seminal *Colonial Desire* traces the formalized race theory of colonialism to its continued presence in cultural theory today.

One of the reasons nature and culture seem divided is the erasure of *culture's* meaning associated with growing and agriculture. In her autobiographical reflections on gardening in *My Garden (Book)*, Jamaica Kincaid clarifies the relationship between gardening and conquest as it bridges nature and culture in her description of the story of Hernando Cortez, cocoxochitl, and Andreas Dahl. Kincaid describes the scene of floating gardens Cortez encountered (via William H. Prescott's *The Conquest of Mexico*), and decided that, "within a generation most of the inhabitants of this place (Mexico), spiritually devastated, would have lost touch with that strange

idea—things planted for no other reason than the sheer joy of it” (117). She tells the rest of the story of the cocoxochitl being taken to Europe, hybridized, and renamed the dahlia, after the Swedish botanist Andreas Dahl. The popularity of the dahlia is testament to the less obvious but still powerful appropriation of conquered environments as well as the nefarious ways in which culture—defined by the social aspects of the Human, including scientific innovation—is elevated above nature. Nature and culture are firmly intertwined throughout Kincaid’s gardening book, and this snapshot is a prime example.

In *Science, Colonialism, and Indigenous Peoples*, Laurelyn Whitt also traces the connected western epistemologies and politics of power that shaped the creation of modern science. She writes, “The conduct of imperial science by nation-states during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and its effect upon other nation-states, has led historians of science to conclude that the issue is no longer science *in* imperial history, but science *as* imperial history” (xiv). Combined with practices of law, Whitt examines how the continuation of oppressive power relations between dominant and indigenous knowledge systems has led to the contemporary practice of biocolonialism or biopiracy, as Vandana Shiva refers to it. Shiva describes biopiracy in this way:

The duty to incorporate savages into Christianity has been replaced by the duty to incorporate local and national economies into the global marketplace, and to incorporate non-Western systems of knowledge into the reductionism of commercialized Western science and technology...The creation of property through the piracy of other’s wealth remains the same as 500 years ago. (2)

Piracy involves plundering and appropriating something of value. What if scientific knowledge possessed by indigenous people contains knowledge that is considered dangerous to those in

power? Londa Schiebinger explores the use of the peacock flower by Caribbean slave women as an abortifacient, and illustrates how the non-transfer of such knowledge was a direct political move. She uses Robert Proctor's term, agnotology, or culturally induced ignorances, to show that "ignorance is often not merely the absence of knowledge but an outcome of cultural and political struggle" (237). Schiebinger states that there is good evidence that Tainos, Caribs, and Arawaks all used abortifacients regularly to control births, and upon seeing this usage, European physicians responded with surprise because they assumed abortion led to death (241). The knowledge of abortifacients travelled back to Europe only within the physicians' understanding of the practice, but tainted by their moralistic prejudices, never became readily available knowledge to European society. The rise of obstetrics as a profession also induced the cultural ignorance of abortifacients; midwives, and most medical practices they advocated, were replaced by male professionals (Schiebinger 246-7). The non-transfer of knowledge about abortifacients is an example of suppression of knowledge based on gendered structures. As *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* illustrates, the use of such knowledge provokes accusations of witchcraft, which are structures of terror in the physical abuse suffered by those accused. Condé creates the story of the autonomous Tituba, envisioning her importance to a legacy of African diaspora and placing her within contemporary transnational feminist discourse as well as critiques of anthropocentric environmental justice.

Demonization of Non-western Knowledge as Structure of Terror

Tituba can be a difficult novel to categorize. Its incorporation of supernatural events and characters as matter-of-fact occurrences warrant its placement within the genre of magical realism. Ghosts of Tituba, her mother Abena, her surrogate mother Mama Yaya, and Mama Yaya's friend Judah White appear frequently and mundanely, as classical examples of the way in

which magical realism intervenes in the western, colonial, and mostly male conception of history and storytelling. Maggie Ann Bowers describes magical realism as “associated with the modernist techniques of the disruption of linear narrative time and the questioning of the notion of history” (9). Magical realism is often composed by and about “people lacking political power,” though its origins are traced to many locations, including some in the west (Bowers 33). Women, indigenous peoples, enslaved, and dislocated people have all used magical realism as a mode of resistance. Reading *Tituba* as a magical realist text highlights its embeddedness in historical processes that are anything but supernatural; corporeal violence inflicted on the figure of the witch grounds my own reading of *Tituba* in the material conditions of slave women in the Caribbean and women in colonial Salem as the body is regulated or demonized, tortured, and destroyed. Simone A. James Alexander describes the magical and spiritual powers given to Tituba as “reconstituting the principles of (first-wave) feminism, advocating instead for a transnational feminist agenda that includes the ‘transgressive’ black female subject, or the ‘antislavery rebel’” (71). Alexander supports this argument through analyzing the connections to other women that Tituba develops and the common threat to reproductive autonomy that they share across race and class. I want to further this argument to include Tituba’s knowledge of and embeddedness in her natural environment as well.

Tituba’s connection with and knowledge of nature enables her to resist oppression, yet this knowledge is what condemns her and leads to her execution. The supernatural within her worldview is “super” or hyper-natural, not against nature, as her accusers would suggest. Tituba’s knowledge of plants, animals, and the elements surpasses that of the male western doctors in the novel, so her imprisonment, torture, and execution serve as evidence of the

processes Federici describes of regulation imposed on women's bodies. Tituba's story enacts the structure of terror implicit in the demonized female body that refuses reproductive regulation.

The novel opens with Tituba's conception through her mother's rape. It is an appropriate beginning, as horrific as it seems, for a novel that focuses on gender and violence, echoing the rape of Africa through the rape of the mother (Alexander 69). Because of the circumstances of her birth, Tituba grows up feeling unloved by her mother: "I constantly reminded her of the pain and humiliation. So whenever I used to cuddle up to her, as children are wont to do, she would inevitably push me away" (6). Tituba's mother is hung after defending herself from another rape. Being present at both the attack and her mother's execution, Tituba "felt something harden inside [her] like lava, a feeling that was never to leave [her], a mixture of terror and mourning" (8). Initiated into the racialized and gendered violence of the plantation, Tituba finds comfort in being taken in by an old woman named Mama Yaya residing in a hidden cabin on the outskirts of the plantation. Barbara Bush has catalogued the traits of slave society in the Caribbean, noting that West African traditions of strong kinship bonds between slaves served as "an emotional anchor for otherwise dispossessed human beings" (7-8). She notes in particular how women cared for not just their own children, but orphaned ones as well as their own as a consequence of this kinship bond (Bush 104).

Mama Yaya becomes Tituba's caretaker and teacher, feared by many of the slaves for her ability to communicate with ghosts, but relied on heavily for her healing powers. Tituba's recitation of Mama Yaya's lessons reveals her knowledge of the environment:

Mama Yaya taught me about herbs. Those for inducing sleep. Those for healing wounds and ulcers. Those for loosening the tongues of thieves...Mama Yaya taught me the sea, the mountains, and hills. She taught me that everything lives, has a soul, and breathes.

That everything must be respected. That man is not the master riding though his kingdom on horseback. (9)

She teaches Tituba a spiritual and practical relationship with nature, challenging the master-slave relationship implied by the mechanistic view of the environment necessary for capitalist expansion. Mama Yaya eventually shares her ability to shape-shift and communicate with spirits. Once Mama Yaya dies, she becomes one of the spirits Tituba is able to call on, along with her mother. Thus, she becomes a source of knowledge for Tituba even after her passing. She warns Tituba early on to only use her knowledge and powers for good: “Don’t let yourself be eaten up by revenge. Use your powers to serve your own people and heal them” (29). However, the cruel treatment Tituba receives from her new master, Susanna Endicott, once she willingly rejoins “the white world” to be with John Indian tempts her to take revenge on the woman. Mama Yaya reprimands her, saying a murder would “pervert [her] heart” and will make her “just like them, knowing only how to kill and destroy” (30). Up until she re-enters the white world, Tituba has only been feared by others for her knowledge and powers. Once she enters the plantation and later the Boston and Salem colonies, she faces much stronger contempt and demonization. Bush recounts planters’ fears about women slaves, “particularly old women, [like Mama Yaya, who] had an exclusive knowledge of herbs and plants which could be used as medicine but also for more sinister purposes” (75). Federici also catalogues how older women were singled out for witchcraft accusations as a way of denying the no longer fertile body the right to a sexual life (192). These and other more violent consequences await Tituba on the plantation and in America.

Sold to Samuel Parris who is leaving for Boston, Tituba is uprooted from Barbados and separated from her beloved spirits of her mother and Mama Yaya. Just as the spirits are place-

based and cannot travel easily, so is her knowledge of the environment. She finds that she is surrounded by unfamiliar plants, and because her powers are dependent on knowing the properties of nature, she needs a guide to help her learn. Judah White, the spirit of a friend of Mama Yaya, acquaints her with her new ecosystem: the herbs, the animals, and the climate (51). Judah arrives just in time to aid Tituba in her search for an abortifacient. Alexander identifies the presence of Judah White as the realization of a transnational feminist agenda: “Judah White, also a practitioner of witchcraft, belongs to the diaspora of empowered women... This female diaspora operates beyond the dictates of patriarchy. Subsequently, witchcraft becomes a counter discourse that challenges female oppressions” (77). Like Sethe in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Tituba explains her refusal to bring another being’s suffering into existence within slavery, and lists the multiple methods of abortion and infanticide practiced by slave women in Barbados (50). She causes her baby to be “carried out of [her] womb in a flow of black blood,” yet she knows that she “acted for the best” (52). Tituba exercises reproductive agency because she has access to the knowledge of abortifacients and wishes to terminate her pregnancy. She’s also able to cure Samuel’s wife Elizabeth of her illness and their daughter Betsey’s as well. Tituba’s knowledge is highly suspect among the other villagers in first Boston, but especially in Salem.

The accusation of witchcraft which she receives is certainly gendered, but also racialized as slave women become the scapegoat for the white women accused. Many of the villagers approach the two or three black servants in Salem “to try and assuage unspeakable desires for revenge, to liberate unsuspecting hatred and bitterness, and to do evil by every means” (65). Her knowledge must be openly condemned, yet it’s constantly sought in secret. Tituba notices the connection being made between race and redemption in the town obsessed with the presence of Satan and sin: “In Bridgetown Susanna Endicott had already told me she was convinced my

color was indicative of my close connections with Satan...In Salem such a conviction was shared by all” (65). Tituba’s earlier experience with being labeled nonhuman at the hands of Susanna Endicott and her associates (“You would think I was not standing there at the threshold of the room. They were talking about me and yet ignoring me. They were striking me off the map of human beings. I was a nonbeing. Invisible.”) are only confirmed by the pronouncement of her beloved Betsey who equates her race with evil: “You? Do good? You’re a Negress, Tituba! You can only do evil. You are evil itself” (24,77). Betsey’s statement is the verbal articulation of the power structure already in place within the practice of slavery, a power structure that is infused within our very ability to understand the category of the human. In *Habeas Viscus*, Alexander G. Weheliye argues that articulations of humanity are made within the language of race, though Black Studies has sustained an ongoing critique of western modernity through social, political, and cultural alternatives (3). Weheliye specifically critiques Foucault and Agamben’s theories of human life described without race, gender, or class distinction:

Bare life and biopolitics discourse not only misconstrues how profoundly race and racism shape the modern idea of the human, it also overlooks or perfunctorily writes off theorizations of race, subjection, and humanity found in black and ethnic studies, allowing bare life and biopolitics discourse to imagine an indivisible biological substance anterior to racialization. The idea of racializing assemblages, in contrast, construes race not as a biological or cultural classification but as a set of sociopolitical processes that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans. (4)

Weheliye employs the work of Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter to rearticulate humanity in a decolonizing process. Often relegated to ethnic studies and identity politics, Spillers’ and Wynter’s ideas have rarely been engaged alongside Foucault and Agamben, mostly because this

strain of the academy has been fiercely “anti-identity,” which permits their theorizations to appear untouched by politics and therefore pure objects of knowledge (7). Betsey’s equation of Tituba as incapable of any good rests on her exclusion from the category of human. Humans can be assigned motives and display a variety of traits, but categorical non-humans are evil incarnate. The production of knowledge, down to the discourses by which we claim to know ourselves as human, is part of the structure of terror that seeks to universalize white humanity as *the* humanity.

Betsey’s equivocation of Negress and evil is only the beginning of the demonization of Tituba’s flesh. Her imprisonment, near starvation, and sexual assault are the effects of the structure of terror that forbids her knowledge and her practice of it. Curing illness may not seem like a threat to hegemonic power, but the use of abortifacients as well as speaking to spirits who would undermine the state religion are clearer threats. Condé’s novel illustrates the processes of regulation and the accompanying terror within those processes to regulate the reproduction of waged labor, or in Tituba’s case, slave labor. Tituba herself is only one character in the novel whose story illustrates this process. Because the reader is invited into her thoughts through the first person narrative, we naturally focus on her experience, especially when Condé claims to have “lived for a year on the closest of terms” with Tituba and heard “things she had confided to nobody else” in the epigraph and elides her own voice with Tituba’s (v). Lisa Bernstein discusses Condé’s artistic “ongoing project of writing her own and Caribbean history” as “*I, Tituba* forms part of the writer’s continuous struggle to understand individual and collective identities, to place the subject in history, and to link this history to other social and cultural histories” (79). Other scholars, such as Marie-Denise Shelton observe Condé’s ability to not just correct the missing testament of Tituba’s within the history of the witch trials in Salem, but also “displace the

narrative beyond boundaries, across borders, in an attempt to reconstruct personal and collective history” so Condé can “appropriat[e] the author’s voice to recount her story through slavery, persecutions, revolts, and her experience as a maroon” (720). While Tituba as the protagonist effectively connects histories of slavery, demonization, and experiences of the maroons to neocolonial power relations today to place her within transnational feminist discourse, the other women in her narrative cannot be overlooked.

Tituba’s Other Women: The Many Demonized Aspects of the Female

Tituba and the women that she befriends together exemplify the range of behaviors that were curbed by the severe punishment of women who displayed them. From the puritanical attitudes towards any pleasure, especially sexual pleasure, to the use of herbal remedies, Tituba’s, Hester’s, and Elizabeth’s stories demonstrate the many forbidden behaviors. Tituba is hung for “all [her] crimes, past and present” (172). The hysteria in Salem is attributed to her, as well as the murder of Benjamin Cohen d’Azevedo’s children, and leading the slave revolt with Iphigene. Though Tituba is not guilty of any of those crimes except perhaps the last one, she certainly possesses the knowledge of the natural world which the combined efforts of patriarchy and capitalism seek to eradicate. Her true crimes are her independence, reproductive agency, and alternative medicine. Federici writes, “the witch hunters were less interested in the punishment of any specific transgressions than in the elimination of generalized forms of female behavior which they no longer tolerated and had to be made abominable in the eyes of the population” (170). Tituba also challenges social ideology surrounding sex and pleasure for women. Her sole reason for leaving her isolated maroon position and reenter the white world is to be the lover of John Indian, and her mother laments her inability as a refrain throughout the novel, “Why can’t women do without men?” (15). In her conversations with other women, especially Elizabeth

Parris, Tituba is unashamed of her sexuality: “For me, it is the most beautiful act in the world...Doesn’t it perpetuate life?” (42). However, Elizabeth acquaints her with the puritanical shame expected to accompany sex, describing how Samuel doesn’t remove his or her clothing to complete the “hateful” act as quickly as possible (42). Any kind of enjoyment of sex is demonized, so Elizabeth warns Tituba to keep it secret.

Tituba’s unabashed sexuality is contrasted with the sexual abuse that she endures at the hands of four masked men who torture her in the middle of the night. When she refuses to confess to bewitching the town, one man “[begins] to hammer [her] face with his fists” then “[lifts] up her skirt and [thrusts] a sharpened stick into the most sensitive part of [her] body” (91). In terrible pain, she acquiesces. Federici again explains the sexual nature of the torture endured by women in witch hunts: “...the sexual sadism displayed by the tortures to which the accused were subjected reveals a misogyny that has no parallel in history, and cannot be accounted for on the basis of any specific crime” (185). Tituba’s torture is misogynistic and extreme, terror used to make an example of her and deter other disobedient women. “...[I]t was in the torture chambers and on the stakes on which the witches perished that the bourgeois ideals of womanhood and domesticity were forged” (Federici 186). However, Tituba is not the only woman in the novel condemned for pursuing sex for pleasure.

Hester, Tituba’s pregnant cellmate, is imprisoned for adultery, having had an affair with a minister. Based on her circumstances, it’s clear that Condé has reimagined Hester Prynne from Nathaniel Hawthorne’s popular novel, though Condé’s Hester is a more radical woman who hangs herself rather than suffer society’s scorn. Tituba notices the endearment felt towards the minister as Hester recounts her affair: “There is something indecent about beauty in a man. Tituba, men shouldn’t be beautiful!...We started meeting under the pretext of discussing German

pietism. Then we ended up in his bed making love and here I am!” (98). Sharing her story, Tituba sympathizes with John Indian as a fellow slave, but Hester becomes irritated by Tituba’s sympathy. She counters that, “Shouldn’t he be here to share your sorrow? Life is too kind to men, whatever their color” (100). While she has been fond of love and sex throughout, Tituba does contemplate how “the color of John Indian’s skin had not caused him half the trouble [hers] had caused [her]” (101). Tituba is confronted with her compounded oppression as a black woman, and befriends Hester in her newfound solidarity. She might have had a superficial bond with Elizabeth Parris over a mutual fear of Samuel, but their shaky friendship was terminated with Tituba’s arrest. Both Hester and Tituba are demonized for their enjoyment of sex because as Federici explains, “female sexuality had to be exorcized” because it “was a public danger, a threat to the social order as [a woman] subverted a man’s sense of responsibility, and his capacity for work and self-control” (191).

The presence of Hester, who seems to be ventriloquizing late twentieth century feminist tenets, along with a foreword by Angela Davis in the English translation, place Tituba within transnational feminist dialogues. Lillian Manzor-Coats reads the chapter including Tituba and Hester’s exchanges in their jail cell as parodic: “it stages the typical power relations existing between white liberal feminists and women of color in contemporary Anglo culture. It also stages the incongruities of their different experiences, different along both racial and class axes” (742). Hester, a white middle class pastor’s wife, bases her judgments about Tituba, a poor uneducated woman of color, on cultural misconceptions. What follows is a lesson from a native informant, “a position most women of color have had to occupy in the U.S. in relation to their white sisters” to educate Hester (Manzor-Coats 743). The foreword by Davis is also meant to establish Condé’s work as a piece of African diasporic canon though “relatively unfamiliar to the

insular African American literary and critical tradition” (Manzor-Coats 739). Though some facts about Tituba are solidly rooted in history, Condé created Tituba and the other women in the novel within the feminist frameworks of her time.

Another woman arrested alongside Tituba is Sarah Good, “still a young woman, but...hunched over and a beggar” (60). The young girls who pretend to be bewitched dislike her because of her putrid pipe smoke and her muttering, but Tituba describes her as “a generous soul,” at least as far as she could tell (60). The other woman accused is Sarah Osborne, “an old woman, not a beggar like the other Sarah, but well-off, the owner of a lovely oak-paneled house, who in her youth had committed some fault or other to her discredit” (60). These women were both suggested as in league with the devil when Betsey, Abigail, and all the other young girls are playing in the kitchen while Tituba cooked and cleaned. She insisted after their questioning that all of their suggestions were just jokes, but when these women are accused, tortured, and imprisoned, the kitchen conversation becomes much more sinister. Federici argues that some of the strongest evidence tying the witch hunts to the spread of capitalism is “the fact that the majority of those accused were poor peasant women—cottars, wage laborers...or usually old women on public assistance or women who survived by going from house to house begging for bits of food or a pot of wine or milk...often they were widows” (171). The accusations against Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne seem a lot more politically motivated than just made by the whims of a group of girls. Sarah Good as a beggar and Sarah Osborne as an old widow are targeted for extermination with Tituba, the root of the affliction in Salem. Osborne’s accusation in particular is an illustration of the imagery being created of the witch: an old hag flying on a broom “betray[ing] a new sexual discipline that den[ies] the ‘old and ugly’ woman, no longer fertile, the right to a sexual life” (Federici 192). Osborne was known to have “an Irish immigrant

she [had] hired to help her on the farm quickly advance[e] from [her] barn to her bed” (107-8). Condé’s painstaking research for her fictional representation produces an accurate account of which women were targeted in order to begin the process of regulation of female bodies and sexuality.

The bodies of several women in *I, Tituba* function as the site of contestation for the processes of regulation which the terror of the witch hunt sought to enact. Tituba’s body as she is brutally tortured by the four masked men, Hester’s corpse hanging in her jail cell, and the unknown fates of both Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne all represent knowledge production as a part of the structure of terror. Witchcraft as Tituba practices it, engages in both the supernatural elements of controlling the atmosphere and communicating with spirits, but it is also the knowledge production outside of the hegemonic colonial science that proves most dangerous. In its threat to capitalist scientific discourse, it must be suppressed by being associated with both gendered and racialized de-legitimation. The demonization of such knowledge is punished on the body as part of the structure of terror.

Myal: The Living Dead and Knowledge Production

While anti-capitalist knowledge production is punished by torture of the female body in *Tituba*, Erna Brodber’s novel *Myal* illustrates knowledge production as a site of the larger structure of terror through the practice of spirit thievery, a process of zombification. Brodber’s characters in Grove Town, Jamaica unite to heal two women in the community who suffer following the completion of their colonial education. With her estrangement from her homeland and culture, Ella develops a grey, stinking mass within her body that baffles the western doctors in Baltimore, so she is sent home. The story of her upbringing as a biracial outcast in Jamaica is told alongside the story of Anita, another intelligent young woman who is haunted by a

poltergeist, later revealed to be the workings of a voodoo practitioner, who thieves her youth and health for his ailing self. Localized knowledge production within the Grove Town community is portrayed as a creolized antidote to the emptying and delegitimizing forces of colonial education and cultural appropriation that Ella faces. Spirit thievery, or zombification, is a form of bodily terror meant to separate the body and the spirit, making the body still available for labor, and in Ella's case in particular, commodifying her childhood experience and cultural history for financial gain.

Before close reading *Myal*, a historical and materialist context for zombification will provide a better understanding of it as a cultural motif standing in for the process of dehumanization inherent in slave societies. The zombie myth originates in Haitian folklore with an extensive history of its employment for political uses long before it was appropriated into American cinema and television. Mimi Sheller offers an overview of the changing use of zombies in film, emphasizing the neocolonial position of Haiti in all of the portrayals:

Here we see a strange currency in zombies, as they shift from a dread memory of slavery into a new idiom of forced labour, and then from a ghoulish monster in Hollywood movies they slip back into Haitian understandings of the US occupation. Thus occupation and the American cultural consumption of the uprooted figure of the zombie serve to reinforce its power, as it is re-grounded in contemporary Haitian culture. (146)

This process can be traced from Bela Lugosi's *White Zombie* (1932), where a greedy sugar-mill owner creates zombies/slaves through working for him, to George Romero's iconic *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), which feature zombie/cannibals satirizing consumer society (and divorcing the zombie myth from its Haitian history), to finally Wes Craven's adaptation of *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, based on Wade Davis' book by the same

title. Wade Davis' accounts of scientific exploration into zombies in the Caribbean provided the source material for this 1988 horror film, yet the anthropologist's later work, *Passage of Darkness: The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie* is more concerned with the significance of plant and medical knowledge outside of western science about a poison that affects only certain parts of the brain controlling speech and thought. Sheller reads Davis' anthropology as a continuation of consumption practices of ethno-pharmacological substances begun by the earliest explorers (146). However, Davis does attempt to explore the image of the zombie as a culturally significant symbol borne from a violent slave history. Davis cites Zora Neale Hurston's encounters with zombies and the likelihood that the former slave population in Haiti would know of this "semblance of death brought on by some drug known to a few" (quoted in Davis 67). Davis is quick to label René Dépestre's writing on zombies as "simplistic," yet his own culminating chapters focus on the social importance of the zombie myth in a postcolonial society such as Haiti. Even though Davis' research on scientific knowledge about the poison and antidote continues, Dépestre's conclusion about zombies mirrors Brodber's use of zombification within *Myal* and describes her most straightforward definition of the process:

It is not by chance that there exists in Haiti the myth of the zombi, that is, of the living dead, the man whose mind and soul have been stolen and who has been left only the ability to work. According to the myth, it is forbidden to put salt in the zombi's food since this could revitalize his spiritual energies. The history of colonization is the process of man's general zombification. It is also the quest for a revitalizing salt capable of restoring to man the use of his imagination and his culture. (quoted in Davis 75)

Zombification for both Dépestre and Brodber is the completion of a colonial education, the regulation of the body towards efficient labor production that essentially disassociates the

spirit from the body. The demonization of the non-white body legitimizes the severing and emptying out of knowledge. Again, as Weheliye writes, the very vocabulary of assigning humanity has been dictated by the structure of race within it, granting the non-white body “not-quite-human” status (3). Dépestre’s description of the zombie as the racialized colonial subject is related to Achilles Mbembe’s discussion of race as a determining factor in true sovereignty within “Necropolitics”: “race has been the ever present shadow in Western political thought and practice, especially when it comes to imagining the inhumanity of, or rule over, foreign peoples...the function of racism is to regulate the distribution of death and to make possible the murderous functions of the state” (17). The zombie becomes the body of those chosen for death if the nature of sovereignty is “the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (Mbembe 11). *Myal* illustrates not just the negative process of zombification as it creates the living dead in a disposable population, but it also portrays the process of the antidote, a creolized ceremony and recovery of one’s ability to make knowledge outside of the western education system in Jamaica. The very form of the novel enacts the antidote: multiple voices bring the reader into community by re-legitimizing knowledge produced in the margins.

Many readings of *Myal* by different scholars share an emphasis on the healing process as particularly creole in nature. Heather Smyth, in “Roots beyond Roots: Heteroglossia and Feminist Creolization in *Myal* and *Crossing the Mangrove*” draws attention to the wealth of theory on creolization by men, and differentiates Brodber’s portrayal as a quintessentially feminist imagining that recognizes women’s bodies as the site of contestation: “the ‘racial’ mixing that illustrates the process of creolization has historically been a scene of sexual violence against women” (2). Smyth argues that the *mestizaje*, hailed as an exclusively male project in which interracial heterosexual rape is congratulated, legitimizes a misogynistic fraternity through

absented women's bodies. Instead, Brodber's creolization is one example of feminist creolization that makes "a critique of the absence of gender and sexuality in creolization theories" (2). *Myal* explores the spirit thievery of two women to critique this absence.

Similar to Smyth's reading of *Myal*, Rebecca Ashworth focuses on the significance of the spirit thievery enacted on women's bodies. She writes,

This theft is symbolic of both present American cultural imperialism and of previous colonial theft, suppression, and defamation of African and Caribbean culture. As Maas Levi's rape of Anita's womb is a re-enactment of the historical violation of black women and symbolically an act of violence against the creative will of a people, Ella's violation is also experienced as violence against her ability to create: Selwyn prevents her conceiving a child and does not involve her in his play. (215)

The bodies of these two women become the site of struggle for dominance between colonial, neocolonial, and Caribbean control. Ashworth refers to this struggle as symbolic, yet I argue that the struggle is very material. Ella develops a large, life-threatening tumor, and Anita is sexually abused. Spirit thievery/zombification does not remain psychological or spiritual; the results of its practice are physical for both Ella and Anita, refusing the binary of mind and body and manifesting the central premise of necropolitics that "death and freedom are irrevocably interwoven" (Mbembe 38). The process of the women's zombification highlights the Caribbean as a *death-world* where the population has the status of *living dead* (Mbembe 40).

Myal opens with a myal healer, Mass Cyrus—myalism being the spiritual belief system counter to voodoo and practiced in many parts of the Caribbean—assessing Ella's tumor and the process that her healing will require. Only after detailing the massive amounts of environmental destruction and lives lost by the atmospheric disruptions does the narration begin to follow Ella's

upbringing and the course of her spirit thievery. Shalini Puri remarks on the significance of beginning here instead of with Ella's school performance: "The novel's opening chapter, then, foregrounds the process, consequences, and costs of restoring the natural, spiritual, and human world to some measure of harmony" (148). This narrative jump is also accompanied by conversations between seemingly disembodied Anglican-named characters debating the nature of colonialism and the zombification of native people. These narrative jumps create a dissociative, nonlinear quality to the novel that ultimately constructs *Myal* as a novel about healing zombies, not just their creation. The disembodied Dan and Willie, along with White Hen and Mother Hen, are identified towards the end of the novel as the characters from *Mr. Joe's Farm* in the colonial school's reader and the myal healing group's code names. This purposeful connection between healing and knowledge production reclaims an instrument (the book) of indoctrination and zombification for teaching self-identification and cultural re-creation. Ella's questioning of her approach to teaching *Mr. Joe's Farm* at the end of the novel solidifies her new ownership of the text. Reverend Simpson asks her, "You have a quarrel with the writer...Need your voice say what his says?" (107). Ella leaves with convictions about teaching what is missing in the allegorical story.

Ella's Zombification and Healing: Creole Culture

From the moment the reader meets her, Ella is positioned between cultures. Ella O'Grady is introduced as the mulatto child of Mary Riley, a housekeeper, and Ralston O'Grady, an Irish police officer stationed in Jamaica: "As is usual, this new officer came to town with no wife and needed a housekeeper. As is also usual, the housekeeper was before long in the family way. What was unusual, was for said housekeeper to refuse to move to Kingston's anonymity to be kept by her baby-father and to opt to go back to her country bush..." (6). Mary Riley instead

keeps her “alabaster baby” in plain sight. By starting with Ella’s isolation in childhood, Brodber escapes the trope of the Caribbean as a racially tolerant society given its diversity. Ella is teased, called “ginger” by her classmates, (not because the students knew it was a shade of hair, but because “ginger was for belly-ache and was harsh. Nothing nice in that”) and ignored by teachers (10). Because her skin prominently displayed any marks from disciplining her, her teachers were embarrassed and “stopped seeing her and she too stopped seeing them” (11). Mostly self-taught, Ella captures the attention of Reverend Simpson in her recitation of Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden,” when he recognizes her struggles: “No one else with that colour and that hair... Seems we of this hue just cannot win!” (6). Even this early on, the process of zombification has begun: “The words were the words of Kipling but the voice was that of Ella O’Grady aged 13” (5). She excels at reciting the poem, just as Lucy did, but unlike Lucy’s reaction of disgust, Ella’s success is a foreshadowing of her complicity with imperial culture later through her husband. However, her degree of complicity is caused by alienation within her own culture. “If Ella identifies with the ‘pale-skinned people floating’ (46) in imperial texts, it is in large part because of the rejection she faces from her classmates and teachers. Ella’s legitimate desire to resist the marginalization to which majority-black culture subjects her is nonetheless shown to misdirect her resistance into collusion or complicity with white imperial culture” (Puri 151). Her healing by the myal spiritual group redirects her resistance by the end of the novel.

Grove Town seems to alienate Ella, yet her placement in Maydene and Reverend William Brassington’s home causes alarm because of the patronizing ethos underlying it. Maydene Brassington is described as “lily white, English and high,” yet she walks the island late at night and recognizes her privilege in conversation with others in the community. If at first she seems to be an antagonist, a symbol of misguided colonial missions, her trust is gained by her

recognition as a good spirit by Miss Gatta who christens her “White Hen” within the myal healing circle (77). Smyth argues that the necessity of a transplanted white Englishwoman in the myal group supports Brodber’s intervention in patriarchal forms of creolization by insisting on a truly heterogeneous group (7). Maydene’s interaction with Amy Holness, the teacher’s wife, allows the reader to glimpse the conflicting views of Amy and Maydene as class and race are confronted to decide what is best for the talented young Ella. This chapter in particular emphasizes the multiple voices of narration that construct *Myal* as a healing text in itself.

The exchange between Maydene and Amy reveals both of their viewpoints across race and class, demystifying the “linguistic rituals” that Maydene’s husband William does not want to acknowledge, mostly because as a (passing) white man he has had the privilege to ignore them or refuse their existence. Maydene has come to Amy and Teacher Holness’ home to ask about Ella: “These white people just wan tek people pickney fi practice pon. Want Mary good-good pickney fi pasture out to her two red-face son. Is pumpkin belly dem wan send this one back home with too?” (20). Amy’s thoughts are communicated in Jamaican dialect and draw attention to the displacement caused by such patronage of intelligent young students as well as the likelihood of sexual violence that awaits female students in these situations. While the reader might expect a naïve inner monologue from Maydene outlining her martyrdom for asking to take in Ella, Brodber does not allow a simple antagonistic reading of Maydene. Instead, she is aware of her privilege and attempts to bridge the divide between Amy and her.

Maydene Brassington was not fooled by the translation. She knew that Mrs. Holness was saying, ‘You interfering white slob. Why don’t you go and do your dirty work yourself and leave me to my business?’...Maydene was in no hurry to go. She had got her foot into one Grove Town house and she was not going to miss this chance to breathe in its

essence, savour it, analyse it and co-exist with it. Nothing that God made was going to frighten her. So if Mrs. Holness thought that just because she was black, was a couple rungs below her socially, she could roll this into a weapon with which to distance her, she would have to think again. (21)

Maydene is hardly ignorant of the appearance of her visit to Amy, yet she does not allow guilt to thwart her intentions. The uncomfortable conversation about “the exploitation of people’s natural god-given gifts—their selves or those of the beings they made” can only proceed when Maydene asks how Amy can get her floor to shine even with children running around and Amy admits to not having any children of her own (22). Amy’s infertility issues become the foundational thread of understanding when Maydene prompts, “But I bet there is a special one [from the school] you wish was yours” (22). Finally it is revealed that Amy would take in Anita if she could, though she “hate[s] to see how circumstances can force people to give their children to others” (23). The women are now able to discuss the psychological effects of racism and classism as they intersect with young people’s education on the island.

Neil ten Kortenaar argues that the spiritual communication Maydene is accepted into as White Hen allows her to communicate more effectively when she is not embodied as the Methodist minister’s white wife.

Ordinary, unenhanced verbal communication requires the physical presence of interlocutors, and because bodies are marked by race and gender, and speech by class and education, such communication is always disturbed by what Maydene’s husband William dismisses as ‘silly linguistic rituals’ (21). What is said cannot be separated from the body and the voice of the one who says it. (Kortenaar 56)

Kortenaar suggests that Maydene struggles until she can meet the community through transcending the body in spirit communication. His article, "Foreign Possessions," focuses on the creolization of religious rituals present in *Myal* that bring together two traditional African healers, a Christian minister and a minister's wife, and a kumina healer in Grove Town.

Kortenaar, along with Puri and Helen Tiffin, reads Grove Town as allegorical for all of Jamaica: "To read Brodber is to inevitably displace Grove Town from the center of the universe and translate it to the larger national framework of Jamaica and the international framework of global resistance to imperialism" (69). Maydene's place, then, within this allegory of nationalism is just as important as the presence of Ole African, the traditional African stiltman and healer. After her discussion with Amy, Ella shares time between the Brassingtons' home and her mother's until she is grown.

Ella's outsider status within Grove Town causes her to misread encounters while with the Brassingtons, though it is not until she relates her memories to Selwyn that she realizes she has an incomplete history. The narrative jumps to the story of Anita's troubling stoning incident—which is important in the second story line—before returning to Ella. Ella has been married to Selwyn Langley, the Irish American heir to a pharmaceutical empire in Baltimore. Immediately following Anita's need for help from the herbalist and hermit Ole African, Ella relates her own experience with Ole African to Selwyn. As she tells the story of being near the cane-piece with Mrs. Brassington and seeing Ole African stilt-walking, she relives the moment. Mrs. Brassington asks her if she knows him, if she has seen him before, but Ella answers, "No, I do not know him" (55), which shocked her then and shocks her even more in the re-telling. "No child in Grove Town needed to see Ole African to know him. They had been hearing about him for centuries...Ella had not as yet reached this truth and Selwyn couldn't help her" (55). She

rethinks Mrs. Brassington's reaction of falling to her knees and saying, "leave" as being strange: "Her story seemed to her now to have some part missing but she dismissed the thought and pressed on to give Selwyn her version..." (56). Ella's partial belonging in Grove Town has equipped her with only fractured understanding, and so as she passes on her stories to Selwyn, they are completely appropriated and reconfigured to mirror Afro-Caribbean villain stereotypes with a blonde-haired victim at the center. "Ella had not told the half. She did not know it" (56). She shared her memories, but they are incomplete. *Caribbean Nights and Days*, the coon show that Selwyn creates from spirit-thieving Ella triggers her physical illness but also prompts her return to Jamaica where she receives the healing necessary to re-member herself within Grove Town.

Maydene recounts the same brush with Ole African a few chapters later but with a very different tone than Ella's, having a more complete knowledge of the society. The terror that accompanies Ella's story is absent:

Here was the spirit of the forest with a clear invitation to a meeting. Right there beside the cane-piece in the pasture, with the little girl standing beside her, she knelt down to join the prayer group. 'Yes, I am in,' she said to herself, 'I have something to give.' And she set herself to pulling her forces together to join the battle. (69)

Maydene had taken a knee in recognition and in conversation rather than in terror as Ella assumes. In fact, the stilt-walking is in preparation for the healing which is needed for Anita whose spirit thievery is not over. However, Ella, not attuned to the meaning of the beating drums of the tabernacle meeting completely misses out on Miss Gatha's ritual: "As it was, Ella heard nothing...Only those who had those kind of ears or who know what the drumming could mean could hear. Ella was none of these" (79). Her misreading the encounter with Ole African and

failure to hear the drums of Miss Gatha's gathering grant Ella a complicated subjectivity within her own culture. Selwyn's prompting and prying into her memories push her completely to one side, out of her in-between-ness and into complicity with the neoliberal imperialism.

The process of Ella's zombification is described as gauze being melted, the result being an objectification of her past life in Grove Town. "For years there had been something like gauze in her head where she supposed her mind to be...separating one section of her mind from the other" (80). As she tells Selwyn of her past and especially when he holds her hand, she experiences a "draining" feeling. The more she told and allowed herself to be pried open, the clearer her ability to describe and "touch" the people became: "The gauze barrier was melting. A great big part of it disintegrated altogether during her honeymoon and by now Mammy Mary and them Grove Town people were very clear...Selwyn's pushing had made a clean passage through which he had fallen into that group of Grove Town people" (80-1). Selwyn could see the group of Grove Town people clearly because he had helped to create them; the people available to Ella were merely types, which her husband could then portray as he wished. Selwyn drained her of her memories in order to create a coon show, a consumable product made at her expense and for profit in an individual example of the colonial enterprise. Ella's experience is commodified in order to add to Selwyn's amassing empire.

At first her draining seemed to be the first steps in becoming a creator, but she was never allowed the opportunity to create: "If a passage has been opened in you, if substance had been drained from you, then your body was being purified to prepare you to produce. Selwyn was her architect. If he could not show her how to fill the spaces he had created and given her too, a chance to create, then what was the point of all this draining and changing and losing her friends?" (82). She was disappointed in the restriction placed on her to only give as well as her

failure to become pregnant: “He has given fruit to everyone but me” (83). Selwyn’s use of prophylactics in order to avoid creating a mulatto child further demonstrates his exploitation of Ella as labor and source material for his own benefit while denying her personhood. Ella’s body becomes an emptied vessel, and psychologically she splits into a cacophony of voices ridiculing her gender and race: “...long conversations between her selves took place in her head. Mostly accusations” (84). When a large bulge forms in her abdomen and she starts repeating the same words about needing maternity wear over and over, it is confirmed that “Ella had tripped out indeed. Selwyn was scared stiff” (84). The first chapter also expresses Ella’s condition as “tripped out in foreign” (4). The physical and mental illness plaguing Ella is evidence of the humanity denied her in zombification. Part of the structure of terror, Selwyn profits from Ella’s experience, and because her knowledge of Grove Town has been limited by her marginal status, what knowledge she has is not useful. Knowledge production and Selwyn’s production of Caribbean characters is felt as terror, causing Ella’s “trip.” Tiffin writes in “Cold Hearts and Foreign Tongues”, “The ‘raw materials’ produced by the colonies for the mother country did not simply consist in sugar, tobacco, minerals, oil. These ‘raw materials’ also included character and narrative, new people and places to be ‘transported’ to Europe and ‘captured’ within Anglo-European representation” (917). Her experience, not her knowledge is valued by Selwyn, and that is able to be stolen, twisted, and made to sell seats in a US theater. Now useless to him, she is sent home.

Maydene brings Ella home to see the healer Mass Cyrus, and the procedure that opens the novel is again described as greatly interrupting the natural environment, proof that the landscape of creole culture is inseparable from the devastation suffered socially. The description of the smell emitted from Ella’s body as the mass is taken out is also described in comparisons made

with naturally-occurring animal phenomena: “Cook say it was like twenty thousand dead bull frog, the scent that escape from that chile’s body” (94). The neighbors ask Reverend Brassington if he started keeping cows with how the bad the smell has been around his home: “Bet you lose one [cow] and don’t know. Drop a sink hole and dead. We smell the smell Parson” (95). The size of the mass that comes out of Ella’s body is also described by the cook in terms of landscape: “Cook say she marvel that a body coulda hold so much stuff. Coulda stand pon it spy Cuba, Cook say” (94). After Ella is cured, however, she has not completely fulfilled her potential within the community as not just a symbol of the dangers of zombification but also as an antidote to the process as a teacher. Ella’s narrative acts as a healing process, but she must make this healing process available to others as they encounter imperial knowledge production as terror.

Because of her education and travels, Ella is given a placement as a teacher of A class in Grove Town after her healing. When she encounters a lesson about *Mr. Joe’s Farm* that unsettles her, she goes to speak to Reverend Simpson about it.

-They [the authors] treat them [the animals] as sub-normals who have no hope of growth
Reverend Simpson.

-And that bothers you? – The Reverend asked.

-Yes. But don’t ask me why because I don’t know...(97)

Reverend Simpson communicates spiritually with the myal group immediately after the interview with Ella to announce that “The antidote, the antidote, White Hen has made a chick chick chick” (98). Reverend Simpson is excited to tell the group that Ella is on the path to becoming a healer through her teaching, hence she is referred to as a “chick chick chick.” The antidote he names is knowledge production, what Ella will contribute as a teacher, especially the kind of teacher that uses the colonial text of *Mr. Joe’s Farm* to illustrate the threat of

zombification, not its inevitability. Ella returns to Reverend Simpson after reading the lesson containing the strike of the animals on the farm. She explains, “The major problem is this: there are alternatives. Why are they never presented in this book?” (105). She goes on to say that what the animals are given to do and say is ignorant: “Why don’t we see them sometimes as sensible, which they are indeed at times in real life and sensible, as they have the capacity to be on more occasions than we give them credit for? Or can we not imagine that people who are not us can be sensible?” (106). Ella recognizes that her own experience and what the text says as causing terror, that being categorized as “not-quite-human” is violence. Reverend Simpson suggests that her quarrel is with “the mind of the writer,” at which point he recalls her husband Selwyn and her quarrel with this one particular writer who caused her zombification (106). Ella argues that the author has “robbed his characters of their possibilities,” to which Reverend Simpson suggests, “Zombified them” (107). Finally Ella makes the leap to ask how she can teach such a lesson to impressionable children: “Is that what I am to teach these children, Reverend Simpson? That most of the world is made up of zombies who cannot think for themselves or take care of themselves but must be taken care of by Mr. Joe and Benjie? Must my voice tell that to children who trust me?” Reverend Simpson repeats that her quarrel is with the author, “But does he force you to teach without this awareness? Need your voice say what his says?” (107). This last question prompts Ella to leave and work on her scheme for the next school day. She realizes that she is equipped with the antidote to zombification: knowledge production against imperial power structures, even using its own tools to teach the opposite.

At the center of Ella’s problem with *Mr. Joe’s Farm* is also a critique of anthropocentric views of nature and culture. When she brings up the “un-naturalness” of the animals (“Isn’t their natural state to live without a master not of their kind?”), Reverend Simpson states, “Animals

don't talk. I don't hear you quarrelling about that...Let's get things clear" (106). Ella insists, "Animals do talk. We just don't understand what they say. That's not my problem. My problem, Reverend Simpson, is that what they have been given to do and say in that book is ignorant" (106). Ella is mistaken when she delineates her problem to only include the content of the animals' speech and actions; her opinion that they do talk and "why don't we see them sometimes as sensible" reveals her quarrel to include the portrayal of racialized people as animals. In *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, Mel Y. Chen claims that "animacy is political, shaped by what or who counts as human, and what or who does not" (30). The animals on Mr. Joe's Farm are a thinly veiled analogy for the slaves of plantations in the not too distant past. Their dependency on the masters in the story portrays the animals as stupid and un-resourceful, furthering the paternal violence legitimizing neocolonial intervention. Ella reveals her problem with the animal analogy by disrupting the assumed animacy hierarchy where speech elevates humans, helping to validate human dominance over nature. Chen argues, "Many nuances of racism, while in some ways articulated around 'race,' are themselves built upon many complex animacy hierarchies (animality being one), each of which can potentially implicate directly the charge of racial abjection without reference to race itself" (35). Ella knows that even though the story does not make the direct reference to race and colonial structures of power her students will internalize its message unless she intervenes.

The curing and conscious-raising process of Ella O'Grady Langley completes the narrative of *Myal*, but it also produces similar effects for its readers. With its constantly shifting narration across lines of gender, race, and class, *Myal* enacts the valuation of knowledge production by a creole community to battle the legacy of colonization still present through spirit thievery. Though Ella's memories are drained by Selwyn for her process of zombification, her

membership is restored when she embodies the chick, the fledgling antidote to more spirit thievery by developing critique and resistance in her students. Knowledge produced by a community within their environment is given esteem in *Myal*. Brodber creates a story about healing spirit thievery in order to enact it against a part of the structure of terror in imperial knowledge production.

Anita's Sexual Assault: The Living Dead

Though Anita's poltergeist-turned-rapist is a secondary storyline in *Myal*, it demonstrates zombification as the process of assigning populations to death within life, labelling expendable populations. A promising student, Anita is first annoyed by rocks pelting the door and roof of her dwelling, then accompanied in bed by a spirit embracing her. Though the sections are narrated by Amy Holness, not Anita, it is clear that the spirit assaults her: "To Anita's cries of 'please don't touch me' were now added, twice daily at 8pm and 5am, Miss Amy's moanings as whoever or whatever it was tried to pin her hands to her side to keep her from comforting Anita" (59). Once it is discovered that Mass Levi is using a voodoo doll to revive his own waning virility by tapping into Anita's virginal quality, the healing is planned: the drumming that Ella is not attuned to hear signals the ceremony performed by Miss Gatha (Mother Hen) where she is able to transport herself to the privy where Mass Levi is and kills him. Ten Kortenaar refers to the drumming group led by Miss Gatha as "Miss Agatha Paisley's Kumina Tabernacle," as he explains that the Kumina cult is popular in St. Thomas, though similar spiritual groups reliant on spirit possession like Revival and Revival Zion can be found in Jamaica (53). The myal group is successful in rescuing Anita, communicating in their spirit pseudonyms. The episode of Anita's attempted possession and sexual abuse is notable for both the representation of masculine power to appropriate women's bodies—what Tiffin defines as the "sick heart" seeking revitalization—

and the assignation of black women to a population of the living dead, real life zombies occupying a body with their spirit absent. Anita's experience of terror, though more acute and isolated than Ella's, is similar to the experience of rape by women in Danticat's novels, which will be explored in the next chapter. The supernatural element to Anita's terror, however, in addition to its method of healing, unifies her and Ella's experiences in *Myal*. Both women experience methods of zombification as terror lived and felt in the mundane experiences of school and domestic activities.

The Witch and the Zombie: Knowledge Production in the Structure of Terror

What this chapter explores by aligning these two Caribbean women's novels is a new understanding of how the figures of the witch and the zombie are similarly employed to identify how power structures shape who can create knowledge as well as the systems of regulation established to reify them. Anti-capitalist knowledge production in both texts leads to the torturing of the body and the attempt to separate the bodily functions, such as reproduction, from the intellectual mind in the service of capital. This separation has been identified by Marx in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* in which he identifies the economic and social relations that result from the establishment of private property and industrialization.

Objectification stems from the production of things, reification of a value in objects, but also from the estrangement of laborers from their labor and the product:

The result is that man (the worker) feels that he is acting freely only in his animal functions—eating, drinking, and procreating, or at most in his dwelling and adornment—while in his human functions, he is nothing more than animal. It is true that eating, drinking, and procreating, etc. are also genuine human function. However, when

abstracted from other aspects of human activity, and turned into final and exclusive ends, they are animal. (“Estranged Labor”)

If zombies seem to be the epitome of estranged labor by Marx’s definition, it is not accidental, to echo Dépestre’s writing on zombies mentioned previously, however, these Caribbean women writers have made significant interventions into this theory of estrangement. Condé revises the “animal function” of procreating to probe the agency denied in Marx’s assumption of sex acts leading to reproduction. Tituba’s punishment for her reproductive agency reveals a dimension to the relationship between women’s bodies and capital that Marx overlooks, as much of Sylvia Federici’s work has shown in this chapter. Brodber also revises Marx’s comparison of laborers’ estrangement to the quality of life of animals in questioning the anthropocentric hierarchy present in his metaphor. Chen critiques this usage arguing, “he was ...relying on an animacy-inflected economy of humans, animals, and objects as his own referential field” (47). Ella refuses this hierarchy, recognizes the qualities assigned to the animals in the story, and takes issue with their use as analogous racialized humans. Anita’s spirit thievery as well illustrates Brodber’s revision to the concept of estranged labor through the sexual abuse of the black female body for the gain of a wealthier community leader, Mass Levi. Making these significant interventions in Marxist theory, both Condé and Brodber reveal the limit of Marx’s theorization in terms of specifically gendered embodiments.

Their feminist novels attest to the specific ways that the suppression of anti-capitalist knowledge production materializes in the structure of terror. The witch and the zombie embody the processes of demonization that delegitimize knowledge produced outside of imperial centers, by women, or against the colonizing project. Condé and Brodber also join an ongoing dialogue across race and class to produce a more transnational and materialist feminism within their

characters' interactions. By highlighting knowledge production as a site of struggle in need of a gendered critique, these authors draw attention to the historical processes which have legitimized the torture of women's bodies through a structure of terror.

CHAPTER THREE

STATE VIOLENCE IN THE STRUCTURE OF TERROR: RAPE

AND SCARRING IN NOVELS BY EDWIDGE DANTICAT

As the two preceding chapters have shown, domestic and mundane activities in Caribbean women's writing have shown the value of such literature in placing the experiences of women within a structure of terror imposed by global capitalism. Material conditions and affective traces felt in domestic activities are again centered in this chapter, building on Raymond Williams' interpretation of marxist theory and its usefulness to literary criticism. Williams critiques the orthodox interpretation of marxism that splits the base from the superstructure—ideology from the law—disavowing the very thesis of unified reading that Marx intended. If we are to observe the interdependence of ideology, state structures, and the modes of production, we may look no further than an analysis that demonstrates just these connections in a particular historical setting and narrative. Edwidge Danticat's fiction about Haiti and its diaspora provides such a rich example through which the structure of terror may be elicited, identifying the sources of terror in state violence, gendered ideology, and devalued domestic activities. The writing of Danticat identifies state violence as part of the structure of terror that ravages Haiti and its diaspora through experiences of rape, attempted murder, and other trauma that often result in scars. The traumatic history of slavery and foreign rule is kept near the surface of the more recent past of traumatic domestic rule by the Duvaliers and military junta through Danticat's multiple characters narrating Haiti's residual and emergent ideologies. Scars are a unique literary motif in their ability to signify connected sites of violence and how they are inscribed on the body to be felt again and again.

Danticat's range of scars is also a method of connecting different categories of terror. Some scars are physical while others are psychological, manifesting in nightmares, or environmental, such as the soil depleted sites of the sugar cane fields or bloodied water from corpses that are a part of genocide. These different types of scars narrate the interconnected effects of economic and social organization that appear separate or outside of politics, especially when relating the ideals of purity and chastity for Haitian women with the traumatic experience of virginity testing. Danticat's narratives of rape, coercion, and racial hatred reveal the interplay between ideologies and state violence as part of the structure of terror felt in the daily lives of women in the Caribbean.

In order to complete this argument, I plan to take the following steps. First, I will outline the interrelated project of imperialism, especially in the Caribbean, and the legitimation of state violence. Next, for each of Danticat's novels, I will historically contextualize them to suggest that her novels cover distinct moments of Haitian history, but they are linked by the prominence of the role of state violence in each. *The Farming of Bones* is historical fiction about the 1937 massacre of Haitians working in the Dominican Republic by President Rafael Trujillo, while *Breath Eyes Memory* and *The Dew Breaker* take place in the latter half of the twentieth century during and immediately after the reign of the Duvaliers. Then, I will examine how the literature, grounded in such traumatic experiences locates domestic sites of violence within the gendered articulation of Haitian nationalism through the recurring motif of scars and their juxtaposition with domestic and everyday objects. Finally, using this framework, I will analyze three of Danticat's novels to reveal state violence as a node within the structure of terror that inflicts those scars.

Why Literature and State Violence?

Autobiographical and journalistic accounts exist beside numerous history books to relate the violent past of the Duvalier regime and the 1937 massacre before then, so why is literature—fiction in particular—useful or better suited to expressing these horrific events? The answer, woven into all of the chapters so far, is that narratives are capable of infusing everyday tasks and objects with terror, having them felt to be a part of a larger structure, a structure of feeling according to Williams, both accessible and inaccessible at the same time. Neil Lazarus defends postcolonial literature as a formidable tool in literary and social criticism: “Where the identification of social conditions of existence in the (post-)colonial world is concerned, literature has typically played a vanguardist, not a belated, role (38). Danticat’s specific contribution to this vanguardist tradition is her recurring motif of scars that unite state terror executed onto bodies, environmental devastation in the monoculture of the plantation, and social/psychological damage that histories of racialized and gendered violence reinscribe. Scars have a way of simultaneously narrating the present and the past; Danticat is able to reference both the cause and the effect in this way, effectively incorporating the violence of the mode of production in the narration. Scars provide an image that narrates a traumatic event, and as those events are elaborated within the text, the physical mark becomes a signifier of the event as well as the affective terror that the event incurs. Scars indicate a structure of feeling, that of terror or trauma in Danticat’s fiction. Williams describes the structure of feeling as “specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought...a social experience which is still in process, often and indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating...” (132). As a structure of feeling, a scar retraces a personal, historical event, making the affect both available

and unavailable simultaneously. Frederic Jameson, in his critique of Althusser's assertion that history as a text has no referent, clarifies this claim writing, "...history is not a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and...our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious" (35). Danticat accesses this prior textualization of history but makes it accessible through literary narrativization in order to locate instances of state violence as within the structure of terror accompanying global capitalism. Literature is better suited to express this contradiction of accessibility and inaccessibility as women narrate their experiences of terror.

Imperialism, the State, and Violence

The terror experienced by state violence in the literature cannot be simplified into a discussion of merely the actions performed by the military or the orders given by leaders of the state; instead, we must establish state violence as a much more broad dialectical process reaching into hegemonic economic, social, and political formations. Dialectical processes are a Marxian concept (though Hegel theorizes the process quite differently in earlier works) describing how material conditions or social class shape the conception of ideas, especially social structures such as the state formation. According to Antonio Gramsci, the state and the civil body of society are never fully separate. In the notes accompanying a section of his prison notebooks entitled, "State and Civil Society," Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith infer that "[Gramsci's] constant preoccupation was to avoid any undialectical separation of 'the ethical-political aspect of politics or theory of hegemony and consent' from 'the aspect of force and economics'" (207). They continue to posit that "between the economic structure and the state with its legislation and coercion stands civil society," demonstrating that civil society is affected by both economic and

state structures, in a dialectical relationship to both (Hoare and Smith 208). Gramsci theorizes that the state ensures that a population conforms to an economic arrangement, emphasizing the large role that social stratum play in governmental formations. This suggests on-going processes that continually produce and reproduce structures of the state in order to adjust to the demands of economic conditions. Gramsci demonstrates the flexibility of the state structure: “A political movement can be of a military character even if the army as such does not participate in it openly; a government can be of a military character even if the army as such does not take part in it” (211-2). The “national structure” is defined by the constant interplay of civil, military, economic, and bureaucratic elements, producing moments where a particular instance may seem isolated from the others because its dialectical connection may be obscured. In this chapter, I argue that the structure of terror contains one such crystallization of civil, military, economic, and bureaucratic elements in mobilizing state violence, obscuring certain elements in each of its manifestations. Duvalierism appears as a military formation as its civil and economic elements are masked, while virginity testing appears to be a civil institution where its economic and bureaucratic elements are masked. The state cannot be theorized as an independently functioning power, and the relationship between state and society requires examination of related institutions, of which Michel-Rolph Trouillot compellingly offers in the context of Haiti.

Trouillot argues, “the Duvalierist state emerged as the result of a long-term process that was marked by an increasing disjuncture between political and civil society” (15). In *Haiti: State Against Nation*, he traces the overlapping economic and social histories of Haiti to their colonial roots and the beginning of the sovereign state. At the center of Haiti’s history are class and racial divides, pitting a mulatto merchant/landowning class against a black agrarian proletariat. Trouillot writes,

...even though state and nation were taking shape at the same time and as part of the same revolutionary process, they were launched in opposite directions. State and nation were tied by the ideal of liberty, but the nation measured its liberty in Sunday markets and in the right to work on its garden plots. The Louverture party, on the other hand, embryo of the state-to-come and ferocious defender of this same liberty, was firmly attached to the plantation system. The leaders wanted export crops; the cultivators wanted land and food. (44)

Trouillot makes the distinction between the state, as in government institutions, and the nation, the people who the state serve, in order to explain how they rarely shared the same vision for the new independent state. The militarized agriculture (*caporalisme agraire*) instituted by Henri Christophe in the north created wealth for the first king of Haiti, though the practice was similar to slavery by keeping together the large plantations and making operations there mandatory (Trouillot 47). Alexandre Pétion took a different course in the west and south, distributing land grants that, even though the best plots ended up in the hands of elites, went a long way in gaining trust with the proletariat. Pétion's and Christophe's successor, Jean-Pierre Boyer, however, in reuniting the states "centralized the state apparatus, and, in early 1822, led Haitian troops in a successful invasion of the Spanish colony in the eastern part of the island" reinstating the colonial legacy of a centralized government with a taste for conquest.

Another legacy traced back to the inception of Haiti is the opportunities offered by the military in elevating one's social status. Trouillot claims, "To be sure, an adequate defense force was necessary in the aftermath of independence, especially with constant rumors of a French invasion. But since the days of Louverture, military rank had functioned as a mechanism for socioeconomic advancement..." (66). When the military functions as the sure way to climb the

social ladder, it is given a large amount of prestige, which discourages involvement in other productive trades, making the policing of its citizens the biggest business of the state. Trouillot argues that the socioeconomic arrangement divided Haiti into two groups: the agricultural producers and those protecting the alliance between the rulers and the foreign merchants who had increasingly provided loans to the state at astronomical figures (80). Loans from merchants paid the military personnel and infrastructural positions, but they were also a large source of income for the merchants. This societal split did not isolate the two groups; on the contrary, they were very much inseparable because of their unequal and complementary relationship (Trouillot 81). The historical economic arrangement in Haiti of extracting the surplus from agrarian peasants and distributing it to the formal and informal militaries as well as the foreign merchants creates the certainty that the military and merchants will spend their wealth reinforcing the system. State power seems impenetrable at least to the proletariat; however, it is susceptible to coups and interventions from abroad, to which Haitian history can also attest.

Thus, the legitimization of state violence in Haiti rests on the historical precedent set by colonization's predatory economy. Abolishing slavery in the new republic did not produce a new social arrangement because those in positions of power continued the parasitic relations that preceded them. The Haitian proletariat creates the wealth of its own rulers and foreign traders, yet faces increasing poverty and brutal violence. Against this backdrop, Danticat's novels narrate the experience of state violence as part of the structure of terror in Haiti and its diaspora.

State Violence and the Scars of Genocide: *The Farming of Bones*

Danticat's novels, and these three in particular, reveal state violence as the process by which Haitian people are the most visibly affected within the structure of terror. Danticat's narrators translate the power structure into everyday life experiences, giving the reader both the

story behind the creation of characters' scars and narrativizing the nation's scars in the interwoven social and environmental fabric of Haiti. Two important historical moments frame these three novels though they are written within a decade of each other over the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. An understanding of each moment and its attendant crystallization of ideological and economic processes is necessary to identify in Danticat's imagery and narration the central contradiction of state violence: that the citizens, those who the state presumably serves, are an expendable population at the same time that their labor production is the sole source of the state's wealth. This contradiction becomes clear in all three of the novels, but I will begin by discussing *The Farming of Bones* as the historical genocide carries out this contradiction most obviously. The scars related by characters in *The Farming of Bones* accomplish several narrative tasks: they align Haiti's social scars of racialized slavery with its environmental ones of monoculture plantations, they materialize the reproduction of the racial-linguistic hierarchy between Spanish-speaking Dominicans with lighter skin and darker Creole-speaking Haitians, and they create the body as a site of memory for telling and retelling stories of terror. The analysis that follows recasts many scholars' observations about the motif of scars in Danticat's work as evidence of this contradiction within the mode of production and the process of state violence.

Early on in *The Farming of Bones*, Danticat uses domestic images and events to illustrate the escalation of everyday instances of racism and class divide into the culminating genocide. I borrow Saidiya Hartman's term, "scenes of subjection" as Hartman describes to "illuminate the terror of the mundane and quotidian rather than exploit the spectacle" (4). The use of domestic or everyday scenes shifts the focus onto the normalization that occurs in order to make such violence barely perceptible. *The Farming of Bones* follows the story of Amabelle Désir, a

Haitian maid working in the home of a Dominican general in 1937. Similar to Lucy, as a domestic worker Amabelle feels both an insider and an outsider to the family for which she works. Sebastien, her lover, asks, “Who are these people to you?” and she responds, “The Señora and her family are the closest to kin I have” (110). Amabelle’s affection for the family is very different from Lucy’s tenuous relationship with Mariah and Lewis’ family, perhaps because she lost both of her parents in a river flood. Another interaction between Sebastien and Amabelle reveals that she may regret being so blinded by the surrogate family script when it becomes clear that their lives are in danger in the Dominican Republic.

‘You never believed those people could injure you,’ he said with a scowl that seemed truly hateful, as though he were talking to someone other than me. ‘Even after they killed Joël, you thought they could never harm you.’ His hands were balled in fists the way they always were when he tried to hold in his anger...Perhaps I had trusted too much. I had been living inside dreams that would not go away, the memories of an orphaned child. When the present itself was truly frightful, I had perhaps purposely chosen not to see it. (143)

Ironically, Amabelle waits so long to leave that she misses the group travelling from Alegría to the border when they are rounded up by troops outside of the meeting place at the church and killed. She then embarks on her own journey with Yves, another cane worker and friend of Sebastien’s, to cross the border and return to Haiti during the genocide known as El Corte (the cutting) or the Parsley Massacre on 2-8 October 1937.

The opening of the novel focuses in on the scars that crisscross Sebastien’s face from cane-cutting and the lack of lines on his hands from holding a machete. Beginning the novel in this way, Danticat narrates both the present and the past of Haiti; its history as a sugar colony

and corresponding social and environmental violence, all within a domestic image of the lovers undressing in their home. Embedded in the description is the violence of the cane stalk on Sebastien's flesh: "the cane stalks have ripped apart most of the skin on his shiny black face, leaving him with crisscrossed trails of furrowed scars" (1). The terror of racialized violence signified by the scarring of Sebastien's face is inscribed in his flesh, the marks on his face and the wearing down of the lines on his hands. Perhaps the constant proximity of such violence does not allow sympathy towards the Dominicans of which Amabelle is capable. Images such as this one invoking both the violence of working canefields and racialized slavery often serve to draw parallels between pre-revolutionary Haiti and emancipated Haiti. Helen Scott enumerates Danticat's stories where canefields have featured centrally in developing the theme of historical continuance of imperialism. She writes,

The past continues to weigh in on the present in very literal ways—sugar production continues to be central to the economy long after slavery ends, semi-feudal conditions persist in rural areas—as well as in folklore handed down across the generations. Most importantly, imperialism continues to circumscribe the lives of Haitians 200 years after their successful revolution... (31)

Scott reads Danticat's fiction as particularly poignant in expressing the teaming up of imperialism with domestic terror to quell Haiti's periodic uprisings, claiming that she "transforms these realities in to emotionally and visually powerful fiction laced with motifs of suicide, dead infants, breech and still births, scars and nightmares" symbolizing lost hope and despair but also "fire, flight, transformation, and resurrection that suggest continued hope for social change and renewal" (30). This opening image of Sebastien's face and hands not only

makes the continuance of imperialist modes of production central to the novel, but it also establishes the centrality of knowing and re-feeling history as the main theme of the novel.

Donette Francis, in discussing *The Farming of Bones*, also comments on how history is made to be the foremost project of Danticat's writing: "Danticat laments that whereas young Dominicans know about this massacre of Haitian labourers, young Haitians do not...historical memory—the stories we choose to pass on—hinges on shame as well as power" (169). She suggests that shame has caused the silence surrounding the massacre in Haitian society and Danticat's fiction is instrumental in recovering this history to be remembered differently. The very format of the novel (dream sequences in bold print and chronological story-telling in regular print) revises the way that history is handed down—through facts and disembodied names—rather than include "the emotional register" (Francis 170). I am arguing that by narrativizing the facts, including the emotional register, Danticat draws attention to the contradiction of state violence in Haiti and its neighboring state, relating a terror-filled genocide that eradicates the lives of those who are both entirely necessary to reproducing the mode of production yet undesirable populations. Scars function in Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* as a reminder that the slow death of Haitians has always been a part of the sugar economy; the massacre merely formalized and catalyzed the process in a matter of days.

The undesirableness of Haitians is felt throughout the novel in the formalized labor institutions (black Haitians work in the mill, the fields, or as domestic servants while Dominicans are mostly army officers, priests, professionals, and artisans) but also in the domestic conversations between Amabelle and Señora Valencia, the woman whose family for whom Amabelle works. After assisting her in the birth of twins, Amabelle is subject to the racist anxieties of the Señora when she notices the colors of her children:

‘They differ in appearance.’ She wanted another opinion.

‘Your son favors your cherimoya milk color,’ [Amabelle] said.

‘And my daughter favors you,’ she said. ‘My daughter is a chameleon. She’s taken your color from the mere sight of your face.’ (11)

Amabelle realizes the Señora’s race-consciousness and chooses only to comment upon the lighter-skinned child. However, Amabelle’s reluctance to mention the dark skin of the daughter does not go unnoticed by the Señora. Calling her a chameleon, the Señora villainizes Amabelle, making her responsible for projecting her blackness onto the child. Later, the Señora asks Amabelle, “My poor love, what if she’s mistaken for one of your people?” (12). Her fear of having a dark child that could be mistaken for being a Haitian is a cruel iteration of the racial hierarchy in the Dominican Republic. The domestic setting for the conversation, at the Señora’s bedside after giving birth, represents the way that economic and political elements can be masked by occurring within a domestic or seemingly private setting. Danticat aligns this violence with the later massacre, showing that scenes of domesticity are part of the larger structure of terror in that the racial hierarchy visible from birth has economic and political consequences for individuals. The events surrounding the birth of the twins creates another opportunity where racialized violence is connected to the domestic realm while perpetuating the undesirability of the black body as Señor Pico and the Señora’s father Don Ignacio hastily ride home.

Driving near the ravines, Señor Pico anxiously speeds by a group of Haitian mill workers walking home, striking one of them and sending him into the ravine. The incident is brushed off by its perpetrator, but related to Amabelle and the other employees in the household by Luis, a groundskeeper. Because it is a small, tight community, Amabelle would “[know] most of the people who worked with Sebastien at Don Carlos’ mill, lived in Don Carlos’ compounds, and

toiled in Don Carlos' cane fields," the repetition of ownership purposefully demarcating the race and class divide between those who own and those who toil (39). She fears for Sebastien initially, but decides that she would have heard immediately if it were he who had been struck. She and the other domestic workers continue to fulfill their duties despite the shock and growing uncertainty of who might have been killed. The description of the household as these duties are carried out creates a tension that Danticat carefully crafts in order to make the reader feel the frustration of the Haitian characters who are not allowed to feel their own community's loss, but are instead regulated to continue creating the comforts of home for those who inflict violence on them. Amabelle narrates,

I didn't stop worrying about Sebastien. As the laughter and Beatriz's effortless Latin phrases echoed from Señora Valencia's bedroom, I walked over to the flame tree and peeked at the dead goat Señor Pico had brought home. Near the bloody spot where the goat's nose almost touched the ground lay my sewing basket and Sebastien's still-unfinished shirt. I had dropped them there when I'd heard Señora Valencia's first screams... The joyful reunion continued upstairs while Luis kept fanning the flames to keep Señor Pico's bath warm. (40-1)

Danticat is able to make the reader feel the tension grow in the divide between the Haitian employees who continue in their tasks like keeping a fire hot to warm bath water while the reckless driver who has killed a friend continues to celebrate. This passage highlights how the racial hierarchy in this context regulates the emotional register in the proletariat class: the grieving of the Haitians or even the suspension of their labor to find more information is not allowed; meanwhile, the Dominican family's joy is prioritized. Danticat's narration through Amabelle is meant to reveal this inequality, invoke the frustration at it in the reader, and still find

the accepted hierarchy of who is and who is not allowed to feel, normal. The inability to grieve and the expectation to continue one's labor in emotional distress exemplifies how *The Farming of Bones* ties early domestic images to the forthcoming state violence in order to draw the similarities between everyday life as part of the structure of terror and the systematic, large-scale terror present in the massacre.

Joël, the man who was struck by Señor Pico's speeding vehicle, spurs a gathering of all Haitians, including the non-vwayajè Haitians, those who are richer and do not migrate across the border following labor patterns. This meeting starts with a violent tenor as Mimi, Sebastien's sister calls for "an eye for an eye," and "not... a war...only something to teach them that our lives are precious too" (66). As people go about their daily tasks, Amabelle narrates their pieces of conversation, which express fear of eradication because of the absence of paperwork to prove citizenship. This faceless chorus of voices related through Amabelle creates both a personal narrative and an anonymity that stands in for the widespread occurrence of this experience. The Haitians in the Dominican Republic identify the fragile citizenship that they have where race defines citizenship, regardless of birthplace, establishment of a home, or feelings of belonging. M. Jacqui Alexander's work has been crucial for understanding the forms of citizenship as they hinge on sexuality, class, and race. In *Pedagogies of Crossing*, she first explores the denial of citizenship to non-heterosexual individuals through the example of the Bahamas, then within both Caribbean and U.S. contexts as formations of citizenship shift and disappear because of militarization and neoliberal practices as far-reaching as higher education policies. Alexander states that "the poor occupy a marginal matrix of citizenship, with no freedom to have the desires of taxpaying citizens—the desire for love, the dignity of work, or the desire to have and mother children" (99). The statelessness of Haitians in *The Farming of Bones* as the handful of voices

narrate through Amabelle reveals what Alexander calls a “marginal matrix of citizenship.” One woman explains to Amabelle,

I pushed my son out of my body here, in this country,...My mother too pushed me out of her body here. Not me, not my son, not one of us has ever seen the other side of the border. Still they won't put our birth papers in our palms so my son can have knowledge placed into his head by a proper educator in a proper school. (69)

Race overrides birthplace and longevity of establishment in the Dominican Republic. Another man responds: “To them we are always foreigners, even if our granmemes' granmemes were born in this country...This makes it easier for them to push us out when they want to” (69).

Another Dominican-born woman replies,

Me, I have no paper in my palms to say where I belong. My son, this one who was born here in this land has no papers in his palms to say where he belongs. Those who work in the cane mills, the mill owners keep their papers, so they have this as a rope around their necks. Papers are everything. You have no papers in your hands, they do with you what they want. (70)

Following these voices, Amabelle reflects on her own situation, admitting that she has no papers to show that she belongs in either the Dominican Republic or Haiti. She compares the uncertainty of herself and the others with their place on the land with other migratory life with colonial violence responsible for their presence on the island: “I found it sad to hear the non-vwayajè Haitians who appeared as settled in the area as the tamarind trees, the birds of paradise, and the sugarcane—it worried me that they too were unsure of their place in the valley” (70). Tamarinds, birds of paradise, and sugarcane are present on Hispaniola because of European colonial exploration and modes of production, just as the Afro-Caribbean Haitians are as well.

These early scenes of domesticity and multiple-voiced testimonials serve as examples of the way state violence is part of the social fabric, manifested in the daily life of Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. The systematic degradation and eradication of Haitian bodies is felt in racist fears of mistaken identity, the regulation of who is and who is not allowed to suspend work and feel, and the purposeful statelessness of Haitians born and working across the border. Señor Pico's smashing of the orchid-patterned tea set which his wife uses to serve tea at her son's wake to Haitian workers is yet another example of a domestic scene or object in which the racial hierarchy is felt before the formalized extermination of Haitians in the novel (116). Danticat uses these scenes to build tension in the narrative and connect the private sphere to the economic conditions of the Dominican Republic in 1937, while keeping the recent past in sight. Nearly halfway through the novel, the massacre begins. Amabelle's narration through this part of the novel offers a conservative perspective on the events because she feels close to the Senora's family and those who begin inflicting the horrific violence. Narrated by another Haitian character, the novel might have a more spiteful tone, rather than the tone of disbelief and confusion that Amabelle projects. This disbelief effectively draws out the contradiction of state violence inflicted on the non-citizen Haitians within the conditions of the mode of production.

Upon hearing that the Generalissimo has ordered soldiers and civilians alike to kill Haitians from Doctor Javier, Amabelle is confused and does not believe that she and the others that she knows will be affected: "This could not touch people like me, nor people like Yves, Sebastien, and Kongo who worked the cane fields. They were giving labor to the land. The Dominicans needed the sugar from the cane for their cafecitos and dulce de leche. They needed money from the cane" (140). Amabelle expresses the central contradiction in the use of state violence ordered by the Generalissimo. How could the people benefitting from their work wish

to eradicate the very source of their wealth? Amabelle's examples through which she relates this contradiction are in language that is both domestic (*cafecito* and *dulce de leche*) and in economic terms of production and exports ("giving labor to the land" and "money from the cane").

Danticat's narration through Amabelle effectively connects the domestic comforts of those she works for with the system of global capitalism and migrant labor practices that have created her current situation, yet her naivete and disbelief cause the reader to feel alongside her the structure of terror as it crystallizes in the brutal form of state violence.

The narration of the attack on Amabelle, Yves, and the others she is with, alongside the testimonies of many others given in retrospect in the last half of the novel are the subject of most scholarship on *The Farming of Bones*. Whether the analysis focuses on language (Francis), survivor's guilt (Marion Christina Rohrleimer), or biopolitics (Judith Misrahi-Barak), the events most commonly interpreted are those related about being beaten, watching others die, and being force-fed parsley to the point of suffocation. In this, my analysis might seem less original in claiming that state violence is carried out in these scenes of terror through the weapon of language (pronunciation to be more precise) and the violence discursively inflicted on the Haitian body becomes formalized and corporeal. However, I want to engage with these scholars' interpretations of the narration in order to differentiate my own reading of Danticat as portraying the totality and inseparability of the economic base and the ideological superstructure in creating the historical moment of the 1937 genocide. By focusing on the early narration of ideologies in domestic scenes, my reading of the attacks interprets the violence as the formalization and implementation of the non-human and non-citizen dialectics of the Haitian body already established in the first half of the novel. I will discuss both Francis' argument about linguistic

tools for violence and Misrahi-Barak's application of biopolitics to Danticat's text as my own reading coincides with each in general, but also diverges in some points as well.

Francis' analysis of *The Farming of Bones* identifies migrancy and the essentiality of it to Dominican's mode of production as well as Amabelle's more sympathetic ties to the family she serves: "The condition of migrancy and the pitfalls of nationalism are among the themes Danticat develops...Amabelle personifies the paradox of the migrant who does not feel at home in any nation-state...[but] while she identifies with fellow Haitian migrant workers, they do not share similar life experiences" (171). Here, I agree with Francis, though she does not go so far as to say that Amabelle's emotional ties to the Señora's family lead to a more tempered version of the relations between Haitians and Dominicans pre-massacre as I do. Francis also delineates the nexus of racial-linguistic-nationalist discourses in line with my own reading that situates Haitians as non-citizens based on racial and linguistic differences. She argues,

The Farming of Bones is a cautionary tale about acts of violence committed for the love of nation...Key to the success of the sugar industry in the Dominican Republic was the trafficking in human bones, but in the post-depression scarcity, these migrants are vilified as threats to Dominican economic security, racial and linguistic purity and ultimately a threat to its national identity. (172)

Francis adeptly explains the centrality of Haitian labor to Dominican economic wealth, but does not identify the excise of Haitians as a contradiction inherent to the mode of production. Rather, it seems that their eradication comes as a natural consequence of scarcity. Her analysis of the passages in the novel where "language is the most tangible marker of nationality," by which Haitians are tortured and beaten explains the connection to the epigraph of the novel referring to the similar biblical story of Gileadites using the pronunciation of "Shibboleth" to discriminate

and kill Ephraimites. However, Francis' statement that "language as a tool of national or ethnic discrimination is not a modern or secular phenomenon" highlights the availability of language difference to be coopted within discourses of nation and race with only a superficial discussion of pronunciation differences between Alegrian Kreyol, Spanish, and French Kreyol when the passage of Amabelle's torture offers a dense, embodied narrativization:

'Tell us what this is,' one [Dominican soldier] said. 'Que diga perejil.'

At that moment I did believe that had I wanted to, I could have said the word properly, calmly, slowly, the way I often asked, 'Perejil?' ...It was the kind of thing that if you were startled in the night, you might forget, but with all my senses calm, I could have said it. But I didn't get my chance. Yves and I were shoved down onto our knees. Our jaws were pried open and parsley stuffed into our mouths. My eyes watering, I chewed and swallowed as quickly as I could, but not nearly as fast as they were forcing the handfuls into my mouth. (193)

This scene is not just a language test, where one passes or not; Amabelle's words "I didn't get my chance" and the subsequent physical brutality of being forced to one's hands and knees create the negation of any utterance that the victims might be capable of. In this stance of subjection, the ability to speak is denied by a violent obstruction with the referent for which the language "test" is given. This is no test at all. It is the embodiment of the racial and linguistic hierarchy already established through the beginning of the novel where Haitian bodies are animalized and pronounced undesirable.

This scene is also analyzed by Judith Misrahi-Barak in "Biopolitics and Translation: Edwidge Danticat's *Many Tongues*" to illustrate the process of "multiple translations—both of bodies and of words—that are at stake when speaking about the 1937 massacre and its

representations in literature” (351). I take issue with a similar application of biopolitics in this same excerpt of the novel where Misrahi-Barak interprets the bodies of Haitians as changing or being re-translated:

Bodies are reduced to parts—eyes, jaws, legs and arms, hands and faces...Fragmentation is everywhere. Individuals cannot speak anymore—they grunt and groan, dehumanized. The translation has occurred; the bodies have been transformed into those of animals; they have been disembodied from what made them living and human bodies. (355)

Misrahi-Barak assumes that Haitians were once treated as full humans before this “translation has occurred.” Weheliye’s criticism of biopolitics yet again becomes relevant as a rebuttal: Danticat’s preceding narrative of how racial hierarchies are felt in everyday activities does not allow for this violence to be considered a detour or a translation, but rather the systematized and formal iteration of Haitians as non-citizens and nonhumans. Race and language are central in determining the humanity of those in the novel, and therefore a “translation” implies that something has occurred as discontinuous. The scene of Yves and Amabelle’s beating and parsley force-feeding torture is the first of many first-person accounts of the massacre that fill the second half of the novel, narrativizing the creation of characters’ scars while claiming the body as a site of memory and history. Amabelle recounts the fervor with which the survivors tell their stories at the makeshift hospital just across the border in the days following the massacre:

As they ate, people gathered in a group to talk. Taking turns, they exchanged tales quickly, the haste in their voices sometimes blurring their words, for greater than their desire to be heard was the hunger to tell. One could hear it in the fervor of the declarations, the obscenities shouted when something could not be remembered fast

enough, when a stutter allowed another speaker to race into his own account without the stutterer having completed his. (209)

Stories of being forced to jump off of a cliff (173), being lined up and shot in the back of the head (210), and black-skinned Dominicans receiving a machete blow across the back for having been mistaken as a Haitian testify to the terror of the genocide in *The Farming of Bones*.

These testimonios have been understood by critics as cathartic release and alternative historiographic representation through multiple voices; however, Rohrleitner questions Danticat's own belief in the effectiveness of such confessions through Yves' skepticism: "Yves's profound skepticism over the value of testimonios written down by outsiders and in a language foreign to the survivors may well also reflect a metafictional concern of Edwidge Danticat herself, as an author who is writing about the massacre from the distant position in the Diaspora, and in English, a foreign and a former occupier's language" (77-8). Giving imagined names and faces to the stories of the genocide's victims personalizes history as well as allows the author to voice concerns about the futility of doing so. Danticat is able to critique historical fiction in English at the same time that she utilizes it; again, a central contradiction in power relations becomes part of the narrative itself.

Scholars have also been very critical of *The Farming of Bones* regarding the centrality of the romantic relationship between Amabelle and Sebastien and Amabelle's inability to move on following Sebastien's unknown whereabouts after the massacre, though others have identified the sexual relationship as the assertion of Amabelle's right to a private life and love in a context where it can be considered rebellious (Rohrleitner 76). W. Todd Martin has focused on the men in *The Farming of Bones*, finding Sebastien and Amabelle's relationship a spiritual one that transcends death rather than flighty romanticism. Martin also identifies Señor Pico as Sebastien's

foil, lacking any emotional complexity and “personif[ying] patriarchal authority” within his own household and within the racial hierarchy of the Dominican Republic (70). These critiques of the novel comment on patterns of ideology in the social context of Haitian-Dominican relations regarding gender and sexuality without really engaging with the inseparability of ideology from economic conditions. Amabelle and Sebastien’s relationship can certainly be seen as rebellious in as far as they resist a formal marriage and carve out of their time heavily regulated by labor conditions moments of tenderness between them, but ultimately the heterosexual love story within the novel coincides with hetero-capitalist reproduction of the labor force: a love affair between two heterosexual Haitian migrant workers will yield the next generation of Haitian migrant workers while simultaneously granting no more right to citizenship for having their children’s birthplace be the Dominican Republic. Perhaps the interruption of this love story with Sebastien’s unknown whereabouts circumvents this cycle enough to consider Amabelle’s yearning for Sebastien somewhat queer, given the ease with which other writers might have replaced Yves as Amabelle’s lover by the end. I am not convinced that this queers Amabelle, but I suggest only that her heterosexual family expectations are interrupted.

In narrativizing the central contradiction that Dominicans tortured and killed Haitians, the source of their wealth and comfort, *The Farming of Bones* provides interesting material to exercise Lukács’ dialectical method for understanding the event of the 1937 massacre. In *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács writes, “Thus we must detach the phenomena from the form in which they are immediately given and discover the intervening links which connect them to their core, their essence...This twofold character, the simultaneous recognition and transcendence of immediate appearances is precisely the dialectical nexus” (8). The terror experienced in the narration of the massacre is both specific to the events in October 1937 and simultaneously

transcendent as it is experienced by Haitians every day in their statelessness and labor exploitation as the earlier narration in the novel describes. The domestic examples of how Haitian non-citizenship and racial hierarchies are lived daily that I analyze above provide the “intervening links” which connect the racial violence of the genocide with the core assertion that global capitalism is dependent on the dialectical construction of non-humans to exploit then exterminate. Danticat’s writing, though it is still subject to plenty of criticism that focuses on the phenomena in themselves, suggests that the mode of production, ideologies, and structures of feeling be seen as a totality, and therefore, her writing presents a call for change which Lukács recognizes as the closest knowledge of reality (8). *The Farming of Bones* lends itself to practicing Marxist dialectics as such, though Lukács argues that “Already at this stage the facts have been comprehended by a theory, a method; they have been wrenched from their living context and fitted into a theory” even if that method is dialectical in attempting to connect the specific to a totality (5). Lukács’ conceptualizing of dialectics informs my own use of “processes” rather than “facts” to describe social patterns and relations throughout my analyses (180). Perhaps even more inclined to the application of a dialectical method, Danticat’s *Breath Eyes Memory* shifts the context into the mid- to later twentieth century in both Haiti and the US to narrativize state violence through patriarchal virginity ideologies as another node within the structure of terror which is felt by women of the Caribbean.

State Violence: Violence Against Women in *Breath Eyes Memory*

Breath Eyes Memory explores the feelings of shame and responsibility passed from mother to daughter by the experience of rape, and in doing so reveals the dialectical relationship between state and gender regarding violence. As Donette Francis suggests in “Silences Too Horrific To Disturb...” an analysis of competing histories of nationality demonstrates that

“sexual violence against women in Haiti operates through the politics of invisibility” (78). The narrative of resistance against imperial power in Haiti has (as in the case of other postcolonial societies) obfuscated the violence inflicted on women’s bodies as part of the articulation of the new state. Francis analyzes Danticat’s use of Caco for the surname of the women in the novel, sketching out the reference to both the native guerillas who fought in armed resistance against the US occupation from 1915-1934 and the subsumed history of these combatants raping Haitian women (77). This is merely one example of how Danticat’s novel allows the suppressed narrative of violence against women to resurface alongside the dominant national histories of Haiti.

In contrast to the reality of state-sanctioned violence against women, the nationalism of Haiti has scripted men as the protectors and defenders of women, instituting laws and policies through their place in the political sphere. Meanwhile, women and minors only have rights as they are extended to them, as Myriam Chancy describes in *Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels by Haitian Women* (27). Simone A. James Alexander builds on Chancy’s argument to describe how “...women are burdened with the task of maintaining the nation’s (read men’s) honor and integrity. As a result, they are accorded the title ‘mothers of the nation,’ an assigned designation that surreptitiously further justifies controlling women’s sexuality” (102). Alexander explores this designation through a close reading of *Breath, Eyes, Memory* to reveal “how women’s bodies undergo a form of militarization as they become subject to scrutiny by the nationalist regime over which men preside” (103). In what follows, I will explore four passages from the novel in which women’s bodies are subject to violence that is elided in dominant narratives of Haitian citizenship. Through these analyses, state violence against women becomes a clear site of terror for women of the Caribbean, especially in Haiti.

The first passage where sexual violence against women is normalized as part of the articulation of “mothering Haiti” well appears soon after Sophie meets her mother Martine in New York. Having been raised by her Aunt Atie, Sophie gets to know her mother and very slowly puts the pieces together of why her mother left her in Haiti soon after her birth. Sophie shows interest in her mother’s relationship with Marc, another Haitian emigrant, but Martine asks about Sophie’s experience with boys: “You understand my right to ask as your mother, don’t you?” Martine asks (60). What follows is the explanation of virginity testing as a mother’s responsibility to maintain her daughter’s purity:

‘When I was a girl, my mother used to test us to see if we were virgins. She would put her finger in our very private parts and see if it would go inside...The way my mother was raised, a mother is supposed to do that to her daughter until the daughter is married. It is her responsibility to keep her pure.’ (60-1)

Virginity testing transfers responsibility for sexual purity onto women rather than naming the actual threat (rape) and holding men accountable (Counihan 40; Gerber 71). The language in which Martine describes her “right” to Sophie’s sexuality allows for the continuance of the violence because the threat remains absent. Men are not mentioned in Martine’s explanation, and the logic behind such an erasure attempts to claim that testing could prevent rape. The cycle of blaming the victim is written into the way Haitian women discuss sexual purity and responsibility in the novel. The work of Carolle Charles has documented how the Duvaliers (and Raoul Cédras, military leader of Haiti in the early 1990s when Danticat writes *Breath Eyes Memory*) implemented policies around rape that condoned it as a tool for repression and intimidation. *Walking on Fire: Haitian Women’s Stories of Survival and Resistance* also documents several women’s stories of state sanctioned sexual violence during Cédras’ regime

“both for catharsis from the horror and for relief from a lengthy enforced silence” (Bell xii).

Martine’s articulation of testing in this first occurrence participates in the elision of the cause for the testing and organizing its connotation around a discourse of responsibility and chastity. “The way my mother was raised” shows how tradition justifies women’s complicity in testing practices and forming its social acceptance through its association with “being good” until Sophie/Danticat uses storytelling and narration to reveal the violence behind it.

Martine continues to explain testing to the eleven year-old Sophie, probing her for how much Tante Atie revealed to her: “My mother stopped testing me early...do you know why?” (61). Sophie does not have an answer, so Martine continues to explain in simple terms but avoids an explanation of the sex act.

‘The details are too much,’ she said. ‘But it happened like this. A man grabbed me from the side of the road, pulled me into a cane field, and put you in my body. I was still a young girl then, just barely older than you...I thought Atie would have told you. I did not know this man. I never saw his face. He had it covered when he did this to me.’ (61)

Martine says this “like someone who was stating a fact” without emotion. In acting as a non-victim, Martine internalizes the shame and blame, reifying the discourse around responsibility/purity and female sexuality in Haiti. Francis argues that, “Martine believes she has no power to construct an alternative narrative that would enable her to integrate this trauma into her life” (80). Francis explicates her symptoms of dissociation and dissolution of her subjectivity, but the disavowal of her victimization goes even further. Because Martine’s rapist is a Tonton Macoute, Francis explores the cultural significance of this naming and the de-legitimation that accusations against these unofficial arms of the state receive.

...Duvalier makes strategic use of macoutes as agents to terrorize and punish his citizenry. Duvalier's willful choice of this name—which translates 'mythological bogeyman' and suggests 'not real'—for his militia force enabled him to camouflage his own violations against his citizens, especially sexual violations against women.

Embedded in the very word is a cultural linguistic block that already discredits the reality of women's stories of sexual abuse by relegating abuse to the realm of the unreal, or condoning abuse as appropriate punishment for a subordinate who has misbehaved. (81)

An accusation against a macoute, then, would be to blame someone who does not exist or to discredit one's own experience. Martine feels powerless in the face of her trauma, and speaks of it as someone terrorized by shame and guilt, too afraid to claim victimhood. This first passage near the beginning of the novel closes with Sophie narrating that many pieces were still missing to understand her mother's full story, which she would get much later, but "By then, it was already too late" (61). Martine's trauma causes nightmares and delusions so terrifying that she stabs her unborn child repeatedly, killing herself and the child. This early passage demonstrates how the language in which the testing practice is communicated from mother to daughter misdirects responsibility for violence against women towards women themselves. It allows the state to utilize sexual violence against women as a weapon of repression and enlists their help in perpetuating it. The discourse around sexual purity as it is passed down from mother to daughter is revealed as part of this violence and structure of terror throughout the novel.

The second passage where violence against women is concealed in the discourse of sexual purity is the scene consisting of Sophie's first "test". She comes home very late while she assumed that Martine was working, but rather than a prolonged typical argument between mother and teenager, Martine "took [Sophie's] hand with surprised gentleness, and led [her] upstairs"

where she proceeds to test her virginity (84). Sophie begins to recite the Lord's prayer in her head, then thinks of "all the pleasant memories" she has from her childhood to distract herself. Martine hopes to distract Sophie by retelling the mythology of the Marassas, the voodoo twin lovers who are exact copies of each other: "They looked the same, talked the same, walked the same... The love between mother and daughter is deeper than the sea. You would leave me for an old man who you didn't know the year before. *You and I we could be like Marassas. You are giving up a lifetime with me. Do you understand?*" (emphasis mine 85). Martine participates in testing practices out of a lack of other options and a feeling of frustration with her daughter's newfound independence. Telling the story of the Marassas and using guilt to reestablish a close relationship is emotional abuse. Martine, in testing Sophie and pressuring her to put their relationship first, perpetuates the violence against women in the practice that failed to forestall her own rape and trauma.

In "Rewriting the Marassa," Nancy Gerber argues that Martine "might have abandoned this custom had she been psychologically stable, since she hated it" (76). However, without any source of healing, her wounds and trauma play out nightly in her nightmares and clinging to the traditions that she knows. Gerber explores how the image of the Marassa in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* "signifies a blurring of mother-daughter boundaries and erases Sophie's subjectivity. Martine unconsciously punishes her daughter by reenacting the scene of rape" (76). Women become both the victim and now the perpetrator because the real threat remains masked behind the discursive construction of sexual purity as being the responsibility of women to ensure despite the state's employment of sexual violence to intimidate and repress women. Martine subjects her daughter to the same hated practice as part of their merging in the Marassas trope. Sophie's refusal to become her mother's twin takes the form of her painful self-mutilation when

she breaks her own hymen with a pestle. Sophie and Martine's estrangement lasts years, but the Marassas trope is visited again when they are reunited and Martine becomes pregnant by Marc. Gerber analyzes Sophie's recognition that she and Martine have become in fact Marassas as a "dangerous kinship [that] leads Martine to confess to Sophie that she had tried to abort her...[and allows] Sophie to internalize her mother's anger through various modes of self-punishment" including bulimia (76-7). Gerber further argues that, "Sophie's bulimia...is related to her struggle to alternately embrace and reject the role of Marassa, binging being the way to bring Martine inside her, as it were—purging, the way of getting rid of her" (77). The connection between mother and daughter in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* is born(e) out of violence and retains violence as its primary character. Even when it seems that mother and daughter have reconciled, their very pairing is destructive for both of them.

This second passage where Sophie is tested and Martine introduces the idea that they are a set of twins further develops the systematic transfer of responsibility for sexual violence onto women. As Marassas, Sophie suffers the shame and trauma of Martine, and through narrating her story and her mother's, attempts to put an end to the cycle of virginity testing. By making this violence known, Danticat writes a previously-unwritten sexual history of women in Haiti. The third passage that places state sanctioned sexual violence within the structure of terror felt by Caribbean women lays out this history of women's complicity as reason in itself for participation and continuance.

The third passage from *Breath, Eyes, Memory* that probes virginity testing as a form of violence that women inflict on other women takes place in Haiti as Sophie confronts Martine shortly after they are reunited. Martine has seen Brigitte, Sophie's daughter for the first time, and Sophie begins to question Martine: "Why did you put me through those tests?" (170). When

Martine answers that if she answers she never wants to be asked again, but Sophie “want[s] to reserve [her] right to ask as many times as [she] need[s] to” (170). Her wish to know was not spurned by anger, but from “a greater need to understand, so that [she] would never repeat it [herself]” (170). Sophie knows that her mother hated the testing herself, so she wants to hear the answer that she already suspects: that it was expected of her because all the women in her family have been subjected to it only to inflict their daughters with the same violence.

Martine’s answer is exactly what Sophie expects, yet her answer is even sadder because she is able to make the connection between the testing and her rape as two interrelated traumas:

‘I did it,’ she said, ‘because my mother had done it to me. I have no greater excuse. I realize standing here that the two greatest pains of my life are very much related. The one good thing about my being raped was that it made the testing stop. The testing and the rape. I live both every day.’ (170)

Martine reveals that her sole reason is that it has a history in their family. By making her mother speak this aloud, Sophie weaves this confession into the narrative as a testament to women’s sexual histories in Haiti. What has been assumed is now confirmed in the text. While Martine recognizes that there is a connection between her “two greatest pains,” she does not follow through with the explanation of their connection. Despite having been tested as a girl, she was still raped—because sexual violence is a state matter in Haiti, not a private one that can be prevented—and despite the pain of both testing and rape, she still tests her own daughter. Rather than witness her own experience with sexual violence as proof that purity is a constructed ideal meant to shift responsibility, Martine internalizes the shame and anger, ready to repeat the futile cycle with Sophie. Danticat demonstrates how the mother-daughter relationship can be deployed by the state as a weapon to coerce women into shaming and destroying themselves through the

discourse of sexual purity. State-sanctioned violence against women has been the unwritten narrative that Danticat textualizes in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*.

One final section of the novel underscores virginity testing as violence perpetuated by women in conjunction with masculinist nationalism. The passage where Sophie discusses her unplanned trip to Haiti and her mother's pregnancy with her therapist shows Sophie sorting out her feelings toward her mother, recognizing Martine's status as both victim and abuser. The back and forth exchange between Sophie and her therapist picks up where the third passage explored here left off:

'Did you ask your grandmother why they test their daughters?' she asked.

'To preserve their honor.'

'Did you express your anger?'

'I tried, but it was very hard to be angry at my grandmother. After all she was only doing something that made her feel like a good mother. My mother too.' (208)

Sophie understands the subject position of Martine and Ife as both victim and abuser; her anger is complicated as she relates it. She feels mixed emotions of sympathy and anger at the same time. Her therapist continues:

'How does it make you feel knowing that she slept with someone? Don't you feel betrayed that after all these years, she does the very thing that she didn't want you to do?'

'I can't feel mad anymore.'...

'Why aren't you mad anymore?' she asked.

'I feel sorry for her.'

'Why?'...

'It's brought back images of the rape.'

Here Sophie admits that she is not able to be angry at her mother. Instead she “feels sorry for her,” knowing her nightmares have worsened and she claims to hear the unborn baby’s voice. Sophie is more inclined to sympathize with Martine because she has been reunited with her in Haiti, again playing on the Marassas trope. Sophie’s therapist is trying to produce ways that Sophie can feel both anger and sympathy toward her mother and to work through her own trauma of the testing with “the talking cure.” However, being doubled as a Marassa, Sophie is only able to be sympathetic. Counihan explains that this perspective only allows readers to see the Marassa pathologically, through the lens of western psychological treatment, even though the therapist is a proclaimed Santeria priestess (49). Given the ending of the novel with Martine’s suicide, this reasoning would assume the death of her mother as a way out of this traumatic doubling, but ultimately Sophie is unable to call out in the cane field at the end of the novel that she is free. (She is asked, “Ou libere?” but she does not respond.) I interpret this inability to answer that she is free as further, irreparable trauma caused by the loss of her mother. Rather than Martine’s death signifying an end to a lifetime of being drawn in and then escaping, Sophie becomes stranded in-between. Counihan reads the ending as Sophie’s need “to remember and to forget” just as many Haitians of the diaspora can neither “stay away nor return to Haiti as home” (51). Sophie and many other victims of state sanctioned sexual violence are torn between the desire to remember and to forget. *Breath, Eyes, Memory* provides a written history for violence against women in Haiti, yet in dedicating such a history to words, the novel forestalls any healing that can come from forgetting.

These four passages demonstrate how the dialectics of purity among Haitians enlists women in a self-defeating practice of sexual violence in a cycle of victim and abuser that serves the state. By repressing women through sexual assault, the state is able to keep women as

secondary citizens, reducing their wages, labeling the work that they do as supplementary, and keeping them from organizing. Through the ideology of chastity and sexual purity, women are complicit in repressing themselves. The practice becomes associated with being a good mother, and as these passages have shown, merely the tradition of virginity testing is enough to justify it to another generation. The dimensions of state violence in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* reveal the particular terror of residual legacies of both the military occupation by the US from 1915-1934 and the regimes of the Duvaliers. As Trouillot describes at length, by the mid-1950s, military violence toward civilians became normalized and “the Duvalierist preference for the sexual ‘conquest’ of females associated with the political opposition, from torture-rape to acquaintance rape to marriage, infused the politicization of gender with violence” (167). If women were once somewhat protected by state violence, the Duvalierist forms of terror not only eradicated this protection but formalized systematic, gendered forms of terror for women which Danticat exposes in the novel. The structure of terror felt by women of Haiti registers in a particularly poignant example of an expectation of virginity testing and rape.

The Long Arms of State Violence: *The Dew Breaker*

Just as *Breath, Eyes, Memory* takes place across at least two generations and bridges Haiti to its diasporic community in New York, so too does *The Dew Breaker* span both the Duvalier era to the 21st century to include victims’ interconnected stories between Brooklyn and Haiti. The ability to narrate from multiple viewpoints, victims and torturers, allows the novel to accomplish an understanding of state violence as it creates victims in its torturers as well.

Danticat’s multiple narrators tell individual stories of terror that together testify to the legacy of state violence in the Duvaliers’ era and specifically the tool of oppression in their organized group of secret police known as the Tonton Macoutes. The title of the novel, *The Dew Breaker*,

is a translation of *choukèt lawoze*, which, as Beatrice explains in “The Bridal Seamstress,” is a common term for the prison torturers who “would break into your house...mostly at night...But often they’d also come before dawn, as the dew was settling on the leaves, and they’d take you away” (131). By narrating from so many perspectives, Danticat is able to demonstrate the far reaches of state violence in Haiti, torturing innocents, creating violence-hungry and oftentimes desensitized torturers, through images of scars both physical and psychological. Describing the scars of both victim and torturer creates the complicated subject position of the dew breaker as both the responsible sadistic perpetrator and the victim of the state. Danticat’s novel probes state violence in Haiti as a structure of terror experienced by its citizens and felt in their daily lives.

In a series of nine short stories, Danticat creates characters that readers meet multiple times in order to examine their experience from another viewpoint. This narration allows for, in some cases, a more sympathetic reading of characters, especially that of the dew breaker. Story order also contributes heavily to a reader’s understanding of both the characters and the system of state violence executed by *macoutes*. By starting with “The Book of the Dead,” narrated by Ka, the dew breaker’s daughter, the initial viewpoint readers are exposed to details his later life and the scars with which he lives. He reveals only that he “was the hunter...not the prey” and “I was working in the prison” (20-1). In my analysis that follows, I will explore how several characters throughout the stories help to create the complex portrait of the dew breaker rather than analyze each story on its own. Organizing my reading of *The Dew Breaker* in this way, I will demonstrate that story order is central to Danticat’s development of a more complete picture of state violence in Duvalierist Haiti as part of the structure of terror felt by people of the Caribbean.

The Dew Breaker: Torturer and Victim

Even the characters related to the man understood to be the dew breaker refer to him as “father” or “husband,” and others refer to him as “the fat man” or “the barber.” However, he is referred to as the dew breaker by his wife Anne early on in “The Book of Miracles,” the first time that he is called anything other than “father” or “Papa” by Ka in the first story, “The Book of the Dead.” This referent sticks with him, partly because it is the title of the collection, but also because Danticat never names him. In the absence of a first name, his past role haunts him and comes to define him, echoing the physical and psychological scars that he lives with after his life as a prison torturer ends. The figure of the dew breaker is the character who receives the most revision as the stories in the collection fit together to show connections between the characters. Danticat purposefully organizes the stories in order to manipulate the impression that readers make of the dew breaker, and in doing so, she makes an argument about state violence and its victims spanning from the innocent to those who inflict it. Examining the short stories where the dew breaker is mentioned maps the shifting impression that Danticat expects readers to receive, starting with a sympathetic initial reception and ending with the darkest, most dramatic episode to convey the complicated subject position of the torturer within systemic state violence.

The first character that we meet is Ka, the dew breaker’s daughter, who has created a sculpture of him, which has sold to a Haitian television star in “The Book of the Dead.” As she describes the wood that makes up the sculpture and her own father’s appearance and habits, the reader understands the dew breaker as someone with a deep scar, typically signifying a victim. Ka describes her father to the police because he has gone missing from the hotel room: “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” (5). She describes how he hates having his picture taken, “covering his face with both hands like a little boy protecting

his cheeks from a slap” every time a camera is aimed at him (5). Ka chooses the piece of mahogany for her sculpture of him because it is “naturally flawed”: “I’d thought these cracks beautiful and had made no effort to sand or polish them away, as they seemed like the wood’s own scars, like the one my father had on his face” (7). All of these descriptions of both her father’s face and finding his likeness in the imperfect wood conjure feelings of love or sympathy for her father and his scar. It also helps that he has told her a half-truth in the past about “being in prison” which she has misunderstood to mean that he was a prisoner in Haiti. This purposeful omission creates much of the sympathy that both Ka and the reader feel toward the dew breaker this early in the collection. However, the story itself complicates this understanding of the dew breaker as we read in his own words why he does not deserve such a statue.

The dew breaker has left the hotel room in Lakeland, Florida with the statue before Ka presents it to the buyer, throwing it into the lake. This prompts the confessional conversation between Ka and her father where he reveals that he has left a lot of information out of his story of his past. The dew breaker says that he does not “deserve a statue...not a whole one, at least” because he “was never in prison...[he] was working in the prison” (20-1). He revises the story behind the scar as well, complicating our perception of him: “It was one of the prisoners inside the prison who cut my face in this way” (21). Although he has admitted to being “the hunter, not the prey” he has still been wounded deeply, and as he says, “I did not want to hurt anyone,” the reader understands that state violence involves the coercion of those who inflict it (20). The details of how he was coerced remain a mystery until the last story of the collection, a missing motive that haunts all of the other stories and the dew breakers that appear in them whether they are actually Mr. Bienaimé or not. (The police officer, Bo, refers to Ka as “Ms. Bienaimé” on the very first page of the first story, the closest we get to any name for the dew breaker.) The end of

the dew breaker's vague confession ends with Ka asking about his nightmares, another psychological scar similar to Martine's in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. She asks, "And those nightmares you were always having, what were they?" The dew breaker responds, "Of what I...your father, did to others" (23). Here, he alludes to scenes of horrific violence and claims responsibility for them, but because Ka and Anne are the first to describe him, he becomes a complicated character.

Ka's phonecall to her mother invites sympathy for the dew breaker again as we learn how having a family and relocating to Brooklyn has helped him to begin life anew. Anne explains over the phone that, "you and me, we save him. When I meet him, it made him stop hurt the people. This how I see it. He a seed thrown in rock. You, me, we make him take root" (25). "The Book of the Dead" is the most positive account of the dew breaker's life, centering the family and recovery that he experiences after he leaves the prison and Haiti. By opening the collection with this story, Danticat suspends the reader's harsh judgment and asks that we consider him as a victim as well. Danticat introduces the complex subject position of the dew breaker by the end of the story, opening up the question of why he worked in the prison and ultimately how coercion plays a large role in the execution of state violence. Danticat uses the progression of stories to describe the dictatorship of the Duvaliers in Haiti through multiple victims' stories, including those of the Tonton Macoutes.

Before returning to Ka, Anne, and the dew breaker's story, Danticat develops two short stories of related characters: one of the tenants living in Anne and the dew breaker's basement apartment and that of his former lover. I mention these stories even though they do not offer insight into the dew breaker's character, per se (though they do mention Anne, revealing her to be more pious and snobbish from this perspective), but because the first one, "Seven" offers an

anecdote about carnival in Jacmel that predicts the superficially oxymoronic subject position of the dew breaker as readers understand him later in the text. Eric narrates his fond memory, a “favorite piece of Jacmel carnival theater,” about a bride and groom in lavish wedding clothes asking serious-looking people in the crowd to marry them.

The joke was that when the person took the bait and looked closely, he or she might discover that the bride was a man and the groom a woman. The couple’s makeup was so skillfully applied and their respective outfits so well fitted that only the most observant revelers could detect this. (52)

The surface identity of the bride and the groom are convincing, just as the scar on the dew breaker’s face may have worked in his favor to convince others of his victim status. Behind this scar however, lies his role as torturer and the narrative of how he received the deep wound. The bride and groom act critiques the societal construct of gender identities and how we read them superficially, yet the fluidity of gender is ultimately what accomplishes the “trick.” The dew breaker similarly appears as the victim, but upon closer reading becomes the torturer by the end, yet Danticat’s point about the man is that he is both simultaneously. Eric’s anecdote about the common act in Jacmel carnival theater serves as a cultural memory of home for him, but also offers an early presage to Danticat’s full development of the dew breaker’s character and how we are to conceive of him as both victim and torturer. The following story, “Water Child,” might also seem unconnected to the development of the dew breaker’s own narrative except tangentially by way of Eric, but the subject matter, that of a single woman who terminates her pregnancy, hearkens back to Danticat’s argument in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* where women participated as both victim and abuser in a gendered form of state violence.

In “Water Child,” Nadine reads her parents’ letters from Haiti but rarely responds except with more money. She works as a nurse, working with a Haitian patient shocked after her laryngectomy that she is unable to speak. She reflects on her abortion months ago, and how the baby would have been born around the time the events of the story occur. Capturing so many details of the Haitian diasporic experience, “Water Child” does not offer any direct links to the dew breaker; however, the patient Ms. Hinds who loses the ability to speak forebodes the terror experienced by other victims of the dew breaker (and other dew breakers) when they are unable to speak the name of their torturer as Anne narrates later. In “Silence and Speech: Figures of Dislocation and Acculturation in Edwidge Danticat’s *The Dew Breaker*” Maria Rice Bellamy concludes that,

Danticat contrasts Haitian immigrant Nadine’s multiple forms of silence with the literal silencing of her patient Miss Hinds. Nadine...grieves the termination of a pregnancy and her relationship with the child’s father, creating a proliferation of silences—the never-to-be-born child, the altar she erects to mourn that child, the lost intimacy with her lover---which compound the larger silences of Nadine’s immigrant life---her refusal to interact with her coworkers and communicate with her parents in Haiti as well the muted presence of her patients in the ear, nose, and throat ward. (208)

Other scholars have established the central theme of silence and speech’s healing presence in Danticat’s work (Francis, Chancy, and Misrahi-Barak to name a few), and “Water Child” is a quintessential example discussed in their analyses. I mention it as one of the least related to the dew breaker himself that still contains the experience of state violence through the immigrant experience as one leaves to escape terror and earn wages to support a family in his or her homeland. Nadine recalls her parents’ sacrifices to send her to nursing school in the US, where

she “dreamed of seeing the world, of making her own way in it,” but instead her life is nowhere near as glamorous (63). She sends half or more of her salary to her parents, so “in return, what she got was the chance to parent them rather than have them parent her” (63). Her isolation even when she succeeds in escaping the reach of state violence is still terror caused by Haitian state violence, so she must be healed by speech like so many of Danticat’s other characters.

Nadine’s and Eric’s stories still contribute to the larger picture of state violence that Danticat creates with the seemingly barely related stories. They contribute to a better understanding of complex subject positions and the long reach of systemic state violence. The next stories are much more obvious in their connection to the character of the dew breaker. “The Book of Miracles” is narrated from Anne’s perspective, where she relates a much more juvenile portrayal of Ka and the most sympathetic portrait of the dew breaker in the collection of stories. Ka appears as a whiny teenager voicing a “meaningless litany” of words like, “Cool,” “Okay,” or “Whatever” (69). She is visibly annoyed by attending Christmas Eve Mass as it is “the same every year” (86). Anne wishes to voice what she sees as the most important miracle that she appreciates at Christmas, but the narration is inner dialogue rather than a conversation with her daughter:

A long time ago, more than thirty years ago in Haiti, your father worked in a prison, where he hurt many people. Now look at him. Look how calm he is. Look how patient he is. Look how he just drove forty miles, to your apartment in Westchester, to pick you up for Christmas Eve Mass. (72)

Pointing out how far the dew breaker has come, from torturing to being a caring father, emphasizes the ways that Anne sees a change in her husband, but her perspective misses his status as victim while he was a torturer, misunderstanding his coercion as a brutally violent

nature that he had to overcome. While Anne's perspective is sympathetic, she is also misled to believe that the dew breaker was individually a horrific person rather than see him as an instrument of the state. Though this analysis of "The Book of Miracles" is critical in reading this Danticat's collection of stories as descriptive of systemic state violence, another section of "The Book of Miracles" and the story that follows, "Night Talkers" requires a more extended analysis.

Near the middle of "The Book of Miracles," Ka notices a man also attending mass who greatly resembles Emmanuel Constant, the militia leader of the FRAPH (Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti). Anne remembers Constant's reign of terror, during which he was paid by the US Central Intelligence Agency, following Aristide's exile: "[he and his] thousands of disciples had sought to silence the president's followers by circling entire neighborhoods with gasoline, setting houses on fire, and shooting fleeing residents" (79). She also remembers the practice of "facial scalping, where skin was removed from dead victims' faces to render them unidentifiable" (79). When Jean-Bertrand Aristide was reinstated as president in Haiti in 1994, the US/UN was responsible for Constant's escape to New York. Both Anne and the dew breaker had seen flyers requesting his identification and arrest for "crimes against the Haitian people" which were stapled to lampposts "all along Nostrand Avenue" with a list of his crimes including torture, rape, and the murder of at least 5000 people (78). Both Anne and the dew breaker nervously take notice of the flyers, and Anne

had to fight 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. (80)

Anne's fear of discovery in New York draws the parallel between the FRAPH and the Tonton Macoutes as Haitian death squads, though the affective accomplishment of the first few stories of *The Dew Breaker* establishes the ability of the reader to suspend judgment of even Constant because we understand the dew breaker as more than just a torturer. For example, Anne continues to think during the mass, and on her way up to receive communion, she wonders, "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?...What if he considered himself innocent?...What right did she have to judge him?" It becomes clear that "The Book of Miracles" precedes "The Book of the Dead" chronologically because Ka is unaware of her father's history; otherwise, she might not become so fixated on the identity of the man who resembles the torturer. Anne examines him as she approaches him on her walk up the aisle, but decides that "it wasn't him" (82). Anne feels, "strangely comforted, as though she, her husband, and her daughter had just been spared bodily harm" though Ka remains doubtful (82). "The Book of Miracles" continues to portray the dew breaker as more complex than the torturer of his past, and by extending the same sympathy to Emmanuel Constant through Anne's inner monologue of questions, continues to build Danticat's critique of state violence as it creates victims of the perpetrators themselves. Constant's remuneration from the CIA for information and mongering fear in civilians is recast as part of the imperial project continued through coups orchestrated by the US in order to install neoliberal, US-friendly leaders. Constant's crimes may be as horrific or worse than the dew breaker's, but Danticat is able to rewrite the narrative of Constant as nothing more than a monster through Anne's thoughts during a Christmas Eve mass, granting him the role of both torturer and victim as well. Anne's fear of discovery is rational, as the next story, "Night Talkers" reveals.

The narrator of “Night Talkers” is Dany, one of the roommates that live in the basement apartment rented out by Anne and the dew breaker. This story is also one of the very few that takes place in Haiti rather than New York, as Dany makes his way to his Aunt Estina who raised him following the loss of his parents “to the dictatorship twenty-five years before” (88). His purpose for the visit is revealed quickly as some of the first people that he encounters are his aunt’s and his own relatives who identify him as the sole survivor of the fire that killed his parents: “Only the boy came out whole,” says Old Zo, to which Dany replies, “I am that boy” (92). He had only prepared to talk about the incident with his aunt, but the mystery of the fire takes a central role in the story as few details are given yet its importance is clear.

Following pleasantries, Dany reveals his reason for returning to Haiti and his aunt: “I found him. I found him in New York, the man who killed Papa and Manman and took your sight” (97). Their conversation is interrupted by guests bringing food and then sleep. The next day they are unable to pick up their conversation as Dany is introduced to Claude, a Haitian repatriot who has spent time in jail for unknown crimes and speaks mostly English. Dany dreams of the conversation that he wants to have with his aunt, reliving the experience of the fire, the shots that he heard that killed his parents, and the detailed description of the dew breaker: “a large man with ...a widow’s peak...now a barber in New York” (105). Dany “had recognized the barber as the man who had waved the gun at him outside his parents’ house” and “took the empty room in the barber’s basement” (105-6). Still dreaming, the aunt prods him for what he did upon recognizing him, but Dany admits that he has not been able to act yet, though he had a chance.

Looking down at the barber’s face, which had shrunk so much over the years, he lost the desire to kill. It wasn’t that he was afraid, for he was momentarily feeling bold, fearless.

It wasn't pity, either. He was too angry to feel pity. It was something else, something less measurable. It was the dread of being wrong, of harming the wrong man, of making the wrong woman a widow and the wrong child an orphan. It was the realization that he would never know why—why one single person had been given the power to destroy his entire life. (107)

When he wakes, his aunt is uninterested in his identification of the man. She explains that she thinks Dany's father was mistaken for someone else, and she returns to sleep. In the morning, his aunt has died, leaving the account of his parents' death untold. While burial arrangements begin, Dany finds himself wondering about what brought him back to his aunt right before her death. While the villagers explain it as "blood calling blood," Dany wonders if "the barber was not his parents' murderer after all, but just a phantom who'd shown up to escort him back here" (116). Though the reader knows the barber to be a former torturer and the likelihood of Dany's story to be true, both the aunt's death before giving an account and Dany's own changing thoughts about the dew breaker provide doubt and allow space for the possibility of innocence. The death of Dany's parents cannot be blamed on the dew breaker, and this uncertainty continues to shape how readers respond to the character himself and place him within the structure of terror created by state violence. Claude's confession of killing his own father while on drugs may seem unrelated to the story except by Dany's thoughts that Claude can speak his nightmares just as Dany and his aunt are "night talkers," but the reference to Haitians and drugs in New York is connected to a long history of state-ignored crack cocaine distribution in black neighborhoods in the 1980s meant to create substance abuse epidemics that served to villainize immigrants and keep minorities from organizing (United States Congress, known as "The Kerry Report"). One form of state violence is compared to another across the Atlantic, creating both victims and

perpetrators in the form of users and dealers. Danticat connects state violence in Haiti to forms of state violence in the US as part of the structure of terror as well.

While “Night Talkers” nearly sees Anne’s fear of identification come true, the following story, “The Bridal Seamstress” carries this doubt even further as Beatrice recounts her torture and constant vigilance towards the torturer who she believes is following her. Asked to write a personal story for the newspaper where she works, Aline visits the retiring seamstress. During the interview, Beatrice recounts how she was tortured by a dew breaker for refusing him, getting “tied to some type of rack in the prison and whipped” on the bottom of her feet until they bled, then forced to walk home barefoot on tar roads at noon (132). Beatrice points out the house where her torturer lives on her street and explains that every time she has moved he has followed her. After their meeting, Aline walks down the street only to find that the house has been abandoned for a long time but still owned by a woman living abroad. Though her facts do not coincide, Beatrice is haunted by the proximity of her torturer, even if it is imagined. Jo Collins reads Dany’s inability to access his aunt’s testimony of his parents’ murder and Beatrice’s partial testimony that rings at least somewhat untrue as fragments and disappearances that allow the collection to be read as trauma fiction. She writes, “traumatic events are rendered incompletely and without the possibility of closure...The Dew Breaker frames and infiltrates the stories, appearing as a haunting trace of a partially revealed traumatic historical legacy” (Collins 10). Collins analysis of how Danticat portrays trauma as unreachable and incomplete finds *The Dew Breaker* refusing the paradigm of the testifying text that many examples of trauma fiction fall into, perhaps including even her own *The Farming of Bones*. While American readers empathize with Haitian characters in the retelling of brutal violence caused by the Duvaliers and FRAPH, Collins notes that “there is another level of ‘systemic’ or ‘objective’ violence which is

normative, in which the United States perpetuates brutality in Haiti to serve its own neo-imperialist interests” that many critics ignore in praising Danticat’s collection (13). The complicit violence that Collins identifies are best exemplified in the ties between Constant and the CIA mentioned earlier that I name as a part of the structure of terror. Continuing in this vein of partial and fragmented stories, both “Monkey Tails” and “The Funeral Singer” introduce stories of others who have suffered under the macoutes’ violence and the victims’ inability to communicate fully the depth of their trauma. Just as it seems all remaining stories in the collection will fulfill a similar role in developing an understanding of the dew breaker or the reaches of state violence, the final story provides the missing piece, the beginning.

“The Dew Breaker” is the longest story, split into 13 parts that begins with the dramatic line, “He came to kill the preacher,” who readers know to be Anne’s stepbrother. The dew breaker was asked to join the Miliciens, or Volunteers after circling around hungrily following the president’s speech, and found the position of power attractive after being raised in poverty in Léogâne. The description of the dew breaker at the height of his profession incites terror and disdain rather than any sympathy from the reader, yet because we have already encountered who he will turn out to be and understand the macoutes as an instrument of state violence through which our own nation is complicit, the reader suspends too harsh of a judgment:

He was the one who came up with the most physically and psychologically taxing trials for the prisoners in his block...He liked questioning prisoners, teaching them to play zo and bezik, stapling clothespins to their ears as they lost and removing them as he let them win, convincing them that their false victories would save their lives...He liked to paddle them with braided cowhide, stand on their cracking backs and jump up and down like a drunk on a trampoline, pound a rock on the protruding bone behind their earlobes until

they couldn't hear the orders he was shouting at them, tie blocks of concrete to the end of sisal ropes and balance them off their testicles if they were men or their breasts if they were women. (198)

The majority of the story follows how the dew breaker arrested and tortured the preacher, Anne's stepbrother, but on the brink of killing him, is reprimanded for helping to create a martyr out of him. As he prepares to release the preacher, he receives his scar from him when the preacher "tear[s] the skin down to his jawline" using a chair's broken piece (226). The preacher regrets not taking out an eye or teeth, but admits his satisfaction because "at least he'd left a mark on him, a brand that he would carry for the rest of his life. Every time he looked in the mirror, he would have to confront this mark and remember him" (227). In anger and frustration, the dew breaker kills the preacher.

Certain that he will be punished if not executed for disobeying his orders, he flees. In his exit from the prison, Anne collides into him, beginning his transformation. He "want[s] her to have pity on him, take him to her house and bandage him" (231). He assumes that she is outside the prison as a relative of someone inside and warns her not to enter. They go to his home where she begins to nurse his scar. The final pages of the story portray the dew breaker's redemption, starting with a simple question that Anne asks probably because she assumes he was a prisoner not a torturer: "What did they do to *you*?"

Assuming that his wound was inflicted as punishment by a torturer, she inquires about his position as victim. This marks a turning point in the dew breaker's life and acts as the climax of the novel, if it can be classified as such. The narration allows him to be considered a victim from this moment on, though because chronologically it happens in 1967 it confirms the affective project that Danticat set out from the beginning. The dew breaker narrates, "This was the most

forgiving question he'd ever been asked. It suddenly opened a door, produced a small path, which he could follow" (237). His answer to her that, "[He's] free. [He] finally escaped" conveys to Anne what she had assumed, but for readers confirms that state violence imprisons those who execute it as well. The final segment of the story jumps back to Anne as Ka hangs up on her after finding out that her father was a dew breaker. In this final apotheosis, only someone other than the dew breaker himself can articulate the process of starting life anew with such a terror-filled history. Again, the character fades from the reader's ability to understand him fully, just as a clearer portrait of him begins to take shape, yet through his account, but mostly through those of others, Danticat draws out the process of state violence in Haiti over the last half century. In his complex subject position, the dew breaker is both torturer and victim of the state as neo-imperial influences shape the use of state violence in Haiti. *The Dew Breaker* ultimately makes a critique that Haitian state violence is an extension of transnational economic violence, another node within the structure of terror that is felt and lived by people of the Caribbean, and more often than not, women.

Extending State Violence Outside of the State

These three novels by Danticat portray an increasing interest in how forces outside of Haiti have shaped the violence that takes place inside of it. *The Farming of Bones* focuses on methods of state violence as Haitians working in the Dominican Republic become stateless, unwelcome, racialized bodies to be eradicated. Definitions of citizenship, as we have seen, are established by race and language difference yet felt in the everyday scenes of violence and terror that escalate to the formalized massacre of Haitian people. Danticat furthers these definitions to include the specific violence mobilized toward women in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* as gender informs citizenship and sexual freedom or the lack thereof. Finally, state violence is located not

just within the boundaries of the nation and its articulation of citizenship, but in the epistemic violence of transnational economies rooted in a parasitic global division of labor as *The Dew Breaker* reveals. To read this collection of stories as merely fiction of Haiti is to miss Danticat's critique of state violence as a scapegoat for global power structures, especially those that create a structure of terror for women of the Caribbean. The economic base of a capitalist world system cannot be separated from the formal structures of state, nor the ideologies at work within a culture. The progression of these works by Danticat exhibit the interrelated project of neo-imperialism, the functioning of the state to serve the needs of a capitalist economy, and the flexibility of ideologies to accommodate formal policies and class divides. Through her poetic prose, Danticat is able to critique global relations of power in seemingly simple short stories about a family attending a Christmas Eve mass or an aunt dying unexpectedly. In these moments of the mundane, or "scenes of subjection" to borrow Saidiya Hartman's term, Danticat conveys a small violence as part of a much larger system. I locate these moments within her texts to describe the structure of terror in which state violence is located as yet another node.

CHAPTER FOUR
GENDERED WORK AND LIMITATIONS OF TRANS
IDENTITY IN *CEREUS BLOOMS AT NIGHT*

While structures of terror have been identified so far in existing processes regulating labor, knowledge production, and formations of the state, this chapter seeks to identify a node within the structure of terror which is felt in absences or limits produced by a social and economic process. In some ways, this chapter is as much about what an example of Caribbean women's literature is *not able to express* as much as that which it is able to express and feel given the structures within which it resides. Rather than view these limitations as shortcomings of the author, the novel, or literature itself, I plan to demonstrate how the struggle and hesitancy of a transgender narrator to relate a narrative that finds language to assert non-binary gender illustrates the limitations of discourses of science as they have shaped our constructions of gender and environment. This transgender narrator has been misgendered in much of the scholarship on *Cereus Blooms at Night* by Shani Mootoo. The speculative fiction novel shares the story of an elderly abuse victim, Mala Ramchandin, and her journey to recovery/resocialization through the narration of Nurse Tyler, a young, empathetic, transgender nurse who cares for her. Mala's story becomes entwined with Tyler's as Mala is reintroduced to her former lover who happens to be the father of Tyler's developing love interest. Although Tyler's story appears subordinated to Mala's by Tyler's own insistence throughout the text that they remain a narrator not a subject, I want to argue that this subordination springs from a western traditional concept of objective point of view in storytelling where a narrator's subjectivity is minimalized as much as possible. Objective narration is, of course, impossible. Tyler's narration, as their subjectivity periodically creeps in, reveals a limit to narrative

conventions while it simultaneously illustrates the lack of possibilities yet established by our language and discourses within science for representing non-binary gender. *Cereus* hints at possibilities through the connections it makes through human and non-human life in the novel, yet the subordination of this subtext to a traditional narration convention reveals these limits as part of the structure of terror. What is just outside of the text's reach—what is suggested, unable to be articulated, or wrongly assigned—reveals the language of gender in scientific discourse to be determined by imperial binary conceptions meant to regulate and reproduce a division of labor as well as anthropocize non-human life as a way of naturalizing such a binary system. I will develop this idea as heterocapitalism, a process affecting gender in humans and the environment, as our last process felt in Caribbean literature as a structure of terror.

Because of imperial binary conceptions of gender, Nurse Tyler is often feminized by characters in the novel and perhaps by readers through dominant ideology. Their in-between gender identity struggles to be articulated in the structures of feeling that organize caretaking labor as domestic, devalued, and supplemental within the international gendered division of labor. The flattening of Tyler's gender identity into femininity by dominant structures of feeling illustrates how people with non-normative identities and sexualities in their daily lives feel the process of heterocapitalism. Heterocapitalism coalesces as a process privileging (re)productive citizenship, creating surplus labor through nuclear family arrangement down to the regulation and scheduling of daily activities around productivity and perpetuated as a norm by "a middle class logic of reproductive temporality" (Halberstam 4). This reproductive temporality is lived and felt in the form of privileges attached to heterosexual marriage, the expectation of children, and the multiple ways that this temporality becomes a norm against which people become othered. The state invests in heterocapitalism to reify a (re)productive citizenship, using neglect

to exclude queer people, the working class, people with disabilities, etc. M. Jacqui Alexander has argued that, “not just (any) *body* can be a citizen any more, for *some* bodies have been marked by the state as non-procreative, in pursuit of sex only for pleasure, a sex that is non-productive of babies and of no economic gain” (“Not Just (Any) Body...” 6). These bodies become a threat to the nation that relies on nuclear families as the basic social unit, and they experience terror in the form of regulation that outlaws them—or in Tyler’s case, simply refuses to recognize them. Alexander asserts, “To the extent that citizenship is contained within heterosexuality, the state can produce a group of nonprocreative noncitizens who are objects of its surveillance and control—subjected to its processes of normalization and naturalization that serve to veil the ruses of power” (“Erotic Autonomy...” 25). Alexander has focused on heterosexualization within the state apparatus to locate “how it is constitutively paradoxical, that is, how heterosexuality is at once necessary to the state’s ability to constitute and imagine itself and becomes, at the same time, a site of its own instability” (“Erotic Autonomy...” 23). In order to reproduce itself, the state relies on women willing to perform this labor, which creates an inherent weakness in the strategy—women loving other women and/or choosing not to have children have the potential to disrupt the state apparatus. In response, the state forecloses erotic autonomy for women by outlawing lesbian acts and prostitution, a means by which many women in the Caribbean earn independence and financial security.⁴ Alexander’s work, crucial to understanding the stakes of recognizing non-binary gender and non-heterosexual love, teases out the discursive-juridical construction of citizens in the Bahamas, Trinidad, and Tobago where homosexuality, especially for women has been criminalized. Tyler’s truly marginal presence in the text likewise exemplifies the stakes for gender and sexual autonomy; they appear only as needed to narrate the

⁴ For a much deeper understanding of the importance of sex work in Caribbean women’s lives, see Kamala Kempadoo’s *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race, and Sexual Labor*.

story of a cisgendered female, and their experience outside of that is censored not only by their own feeling of impropriety in over-stepping a narrator's role, but also by structures that make this marginal position naturalized. This naturalization occurs as well in the projection of just such imperial binary conceptions of gender onto non-human life. For centuries, this anthropocization of animals and plants has served as justification for the state's insistence on heterosexuality as natural; however, the construction of biological concepts has been identified as heavily embedded within the colonial project, not least of which has been the assignment of gender in non-European flora and fauna. Many critics have discussed how the environment in *Cereus* becomes akin to a character in the novel, and in agreement, I explore how non-human life is subject to a similar process to heterocapitalism, experiencing terror because of the limitations of our understanding.

By close reading Tyler's experience as a nurse in the town of Paradise on the imagined island of Lantanacalara, I plan to identify the ways in which this trans character is given a complex, in-between identity from interactions with some characters but nonetheless remains largely defined as feminine by their occupation because nursing is devalued within the gendered division of labor and as a transgender nurse occupies a queer temporal space. Therefore, they demonstrate the limitations of the expectation of an objective narrator and the regulatory power of labor with associated structures of feeling, despite their representation as resistant to heteronormative identities and sexualities. While the textual evidence is sparse for this discussion, its sparsity in itself suggests that structures of terror are effectively silencing and creating absences within the text. *Cereus* offers us representations of gender and environment that challenge the imperial binary scientific discourse on gender, however brief, yet draws as much attention to that which is outside the text, relegated to its margins, or unable to be

expressed fully. Exploring the process of heterocapitalism as it regulates labor through structures of feeling will provide an analysis of Mootoo's novel that emphasizes the limitations of its type of narration, scientific discourse on gender within the gendered division of labor, and its critiques as a cultural utopia.

Lantanacamara as a setting plays with the idea of utopia as well: the island is an imagined one, literally "no place," though the racialized names and the history alluded to throughout the novel suggest that it is a stand-in for Trinidad. A former sugar plantation colony for the British Empire, Trinidad followed the course of similar islands whose sugar economy outlasted both the slave trade and emancipation. In order to avoid a "free" labor market where workers (mostly former enslaved people) could bargain for better wages and conditions, the planters brought in indentured laborers from India, Asia, Africa, and Europe (Sunshine 15). The largest population entering Trinidad was from India; this influx created a large demographic shift near the mid-19th century. As Lisa Lowe writes, observing the "intimacies of four continents," there is "scarcely any [research] that considers the connections, relations, and mixings among the histories of Asian, African, and indigenous peoples in the Americas" during European colonial conquest (2). Mootoo, writing in the Trinidadian diaspora, chooses a place like Trinidad but not exactly to locate her story, imagining a setting with a similar history of violently displaced peoples and racial mixing unlike any other. Globalizing labor patterns created Lantanacamara/Trinidad, so to examine further labor and gender patterns on an international scale is not much of a stretch.

In this final chapter, I intend to return to the framework informing my first chapter on domestic labor and its devaluation as supplementary and gendered. I will also build on the framework of my second chapter including epistemologies of knowledge as developed through

power structures of empire, especially as they concern knowledge of the environment and sexuality, to extend into a more clearly queer critique. Because it emphasizes the damage that binary gender codes have wrought, this chapter no longer insists on employing women as a category of critique insofar as it tends to exclude identities that express femininities and exceed biological definitions. As each chapter has begun thus far, so I will start by rationalizing the use of literature for discussing this particular node in the structure of terror. This section situates this chapter within my larger argument of expanding Raymond Williams' concept of structures of feeling as well. Next, I will re-establish the sexual division of labor as described by Maria Mies as the foundation for the devaluation of the nursing profession. Then, I will locate this devaluation of nursing labor as part of the process of heterocapitalism, the final node in the structure of terror. Next, I will close read Tyler's experience of engaging in feminized devalued labor as a trans person, identifying how the novel both provides a glimpse of non-binary gender and displays its limits in making this accessible. These limits are felt in the abbreviations and absences within the text. Finally, I will similarly analyze how Mootoo engages decolonial understandings of the environment but such portrayal can only be expressed by impressions and feelings in the novel in contrast to discourses of science or commodification of the environment. This final chapter in my argument recognizes heterocapitalism as the last node within the structure of terror felt by people of the Caribbean.

Representation and Trans Characters

Such a reading of *Cereus* requires a discussion of how the trans identity is constantly constructed through such representations in literature, especially when, as in this case, the representation withholds as much as it reveals about the character. In each of the preceding chapters, as part of the introduction, I have developed a rationale for literature as an important

cultural archive where women, and in this chapter queer people as well, feel the processes of regulation. Within this chapter, my focus remains on literary representation as a process of meaning building, reconstructing gender and environment in Mootoo's prose. The very nature of representation is a process of construction, re-articulation time and again. Stuart Hall writes in *Representation* that "... meaning does not inhere *in* things, in the world. It is constructed, produced. It is the result of a signifying practice—a practice that *produces* meaning, that *makes things mean*" (24). As a process, the representation of trans identity in *Cereus* provides a historical-cultural utterance that can only be understood within the discourse on gender and its regulation. Expounding on Foucault, Hall continues:

This idea that physical things and actions exist, but they only take on meaning and become objects of knowledge within discourse, is at the heart of the constructionist theory of meaning and representation. Foucault argues that since we can only have a knowledge of things if they have a meaning, it is discourse—not the things in themselves—which produces knowledge. (45)

The discourse of gender and sexuality exceeds the biological; *Cereus* joins this discursive formation in the late twentieth century, offering a representation of trans identity and sexualities counter to the hegemonic conceptions within the discourse but also tracing their limits in the text. Transgender studies has challenged the medical/scientific discourse on gender and sexuality for decades, yet Mootoo's pairing of human gender identity and sexuality with the discourse of the natural environment yields seemingly new parameters to representation within both discourses; however, this pairing is only new in the discourse of criticism, being that history has often paired them in scientific discourses.

As both gender and the environment are co-constructed concepts, an understanding of the effects modes of production have on representation can be gained by exploring their shared history. Much work already exists in the field of ecocriticism elaborating the connection between representations of environment and the method by which knowledge of the environment was created, especially those focusing on how this knowledge came as a product of colonization. I wish to utilize this established history to trace what I mean by “co-constructed” as it applies to the concept of gender. As editors Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Renée Gosson, and George Handley argue in the introduction to *Caribbean Literature and the Environment*,

Here the relationship between ethnography, natural observation, and narrative production was forged and was deeply entangled with notions of spatial difference and colonial violence. The flora, fauna, and humans that were captured and transported lifeless to European metropolises for analysis, documentation, and display attest to the epistemic violence of the production of ‘natural’ knowledge. (7)

This creation of a set of knowledge referred to as *natural science* has at its root the violent acts of capture, killing, transporting, and dissecting everything from plants and flowers, small and large animals, to indigenous people. Collecting, labeling, and sometimes displaying life from the colonies remains a method of extracting not just knowledge but profit as well. While the more obviously profitable finds like metals, herbs, or humans racialized for slavery made their way immediately to market, the less obvious bounty of the colonies was stolen and stored in museums, botanical gardens, and laboratories. Mimi Sheller’s *Consuming the Caribbean* offers a very complete analysis of the history of colonialism and neocolonialism as consumption of the Caribbean in terms of environment both living and non-living. She explores, for instance, the life of Sir Hans Sloane who, “transmuted his ties to Jamaica not only into the making of his personal

fortune and reputation as a scientist, but also into a physical collection that became the origin of the British Museum and a key centre of botanical knowledge and medical research” (15).

Traveling to Jamaica in 1687, Sloane started a collection of specimens including human body parts, mostly from slaves, that prefigured the scientific work that would follow a century later using classifications systems of plants to produce a human classification system for race (16-7).

Sheller asserts that “the accumulation of contemporary ‘Western’ scientific knowledge, cultural innovation, and capital continues to be made viable by far-reaching global circuits of knowledge-production premised on the consumption of the, landscapes, plants, foods, bodies, and cultures of the Caribbean and other ‘Non-Western’ places” (21-2). The practices of consuming the Caribbean in order to produce natural science also led to development of biological discourse, overextending the knowledge it produced into description of human sexuality.

As human sexuality alongside animal and plant life became ordered and classified through the colonial experience, a “new science emerged that contributed to the erasure of indigenous knowledges while erecting a hierarchy of racial ‘species’ and gendered difference” (DeLoughrey et. al. 7). The ordering of bodies into racial and binary sexual categories aided by colonization created a durable episteme regulating bodies and allowing social processes to generate hierarchies through which economic processes could be reified. Of course, the objectivity of science, despite its conception through humans within a predatory, global mode of production, would function as a justification for its naturalness. This contradiction of humankind creating what it frames as objective truth so that it is able to label and order living and non-living nature stands at the center of the analysis of this chapter. Projecting such a system back onto the nature from which humankind claims to have culled it provides an even more telling description of the limits this body of knowledge inherently possesses. I interpret this problem of limits to

representation—or inability to represent fully—as crystallized within the hesitant narration and not quite fully realized representation of gender and environment within Mootoo’s novel.

Imperial capitalism has produced the power structure creating producers, consumers, and the consumed. The process of representing trans identity, non-normative sexualities, and an ambiguous Caribbean environment is influenced by this power structure. The representation within *Cereus* escapes the hegemonic discourses of gender and environment in some instances, and traces the limits of representation in others. Literature, yet again, provides the language through which we are able to describe and analyze the work of representation. Because this limit is contoured for us by feelings, especially hesitancy or restraint in entering the narration, I focus on these feelings as part of a structure itself, registering an absence or an inability to articulate what is felt as terror. Again, employing Raymond Williams’ concept of structures of feeling, I identify “characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships” which signal a set of “internal relations” that are “in process” to connect cultural phenomena to economic processes (132). Williams’ structures of feeling take the form of a structure of terror felt by characters in these novels of the Caribbean. Only perceptible as a set of feelings, the structure of terror is not a formalized ideology but a set of processes still emergent but connecting culture and economic patterns.

The above context of colonization as the economic pattern underlying the cultural categories of gender and sexuality is still an incomplete portrait through which to discuss *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Western scientific discourses of biology and human gender and sexuality are not monolithic static bodies of knowledge entirely responsible for the process of representing in literature; they are only single determining factors in the novel. They are part of the “specific and always related determinants which are the real social process” as Williams argues (88). In

addition to the colonial history of scientific discourse, the language created by this discourse remains another determining factor in revealing the limits to Tyler's narration. In this chapter I continue to assert that literature, indeed all language

is not a pure medium through which the reality of a life or the reality of an event or an experience or the reality of a society can 'flow'. It is a socially shared and reciprocal activity, already embedded in active relationships, within which every move is an activation of what is already shared and reciprocal or may become so. (Williams 166)

Interpreting *Cereus Blooms at Night* requires identifying those active relationships that produce meaning within the text, one relationship being a much larger discourse of trans identity established in the last two decades after the novel's initial publication.

Language is a particular site of contestation within transgender studies, as everyday pronouns have served as a reminder of both the influence of the imperial gender binary and the flexibility of language to incorporate new words and usages to reflect active social relationships in producing meaning. As Leslie Feinberg writes in *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come*, "the language used [in the pamphlet] may quickly become outdated as the transgender community coalesces and organizes—a wonderful problem" (206). However, language is not the only concern surrounding representation and trans identities. In the introduction to the *Transgender Studies Reader*, Susan Stryker writes,

Transgender phenomena call into question both the stability of the material referent 'sex' and the relationship of that unstable category to the linguistic, social, and psychical categories of 'gender'...what we typically call the sex of the body, which we imagine to be a uniform quality that uniquely characterizes each and every individual whole body, is shown to consist of numerous parts—chromosomal sex, anatomical sex, reproductive

sex, morphological sex—that can, and do, form a variety of viable bodily aggregations that number far more than two. (9)

Representation for trans identities is thus a process of being read by others with access only to the cultural signifiers of gender. Appearance and clothing can produce a misleading conclusion because of this lack of access. With Tyler’s narration, we have much more access to the psychological aspects of gender in order to read them more fairly. Representation, especially when the assumed correlation between biological sex and social gender do not match, is often read as a falsehood, one that transgender individuals often pay for with their lives or their freedom. Bathroom legislation and hate crimes such as the famous case of Brandon Teena expose a pattern of anti-transgender violence that clearly articulates the stakes of representation for trans people. Stryker argues that one of the tasks of transgender studies is to “articulate and disseminate...new representational practices, within which variations in the sex/gender relationship can be understood as morally neutral and representationally true...” (10). While *Cereus* adds to the depth of representations available to us of transgender lives, it also defines the limits of representational practices as Tyler’s character registers as female rather than undoing gender in queer ways due to the type of labor they practice.

The Gendered Division of Labor and Caretaking Work

The inability of scientific discourse to account for non-binary gender until very recently has shaped the way ideology and labor interact. This section takes up the theoretical framework of my first chapter, establishing a gendered division of labor ascribed by only two genders. How did caretaking or nursing become gendered work? The essentialist ideology that women are more nurturing and therefore suited to the task can be traced to enlightenment thinking that placed men in the realm of intellect and women in the realm of the body and nature, as I have discussed

earlier through Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature*. However, even before the Enlightenment, processes of devaluation of caretaking work were being set in motion. In *Caliban and the Witch*, Silvia Federici's intervention in the marxist theory of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, she writes that prior to capitalism, "women worked in the fields, in addition to raising children, cooking, washing, spinning, and keeping an herb garden; their domestic activities were not devalued and did not involve different social relations from those of men, as they would later, in a money-economy, when housework would cease to be viewed as real work" (25). The commutation of labor services (money exchanged as payment) began the process by which workers are exploited: because they could no longer differentiate what labor was done for their own sustenance and what was done for the landlords, their exploitation was hidden (29). The process was especially detrimental for women. Federici explains that "in the new monetary regime, only production for market was defined as a value-creating activity, whereas the reproduction of the worker began to be considered as valueless from an economic viewpoint and ceased to be considered as work...being mystified as a natural vocation and labelled 'women's labor'" (74-5). Caretaking of children, the sick, and the elderly are all examples of this labor that because it does not have production value is not considered work. This gendered division of labor fixed women to reproductive work, and during population crises, such as the years the plague threatened to leave landowners without enough workers, wombs became property of the state through laws forbidding abortion or any attempts to regulate reproduction (92). Federici frames the witch hunts of the 14th-16th centuries as the extermination of women who would not comply. Herbal remedies and knowledge of healing were labelled heresy. The rise of the professionalization of medicine also wrested the knowledge of their own bodies and reproduction from women as midwives became suspect for their role in allowing

women's agency regarding childbirth (201). These processes traveled to the colonies producing fatal suspicion of indigenous or African practices of agency regarding childbirth as well.

Western medical practices sought to discredit and rid the colonies of “witchcraft or devil-worship” by demonizing any medical practices outside of its own (Federici 220). Though European medical knowledge was rudimentary in the colonial period, it was trusted as scientific and set in opposition to African knowledge of herbal remedies categorized as superstition, increasingly in the setting of childbirth. By enforcing this control of reproduction, the core site of Europe ensured the reproduction of its cheap labor in periphery sites of the colonies, while creating a method of enclosure of lands, bodies, and social relations. As Federici points out, however, there was successful resistance to these processes, especially by women, presumably because they were the most negatively affected by them. Enslaved women of the Caribbean, for example, were very successful in re-appropriating their social labor by refusing to reproduce when plantation owners switched from a strategy of consuming slaves to death to encouraging reproduction because imported enslaved people became more expensive. Barbara Bush's extensive research on enslaved women in the Caribbean describes the changes in workload and treatment that planters adopted to try to encourage enslaved women to reproduce, yet the population actually decreased during these years (135-7). She writes that “it is crucial to allow for the fact that, although enslaved, the individual woman still possessed free will....[Refusal] was a valid form of slave resistance” (139). While such measures of torture existed in the form of the witch-hunt and professionalization of the medical field surrounding childbirth to attempt to force women into motherhood, successful resistance existed alongside them. The effects of these regulatory practices are still felt in many women's experiences of modern obstetrics.

In their study, *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers*, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English claim that by the 1970s “the medical profession as we knew it (still over 90 percent male) had replaced and driven out a much older tradition of female lay healing, including midwifery and a range of healing skills, while closing medical education to women” (11). Ehrenreich and English explain that the male dominated profession of medicine replacing the less advanced technologies of women’s lay healing because of scientific advancement is a myth: “It was an active *takeover* by male professionals...the critical battles took place long before the development of modern scientific technology” (28). Between Federici’s research on reproductive labor and Ehrenreich and English’s work on the denigration of women’s healing practices, the extensive history behind the devalued status of Nurse Tyler’s profession is evident.

The segregation of the medical field into doctors and surgeons who are male and nurses or caretakers who are female is just one example of how gendered relations are newly created within the mode of production in order to elevate the work of intellect and denigrate the work of the body. A capitalist world system requires that one population becomes “overdeveloped” at the expense of those who become “underdeveloped,” namely women. Maria Mies builds this argument in *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, writing, “...the goal of this system, namely the never-ending process of capital accumulation, cannot be achieved unless patriarchal man-woman relations are maintained or newly created” (38). Mies’ work critiques the absence of “non-productive” labor in Marx’s articulation of the exploitation of the worker: “Marx himself has theoretically contributed to the removal of all ‘non-productive’ labour (that is, non-wage labor, including most of women’s labour) from public visibility” (48). Caring for children, the sick, and the elderly is in many cases unpaid work that is relegated to women, and in the paid

positions in nursing, they are often low wage positions, sometimes hourly, and viewed as supplemental income. RNs (Registered Nurses) are rarely expected to perform the dressing, bathing, and personal care of patients in today's medical facilities. Instead, it is mostly done by LPNs (Licensed Practical Nurses), revealing a strict hierarchy within the field of nursing as well. Nursing aides or home care aides, even lower in terms of status, are often low wage positions, almost always hourly. Obviously, more intense training and medical knowledge distinguishes the subdivisions of the nursing and caretaking profession; however, it is notable that the more personal and related to the everyday activities of the body the labor becomes, the lower the status and the pay.

The field of obstetrics also has a horrific history behind its creation, further emphasizing the exploitative nature of caretaking and medical labor. In *Medical Apartheid*, Harriet Washington describes the reputation of Dr. Marion Sims, a widely lauded doctor credited with devising the surgical procedure for repairing vesicovaginal fistula, a condition following childbirth where the vagina is torn dramatically leaving openings between the bladder and rectum. What is missing in the official records (medical journals and diagrams) is his torture of the four enslaved women that he purchased and operated on repeatedly without the use of anesthesia, which was used for similar procedures at the time (Washington 63-66). Sims' own journals kept during his experimental surgeries provide many of the details of the torture inflicted on these women. Washington's study on medical experimentation on black Americans reveals a history intertwining medical advancement and the absence of informed consent that enslavement guaranteed in an American context. Thus, in addition to the division of intellectual labor versus labor related more closely to the body, overtly misogynistic and racist practices

remain mostly hidden from the official record creating Western medical knowledge and procedures.

Tyler's credentials in the novel include a prestigious training abroad in the Shivering Northern Wetlands, a thinly veiled reference to either the US or Britain, though they find themselves completing the tasks of untrained caretakers in the nursing home, or worse yet, the janitorial staff. Even within a marginalized profession, Tyler's status is further lowered as their non-conforming gender causes the management to assign them to cleaning tasks. The hierarchy of labor within the medical and caretaking profession extends below the realm of the already denigrated body to housekeeping work, also feminized, for Tyler.

Caretaking work also registers affectively for Tyler, attaching caretaking work to the structure of happiness as described in chapter one. Reproductive labor and care for the sick and elderly are often infused with the socially normative feelings of love and understanding. In her chapter "The Materiality of Affect" in *Fires on the Border*, Rosemary Hennessy writes that, "Affective capacities are socially disciplined to comply with prevailing norms, but they also attach to potentials and expressions that defy regulation. It is in this sense that they are indeterminate" (44). Norms reify a feeling of love as one performs caretaking labor, yet feelings do not always express themselves as expected. As capitalism further encroaches on the body, and the service economy grows, "the labors of the head and of the heart now dominate capitalist production. [They]...produce subjects rather than commodities, and [they] do so, in part, through the affective capabilities of workers" (54). Tyler is a loving caretaker for Mala, following the affective norms of caretaking labor, and perhaps because they meet this affective norm, Tyler is misgendered as a gay male by most critics. I argue instead that Tyler's success in practicing normative affects attached to their labor should not determine their gender identity but readers

should rely on the personal narrative offered. That this narrative exhibits hesitancy and fear in articulation, I read Tyler's situation as terrorized by the gendered aspect of their labor and the expected affects associated which feminize them.

The devalued domestic work of cleaning and caretaking, as well as the affective expectations associated, presented in the novel hinder Tyler's full gender expression in that they are read by other characters as female. Though their own narration creates a queer identity, we recognize the feminization caused by caretaking work within the gendered division of labor as a limit imposed on the text by scientific/medical discourses and its representation.

Heterocapitalism: Gender and Environment in *Cereus Blooms at Night*

The previous section detailing the gendered division of labor as it feminizes caretaking labor and by extension Tyler's representation continues the framework that I developed in the first chapter. In the following section I connect this analysis to the larger process of heterocapitalism, the final node in the structure of terror that I name and describe.

Heterocapitalism organizes citizenship and identity around the privileging of heterosexual relations and temporality. After defining heterocapitalism, I will turn to two readings of *Cereus* that take up similar lenses with materialist critique but come to very different conclusions.

Perhaps the clearest starting point for developing the discourse on the regulation of sexuality and the body is Foucault's *The History of Sexuality Vol. I* where he describes the growth of sexuality as a discourse disguised as secretive but profuse and public in actuality. Foucault argues that sexual discourse promotes the nuclear family arrangement in order to "anchor sexuality and provide it with a permanent support" (108). Desires that aided in procreation would be confirmed and promoted, while those desires that did not (and continue not to) are punished, and in some cases, exterminated. According to Foucault, "The deployment of

sexuality has its reason for being, not in reproducing itself, but in proliferating, innovating, annexing, creating, and penetrating bodies in an increasingly detailed way, and in controlling populations in an increasingly comprehensive way” (107). Foucault establishes the way in which sexuality discourse serves a normative function on a societal level, but materialist and queer theorists have expanded and critiqued his work at length. Foucault makes the first contribution to a definition of heterocapitalism as a process; it involves maximizing productivity through familial social arrangements and establishing this arrangement as normative.

Norming heterosexual family units privileges individuals who their lives along such a reproductive schedule. In *Time Binds*, Elizabeth Freeman describes and names chrononormativity as the way that “naked flesh is bound into socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation” (3). It is a “mode of implantation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts” (3). Organizing time through calendars, schedules, routines, time zones, and watches in order to emphasize and regulate productivity assigns meaning to time within a capitalist mode of production and felt in everyday activities. Working a 9-to-5 job on weekdays posed a significant disruption to those accustomed to the seasonal rhythm of agriculture during industrialization, as Freeman points out. Judith (Jack) Halberstam argues that, “Obviously, not all gay, lesbian, or transgender people live their lives in radically different ways from their heterosexual counterparts, but part of what has made queerness compelling as a form of self-description in the past decade or so has to do with the way it has the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space” (1-2). Normative time is experienced in terms of heterosexual milestones—typically, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death. To live outside of this timeline is to occupy queer time. Chrononormativity establishes a norm for a daily routine determined by labor, which serves to

privilege professional jobs and a middle class routine. Service jobs, performed outside or beyond the normative working hours, place the working class in a queer time. Conversely, “[Derrida’s] *Specters of Marx*...contributes to queer theory the idea that time can produce new social relations and even new forms of justice that counter the chrononormative and chronobiopolitical” (10). Dana Luciano describes chronobiopolitics as influencing the management of an entire population, not just individuals in the organization of linear-historical time opposed to cyclical-domestic time (qtd. in Freeman 4). Freeman builds on Judith Halberstam’s seminal text on queer time and queer space, stating that “failures or refusals to inhabit middle- and upper-middle-class habitus appears as, precisely, asynchrony, or time out of joint...queers are a subjugated class” (Freeman 19). Thus, Halberstam and Freeman contribute the second part of the definition of heterocapitalism: normative time is organized around labor productivity and certainly around reproduction. Though this definition of heterocapitalism seems nearly complete, one last critic’s work is essential to placing the analysis of Tyler’s feminized labor into this process.

Rosemary Hennessy also elaborates on the regulation of sexuality in late capitalism in *Profit and Pleasure* by describing the “fragmented thinking that has separated sexuality from social production” even within marxist theory (37). Hennessy laments the absence of studies that historically connect sexual identities and commodity culture:

The history of heterosexuality as a discursive ensemble that capitalism makes use of, as a vehicle for the legitimation of a gendered division of labor in the family and in waged work, and as an agent in the development of race and class consciousness has yet to be written, as does the history of hetero- and homosexuality’s changing intimate links to commodity production and consumption. (97)

Hennessy redirects the focus of theorists in the discourse of sexuality away from psychoanalysis (arguably where it began with Foucault), linguistics, and especially performance to better understand sexual identities as created within global capitalism. Aligning Tyler's gender identity and limitations within the gendered division of labor as it feminizes and devalues caretaking work, I attempt to contribute to this lack of materialist readings that Hennessy identifies. That is why this chapter focuses on Tyler's non-normative identity and the absences within the text where their representation is unable to be fully expressed. Heterocapitalism, then, is the process by which labor is maximized through the family arrangement, gendered division of labor, and organization of time to privilege a middle class temporality in order to ensure the futurity of the nation-state. The inaccessibility of their trans identity is a kind of terror, an affective negation of subjectivity on one's own terms. In this way, the process of heterocapitalism is identified as my final node in the structure of terror present in writing of the Caribbean.

As I develop this node within the structure of terror, I will engage with much of the criticism written on *Cereus Blooms at Night* as many critics read Tyler as queer but not necessarily trans, glossing over the importance of their labor in reading them as feminine rather than trans. Because our narrator restrains themselves to enter the text so often, there are few passages to close read; however, part of my argument rests on the importance of what cannot be fully articulated in the text. In this case, developing what does not appear and the structures relegating what does appear to the margins will form a significant portion of the analysis.

Much of the criticism of Mootoo's novel surrounds the beautifully interwoven representations of sexual violence and colonial racial violence, as well as same-sex loving and an environment wild and assertive—not because of human meddling, but in spite of it. Alison Donnell refers to the breadth of issues covered in the novel as a “roll call to some of the most

sensitive issues around sexuality in the Caribbean...many of which remain almost silent within literary critical discourses” (168). While I am focused on the limits set by the hegemonic sexual binary within the novel because of feminized labor, *Cereus* does successfully contribute to the critical conversations of sexuality, gender identity, sexual violence, and perceptions of the environment in the Caribbean, as many critics are quick to illustrate. They often describe the centrality of the natural environment in the novel as one of Edouard Glissant’s well-known observations that a distinct trait of Caribbean literature is the development of the environment and its attendant history as a character itself: “Our landscape is its own monument: its meaning can only be traced on the underside. It is all history” (*Caribbean Discourse* 11). Two critics in particular capably identify the entangled representations of transgenderism and environment, and I mention them because their analyses coincide with many of the frameworks that I have adopted to name and exemplify heterocapitalism as part of the structure of terror in Caribbean writing. Both Nicole Seymour and Isabel Hoving offer readings of *Cereus* that engage in the complimentary constructions of gender and environment through scientific (sometimes specifically medical) discourse to highlight both as victims of imperial epistemologies whose representations are still fraught with perpetual residues of colonial knowledge complicit with capitalist modes of production. Each takes a different critical path, but the shared concern about identity and nature provides similar conclusions.

Seymour develops the concept of “organic transgenderism,” “gender transitioning as a phenomenon that is at least partly natural—that is, innate and spontaneous—rather than primarily cultural, or constructed” applying the concept to Leslie Feinberg’s *Stone Butch Blues*, Michelle Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven*, and Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night* (36). She develops the debates surrounding gender transitioning and the medical complex, especially as

feminist theorists, of which Janice Redmond is the most well-known, attack MTF (male to female) transitions as a rape of the female body; however, taking up Stryker's and Halberstam's responses to this debate, Seymour reads the three aforementioned novels as critiques of "globalization, ecological devastation, the long afterlife of colonialism, and the increased obfuscation of labor relations in late capitalism" (43). Rejecting the biologically identifiable body as a commodity granted through the medical industry, Seymour interprets the transition of Otoh (Tyler's FTM lover) as a "shift [of] emphasis from the external to the internal, from prosthetic addition to organic self-transformation...[Mootoo] goes so far as to satirize the medical authorities as clueless and incompetent rather than expert and unassailable" (46). While Seymour reads Mala as an empathetic, loving witness, instead of a cold medical professional, to Tyler's transition (49), Rosamond King interprets this as an example of how "Caribbean literature generally treats trans people as not fully human...tools in service of 'normal' men and women who *are* fully human, complete with limits *and* flaws" (584). King explains the many instances in the text where Tyler withholds their own pain and narrative in order to allow Mala to remain the protagonist. This is an example of that which exists outside of the text in *Cereus*, keeping the trans character as marginal. This limit to the narration that King identifies I will analyze later as an example of terror. Despite her overlooking this power relationship in the narrative, Seymour offers an insightful evaluation of *Cereus* overall, describing the relationship of care that individuals should exhibit towards the environment and transgender transitions:

Cereus develops a queer definition of futurity that can combat the logic of capital accumulation. It draws in part on the notion of intrinsic value but focuses more on value as something lovingly and communally constituted, rather than as the property of a given thing. Indeed, the novel stresses the positive social aspects of *valuing*. (58)

Seymour's argument about these three novels with organic transgender transitions seems to be that bodies and nature are valued in the literature based on local cultural systems of intrinsic value rather than medical and scientific expertise from the west. With this in mind, Seymour's argument identifies the technomedical discourse as a source of violence, or a process by which the transgender body may be terrorized. In the case where sexual reassignment surgery is not desired or pursued, the medical field's insistence on the biological sex matching psychological identity can be named as another node in the structure of terror, especially prescient in the recent policing of bathrooms in the US context. Seymour's argument identifies a process easily added to the constellation I have outlined in earlier chapters of the structure of terror. However, I do not agree that *Cereus* offers a "queer definition of futurity that can combat the logic of capital accumulation." In fact, my reading of *Cereus* argues that in being read as female, having their work devalued, and living outside the heterosexual reproductive temporality, Tyler's experience reveals how they are limited within the narration itself. There is, quite literally, no space made for them in the text, let alone imagined futurity. Heterocapitalism is the process by which Tyler's story is subordinated to Mala's, having been constructed as hardly legible. Their queer identity still lacking language for expression becomes inexpressible—and therefore left out of the text—but felt as terror by transgender individuals subject to a binary gender discourse. They and Otoh begin their relationship despite the disapproving eyes of Paradise and still as the backdrop of plot against which Mala's story stands in relief. While Seymour offers an interesting reading of the novel villainizing the technomedical complex, I disagree with her overall assessment of it. Another critic's article on the novel aligns more closely with some of my own frameworks. Isabel Hoving's reading of *Cereus* reveals another node within the structure of terror, which my own argument places in a larger context.

Hoving responds to critics who would frame *Cereus* as a predictable ecofeminist utopia, focusing on Mala's alignment with nature and her escape from the patriarchal culture. By complicating earlier readings of *Cereus* that identify the yard of the Ramchandin house as a feminist safe space "outside of the violent patriarchal sphere" (156), Hoving describes how Mootoo does not structure the novel around a binary placing pristine nature at odds with perverted culture; instead she tends to emphasize the ways in which nature and culture are inseparable, blending nature in the form of insects and plants into the space of the house while allowing the putrid smells of the human activities inside to permeate the yard (157). She argues that Mala's retreat is conveyed as a pathological one away from traumatic reality, and second, that paradise and horror are both present within the house and the yard, refusing to pit one against the other. Hoving observes of the text itself:

The many sketches of insects in the novel seem as indispensable to understanding the narrative as the words themselves, and in this way the binary between the natural world and the cultural one is again subverted. Readers are warned that words alone cannot tell this story since it exceeds the boundaries of the cultural. (157)

Instead of portraying the yard as feminist utopia, Hoving focuses on how Mootoo reveals a more "general distrust among women writers of utopian perceptions of Caribbean landscape" which she locates in Mala's personal trauma as well as the traumas of nomenclature and categorization developed within the colonial project (158-9). Hoving cites Robert Young's work on racial taxonomies developed in colonial scientific discourses as one trauma that make women writers distrustful of romanticizing nature. Young describes scientific inquiry of the colonizing empires based on plant propagation and animal breeding that led to application in humans and created detailed racial categories. This categorization also warned against the dangers of miscegenation

that fueled regulation of sexual desires to cease racial mixing begun in the colonies. Hoving reads *Cereus* as revealing this desire for racial purity as a perverse violence in the denial of Chandin's sexual desire for Lavinia by Reverend Thoroughly. Feminist writers must distrust such discourses of "nature" when they have been long susceptible to disenfranchisement, or even more violently, rape, based on such racial categories and ideology where the power structure appears invisible.

Another example that Hoving uses to show a rather ambiguous opinion of nature being associated with the feminine in the text is Londa Schiebinger's research on Linnaeus' heterosexualization of mostly hermaphroditic plants. Schiebinger examines Linnaeus' application of ideas on human sexuality to the nomenclature created for plants. Hoving writes,

If one turns to nature for models of a natural sexuality, one will often find oneself peering into a reflection of social ideas about sexuality. The reconstruction of nature as a racial, sexual, and gendered hierarchy was motivated by the desire to find an authorization of social ideas. (161)

As mentioned earlier, humans create the discourse in the first place, apply it to other species, and then use it to justify social practices. This is a glaring example of how the economic system of colonialism created the discourses by which it could justify processes of primitive accumulation through ideology. This is another reason women in particular in the Caribbean are distrustful of feminine utopias as Hoving illustrates. She concludes that "[*Cereus*] suggests that the only perverse forms of border-crossing are produced by the violence of colonial sexual and racial laws; the refusal of hybridity...leads to the ultimate form of endogamy: incest" (164). Extending Hoving's argument slightly identifies the racializing categories of Young and the "naturalization" of a binary gender system by Linnaeus as part of the process of

heterocapitalism. Scientific categorization becomes a tool of the state apparatus to order and justify uses of bodies.

Similar to the critical lens applied in my second chapter, enlightenment era knowledge production meant to name, classify, and order the natural world forms a node within the structure of terror by which racial and sexual violence are normalized. Against this process, Hoving identifies hybridity and instability as the norms of the environment: “Instead of trying to return to an organicist and harmonious sense of nature, *Cereus* works through the pain caused by colonial destruction and transformation, subtly differentiating the queer from the violence of the perverse” (164). The novel delineates this difference successfully, and through this distinction highlights the ways inherited colonial scientific discourse in both biology and medicine have incited terror through heterocapitalism. Seymour’s and Hoving’s analyses critique these discourses, some of which have overlapped with my readings of other Caribbean novels, and which I connect here within the structure of terror.

While these critiques dovetail with the frameworks that I have established in earlier chapters through readings of *Cereus*, I wish to further develop through my own close reading of the novel the process that it illustrates as an extension of these former nodes—the limits imposed on the novel by scientific discourse on gender known as heterocapitalism. The narration of Tyler, as I argue here, allows the reader to understand their feminization as a flattening of their non-binary gender identity as well as outline the unavailability of trans experience as terror.

Tyler: Silenced Storyteller

Tyler’s self-declared in-between-ness is evident in a few places in the novel. Their effeminate style of dress and certain behavior can be mistaken for a desire for conventional femininity. However, when given the opportunity to express their gender, Tyler does not wish to

pass as a female, but to escape the binary gender system. In the close reading that follows, Tyler reveals their own feelings about the gender they feel to be true, while hesitating to enter the narrative at all in order for the temporality to remain that of the middle class, heterosexual Ramchandin family. By sidelining their story in service to Mala's, heterocapitalist processes remain naturalized, curbing the full representation of a trans character.

Tyler's "lapses" as they describe in the preface are rare, where they narrate their own pain and trauma. In the opening page where several small beetles interrupt the sentences and a dragonfly faintly appears behind the text, Tyler describes their own role in the novel:

Might I add that my own intention, as the relater of this story, is not to bring notice to myself or my own plight. However, I cannot escape myself, and being a narrator who also existed on the periphery of the events, I am bound to be present. I have my own laments and much to tell about myself. It is my intent, however, to refrain from inserting myself too forcefully. Forgive the lapses for there are some, and read them with the understanding that to have erased them would have been to do the same to myself.

(Mootoo 3)

Even their own apologetic inclusion of these moments in the narration serve to naturalize their own oppression. They are conscious of "inserting [themselves] too forcefully," and refers to any place in the text that is centered around their experience as a "lapse," as a statement of deferment. Tyler enters the text apologetic from the start, yet expressing that there is much to tell about themselves. Tyler's story only appears where necessary in order to relate Mala's. They ask, "What would be the value of laying it all out before you? The temptation is strong, I will admit, to be the romantic victim. There is in me a performer dying for the part, but I must be strict with myself and stay with my intention to relate Mala Ramchandin's story" (15). The

“value of laying it all out” before us, would be to denaturalize Tyler’s exclusion and naturalize their in-between-ness, a non-binary gender identity and its belonging in the text. Western conventions of narrative are felt here as part of the structure of terror. The convention that a novel has one main protagonist—perhaps with multiple storylines which converge around them—keeps Mala at the center of the narrative and only allows Tyler a supporting role. So many examples of canonical literature have created this convention in Anglophone fiction; from the Prologue of the *Canterbury Tales* to the twentieth century novels like *The Great Gatsby*, a narrator has related the story of another, pretending objectivity, yet reproducing within the text a power structure to which their own plot is subordinated. The narration style of *Cereus* places it within this textual history which developed within the history of colonialism and expanding global capitalism. It is difficult to imagine a novel where more than one protagonist exists in the western Anglophone tradition, and the novel traces this limit. While *Cereus* does such an impeccable job of revealing the racial and gender violence in the colonial history in the Caribbean through Mala’s story, it can only express the limits against which the narrator pushes in regards to storytelling and which characters become fully realized. Tyler is partially silenced by a narrative convention which keeps the rest of their life, their “own pain” as they write, outside of the text. Tyler’s preface offers one place in the text where their silencing feels like a duty to the reader. “To stay with [their] intention” as they write, is their aim, though the agency in using “intentions” repeatedly in the preface is at odds with what they actually write. Tyler wants to tell their story; but an external convention thwarts this desire. So naturalized is their marginalization in the text as narrator that they have internalized this norm. Thus, Tyler’s “lapses” demonstrate the limits of the objective narrator convention and illustrate it as a place where the structure of terror is felt.

By reading closely these lapses, the reader can better understand what is missing from the text and how its non-fully developed narrator experiences terror by having their identity abbreviated and voice nearly silenced. The first kind of lapses appear when Tyler relates instances where they are made to feel normal. Pointing out the few times when they are made to feel ordinary reveals how rare their comfort is in social interactions in Paradise. When the doctor comes in to treat Mala, Tyler shares that “he talked and joked with me in the same manner he would have with any of the other staff...For the first time in weeks I was not a curiosity...And became aware of how desperately I want to be—and treated as—nothing more than ordinary” (22). Mala herself provides one of the moments of ordinariness when she steals the female nurse’s uniform for Tyler, then ignores their transformation. Up until this point, Tyler’s dress has been conservative, consisting of the “freshly washed, starched, and pressed white shirt and meticulously pleated trousers, both of which [they] had made from the same cotton as were the nurses’ uniforms” (6). Only a few times are they complimented by other nurses or patients for wearing a “neckerchief” that “suits him,” though the incidents they know are meant to be mocking: “I could detail for you the number of times I have come across that same tone. I am aware of the subtleties and incremental degrees in a hostility—from the tight smile to the seemingly accidental shove—and I have known the gamut” (15). Most social interactions concerning their dress have been cruel, and in response, they share their “one strategy of survival” since they “couldn’t hide and knew better than to flaunt”: “I was quietly proud and did not enter into a façade of denial” (15). Instead of the condescending flattery that they get from most other people, Mala’s pilfering of a nurse’s dress is neutral, but not interpreted by Tyler as an act of kindness either. They explain, “The reason Miss Ramchandin paid me no attention was that, to her mind, the outfit was not something to either congratulate or scorn—it simply was.

She was not one to manacle nature, and I sensed that she was permitting mine its freedom...I had never felt so extremely ordinary” (77-8). Rather than display a congratulatory happiness, Mala continues her nightly construction of the tower of furniture in front of the window. She ignores Tyler’s appearance altogether as a way of naturalizing their dress. This is one of the first glimpses that we get into their full gender expression, even if it is fleeting:

At first I felt horribly silly, like a man who had put on women’s clothing for sheer sport and had forgotten to remove the outfit after the allotted period of fun. I felt flat-footed and clumsy. Not a man and not ever able to be a woman, suspended nameless in the limbo state between existence and nonexistence...I did not even consider leaving her room dressed as I was. I was endowed with a sense of propriety, depended on it, for that matter, for the most basic level of survival...It had been a day and an evening to treasure.

I had never felt so extremely ordinary, and I quite loved it. (77-8)

Tyler responds in the first line to the stereotypical representation of transvestism in popular culture, that of humor. As they continue, Tyler expresses that they are “not a man,” but also “not ever able to be a woman,” the reader can assume, because of the social oppression, not to mention physical violence that such a public display of their gender might cause. The contained cruelty that they experience remains so because they “[do] not flaunt.” The nurses tolerate such conservative behavior, but they will not overlook more public and dramatic displays. The moment that Tyler dons the nurse’s dress for the first time is significant because it offers us the first “lapse” of theirs that communicates their non-binary identity but also because it is the best example of ordinariness as a privilege extended only to those whose gender fits a norm. These moments of ordinariness show how ingrained the curious, but mostly cruel and exclusionary responses are to Tyler’s gender and the assumed femininity of their profession.

One last example of the ordinariness that Tyler encounters serves to illustrate how they are incorporated into the nursing community at the home because of their success with treating Mala. Rather than unsettling the assumed feminine attributes of caretaking, Tyler's ordinariness is imparted because of their success in meeting the stereotypically female nurturing traits: "Initially I felt flattered at being finally included in conversations and being missed if I didn't show at meal times. Now, whether I had parted my hair this side or that, or wore a new scarf at night, I was no longer pretentiously fawned over. The change was delightful if not daunting" (97). Obtaining ordinariness in this case, no matter how empowering it may seem, serves to reinforce gendered traits in caretaking and the ability to devalue it as labor. Acceptance of their feminine traits denies the in-between-ness that they seek; it means ignoring the resistance of Tyler's chosen lack of definition for themselves. The cost of ordinariness in this case is a limit imposed by the gendered division of labor as it feminizes those performing caretaking labor. This process of heterocapitalism flattens Tyler's identity to femininity because it does not recognize an identity outside of the colonial binary system. In the section that follows, I will explore the places in the narrative where Tyler reveals their self-defined gender identity while giving a much more specific and detailed account of their lover Otoh's trans identity.

Tyler's Non-binary Identity and Feminized Labor

Cereus is written by interweaving a modern timeline where Tyler takes care of Mala Ramchandin as an elderly lady and a series of flashbacks begun as a story told to Tyler as a child by his Cigarette Smoking Nana (as opposed to Bible-Quoting Nana) in answer to his question, "...can your Pappy be your Pappy and your Granpappy at the same time?" (25). The back and forth timelines allow for the history of Mala's family to be revealed a little at a time while our narrator reappears every so often to move along Mala's reentry into the human world and

marginally their own love story. Therefore, the organization of the plot brings the two climactic moments (the reason for Mala's retreat into the wild yard and Otoh's decision to follow love despite learning of his father's tragic experience) into chapters adjacent to one another, overlapping in the scene of discovery of Mala's father's body. This arrangement causes uneven, somewhat small spurts of narrative where Tyler communicates the plot of the modern storyline, similar to those where they speak about themselves in self-described "lapses." In "Trauma in Paradise: Willful and Strategic Ignorance in *Cereus Blooms at Night*," Vivian M. May treats the parallel story structure as a resistant reading of the events in Mala's and Tyler's lives to be interpreted linearly and therefore complicit in the willful ignorance that hegemonic epistemologies would determine. She writes, "Mootoo's novel demonstrates that a method of juxtaposition of placing seemingly distinct and different stories side by side in a kind of horizontal relation rather than a linear or hierarchical relation can be a significant epistemic strategy for developing resistant consciousness and for exposing the complexities of willful ignorance" (127-8). May outlines how the complementary stories accomplish more together than either could on its own. She argues that Tyler as a narrator actually solves some of the difficulties faced by survivors of abuse in finding the language to communicate their trauma (126-7). I disagree; May's argument treats the plotlines as if they are equally developed, which is just not the case. Her use of "horizontal" makes light of the fact that Tyler's background and love story appear in such small interludes at the margins of Mala's story. Rosamond King, as discussed earlier, explains the relationship between the two plotlines much more carefully. She claims that such narrative responsibility is "emotional deliverance...when the trans character reveals or facilitates the recovery of memory, truth, or history" of a cisgendered protagonist such as Mala (583). "As a result...Caribbean literature generally treats trans people as not fully human

(or as somewhat more than human) tools in service of ‘normal’ men and women who *are* fully human, complete with limits *and* flaws” (584). King’s article makes a convincing argument to critique the abbreviated amount of space in the text where Tyler does communicate to the reader their own pain and history. These moments are the most interesting passages in the novel for the analysis that follows.

Perhaps the most significant moment for Tyler’s introspection and communication to the reader about their gender identity takes place in the interaction that they have with John Hector, the gardener at the alms house. The first part of the conversation is an awkward offering of the yellow gerbera to Miss Ramchandin, but upon hearing that she will be saddened by its separation from the rest of the plant, Mr. Hector then offers it to Tyler. When Tyler refuses it because they will be accompanying her all day, Mr. Hector defends his heterosexuality: “I don’t mean nothing by that, you know!...I married and thing. I not funny, you know. Is just that the thing picked already” (69). Tyler suggests giving the flower to another resident, and Mr. Hector “turned away so fast I felt a shrinking inside” (70). They ponder the reaction they feel, deciding “discomfort or disdain, they amounted to the same: he recoiled from me and it was his recoiling that stung, made me feel as though my back were exposed...” (70). While he handed the flower to another resident, Tyler continues to reveal more to the reader about themselves:

...if I did not so loathe my unusual femininity, his rejection of me would not be so devastating...I decided there and then that I would change my own feelings about myself. I would, I must, cast him out of my thoughts and stand tall...Nana had accepted me and my girlish ways but she was the only person who had ever truly done so...I wondered for the umpteenth time if Nana would have been able to accept and love the adult Tyler, who was neither properly man nor woman but some in-between, unnamed thing. (71)

This is the first explanation from Tyler in their own words how they feel and identify. Though they answer to masculine pronouns and refer to themselves as the only male nurse in the alms house earlier in the novel, this is the first reflective utterance we overhear in their thoughts that gives us an indication that they are not a feminine gay man as many characters assume. Mr. Hector himself shares the story of his brother (“He was kind of funny. He was like you.”), explaining how his mother expelled him from the family because his father used to beat him over his effeminate speech and behavior (73). “[Randy’s] voice was soft-soft, just like yours, and the way he used to talk, quiet and sing-song sing-song...Pappy used to beat him bad-bad, just for talking so” (73). Mr. Hector recalls bringing up Randy in front of his mother who cried at his name, so he stopped bringing it up “so...as time pass it was like he didn’t ever exist” (73). His family was able to erase the evidence of queerness in their surroundings, yet Mr. Hector’s sadness at speaking so frank with Tyler belies the trauma that is not quite gone. The absences of Randy Hector, Lavinia Thoroughly, and Sarah Ramchandin as characters who warrant a complete story depict just how unimaginable gay and lesbian lives are in the Caribbean.⁵ However, this passage initially strikes readers as comparing the similar oppressions of Randy Hector and Tyler, assuming that at least one, if not both, are homosexuals identifying male. While much of transgender studies literature and especially many members of the gay community would insist on distinguishing between identity-focused transgenderism and desire-based sexuality, I think that Mootoo intercepts this debate by suggesting that such strict labeling and categorizing does tangible harm, and she therefore resists labeling any gender identity or sexuality definitely. This is in stark opposition to Donnell’s assertion that “The issue of naming

⁵ Donnell states that, “The lesbian has no place,” within *Cereus* (177). She points out that lesbianism is never named, and Mala is said to have “had no words to describe what she suddenly realized was their secret” (Mootoo 56).

sexual selves and practices is crucial in this novel, as the lack of positive self-definitions for queer subjects means that all seemingly ‘other’ sexual acts are flattened out onto a continuum of deviance when calibrated against heterosexual norms” (172). As concluded in my second chapter, the same regulatory discourses of imperial science are responsible for naming and organizing plant, animal, and human traits, including sexuality and gender. Mootoo critiques these discourses in the refusal to use either Trini or western nomenclature for sexualities or gender identities. Yet, even with her refusal to identify sexualities or gender identities by name, many western readers read Tyler’s gender identity as effeminate gay male because the nursing profession and caretaking work are feminized and devalued. This flattening of their experience overwrites the identity they articulate and disavows the ability of any gender to perform caretaking work well and become generally more valued. While I agree with Donnell that *Cereus* demands that readers “differentiate between abusive and consenting relations,” I do not agree that it is particularly important for Mootoo to represent transgenderism and homosexuality with the terminology that western readers expect (172).

In fact, Tyler recognizes the shared oppression between themselves and the recently introduced compatriot queer people. In the briefest interjection into Mala’s history, Tyler states, I often call out Randolph John Hector’s name, too. And Sarah Ramchandin’s. And Lavinia Thoroughly’s. Where are you all?...I wonder at how many of us, feeling unsafe and unprotected, either end up running far away from everything we know and love, or staying and simply going mad. I have decided today that neither option is more or less noble than the other. They are merely different ways of coping, and we each must cope as best we can. (90)

Tyler identifies the shared ways that all queer people are subject to social stigma if not outright violence in Lantanacamara.⁶ According to M. Jacqui Alexander, the government there used the fact that the islands had the highest infection rate of AIDS in the Caribbean to justify criminalizing homosexuality alongside a moralizing social campaign, which singled out lesbian sex (6). Alexander's first chapter in *Pedagogies of Crossing* describes the roles of state-enforced notions of masculinity and femininity, as well as the consequences for those non-conforming, either by non-normative identities or desires. Tyler's "calling out" to a newly found community stresses the common experience of isolation, pain, and the possibility of fatal violence without drawing on either western or local divisions or labels. It also draws direct attention to the narratives that lie just outside of the novel. None of these queer characters gets more than an anecdote; they disappear into only imagined futures—and only two options at that. This passage is perhaps the most direct in identifying how the narrative itself become part of the process of heterocapitalism, relegating those un-reproductive lives to the margins. Tyler feels this exclusion as terror: running far away or staying and going mad are the only two imaginable responses, and they are "merely different ways of coping" (90). These limits are produced in the text by the process of heterocapitalism.

Though Tyler appears as one queer character among several, theirs and Otoh's experiences are portrayed with more nuances, though not in much more space within the text. The strongest evidence that Tyler's gender becomes flattened onto the binary comes in the interactions with other nurses. When Mala seems to be recovering somewhat, interacting

⁶ Many scholars have also pointed out the importance of Mootoo creating an imaginary time and place for the novel rather than setting it in Trinidad post 1980s. See May (107) and Maryse Condé (64).

pleasantly with the staff and other residents, other nurses and Sister take notice and offer at least a contingent acceptance to Tyler:

There was talk that I had ‘performed miracles’ with Miss Ramchandin. When I resisted such praise, knowing the change in Miss Ramchandin was only the result of humane treatment, I would be cut off with protestations that I was far too modest—for a man. Initially I felt flattered at being finally included in conversations and being missed if I didn’t show at meal times. Now, whether I had parted my hair this side or that, or wore a new scarf at night, I was no longer pretentiously fawned over. The change was delightful if not daunting. (97)

In this instance, Tyler has superficially gained the ordinariness which they sought. However, the ability to fit in among the other nurses relies on their ability not just to complete emotional and physical caretaking well, but also on their performance of feminine modesty in response to success and praise. Following an unwritten social code is perhaps more important than aptitude, even as, as Tyler reminds the reader, no skill but compassion is practiced with Miss Ramchandin. By voicing the misinterpreted compliance, the other nurses illustrate how already feminized nursing is subject to social codes and behaviors that further reify its gendered representation. Tyler is rewarded for being a “good girl,” not quite for being a good nurse.

The recognition of nurturing female traits in Tyler’s care of Mala leads Sister to ask them to work with another troublesome resident, Mr Phu who “was sure his room had been taken over by an army of red ants” (97). The new assignment was “a sign of growing respect” from Sister (97). However, again, aptitude is synonymous with compliance to gendered traits. The new assignment does not come to fruition for Tyler as Mala purposely creates a disturbance that warrants Tyler’s full time assignment to remain with her (99). This plot point allows Mootoo to

convey both Tyler's feminization due to the gendered nature of caretaking work and ensures that Tyler can continue to capture Mala's mutterings that eventually lead to her developed history.

Outside of Mala, only two other characters allow Tyler to occupy a more complex identity in the novel. Otoh, whose own identity receives far more development in the form of a history, and his father Ambrose Mohanty both accept Tyler unquestioningly without asking for a definition. In one of the visits that Otoh and Ambrose make to Mala and Tyler, Ambrose notices and comments on Tyler's darker painted lips and more pronounced rouge. Tyler refers to Ambrose's straightforward, yet good-natured comments, pronouncing that, "The old man was delightfully indiscreet" (125). Ambrose addresses Otoh: "Mr. Tyler appears to be painting his face more diligently as time goes by...my boy, I think Mr. Tyler fancies you, wouldn't you agree?...He is a Mr., isn't he?" (125). Ambrose notices the make-up, identifies Otoh as the target of their desire, and leaves available the possibility that "Mr." is not the way to address them. Ambrose leaves Tyler's identity open as a question, but these characters are the few who allow such complexity. Otoh is granted quite a bit more complexity, and because his career remains unspecified in the text, is not subject to the kind of flattening imposed on Tyler's.

Many scholars address the passages devoted to Otoh's gender identity, most describing it as Seymour does, as an organic transition illustrating something "true" about transgenderism, as if there is a monolithic experience or that the use of hormones or surgery are somehow artificial and therefore undesirable. While I understand that this representation of a FTM trans person is the choice of Mootoo to create a single character's history, I think that this example and the theorizing that accompanies it, especially within a novel that clearly intends to address the overlap of nature and culture, is rather damaging to transgender transitions that do involve hormones or surgery. This expectation that a "true" trans body will transform itself to be the

“correct” gender sets an unrealistic and unfair precedent by which gender identity may be further regulated and denied. One of the most analyzed lines from the passage is the admission of the medical staff that they had identified Otoh wrongly at birth: “So flawless was the transformation that even the nurse and the doctor who attended the birth, on seeing him later, marveled at their carelessness in having declared him a girl” (110). This line has been cited by critics to counter the authoritative medical discourse, a critique that most find subversive or even a joke aimed at questioning such deeply established epistemologies. The method of resistance is one that creates a new measure by which gender can be defined as natural or not, an altogether destructive path for representations of trans people. In “My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix,” originally a performance piece but later published, Susan Stryker expresses an affinity with Frankenstein’s monster in order to communicate trans rage:

To encounter the transsexual body, to apprehend a transgendered consciousness articulating itself, is to risk a revelation of the constructedness of the natural order. Confronting the implications of this constructedness can summon up all the violation, loss, and separation inflicted by the gendering process that sustains the illusion of naturalness. My transsexual body literalizes this abstract violence. (254)

As a product of medical science, Stryker identifies the transsexual body as the unnatural, technological construction that feels “exclusion from human community that fuels a deep and abiding rage...that, like the monster, [she] direct[s] against the conditions in which [she] must struggle to exist” (245). Stryker is responding to Sandy Stone’s call for “post-transsexual” theory, and finds in the figure of Frankenstein’s monster a relatable rage but also a powerful resistant place from which to speak, act, and write. This very contempt for naturalness discourse is part of the expertise of the “monster.” While Otoh’s representation of trans lives is important

to valuing transitions that do not entail surgery or hormones, we must be careful that such an “organic transgenderism” does not become a standard by which to measure all trans-ness.

Stryker’s message communicates anti-naturalness as a strength of trans people in identifying the constructedness of even that which we label as “natural.”

In the narration of a transgender transition such as Otoh’s, the re-invocation of nature “correcting” itself in the growth of his body to fit a more male physique detracts from the constructedness of gender assignment in the first place, as Stryker describes in the larger quote above. Privileging a transition such as Otoh’s as “organic” produces a hierarchy where the “flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other than that in which it was born” is degraded further (Stryker 245). There are obstacles to sexual reassignment surgery for those who prefer to have it, such as cost and proximity to medical services, so in many locations, especially the Caribbean, transgender embodiment is limited. The other side of this argument is how transgender representation becomes romanticized in transformations like Otoh’s, possibly leading to animosity towards individuals seeking medical transition. The stakes are high for representation of transgender bodies in the Caribbean where sexuality and gender identity receive more legislative attention because their economies rely heavily but discreetly on sex tourism. Despite receiving more attention in both the novel and in critical discussion, Otoh’s transgenderism offers a representation still rife with concerns about the overlap of nature and culture.

Though the narrative of Tyler and Otoh takes place in the margins of the novel, in short spurts of background and amid promises to “exercise restraint” when “the temptation...to relate every scintillating detail of the romantic blossoming” (105) becomes strong, the attention Mootoo gives the lovers provides only enough to begin to understand them. Our critiques must

always rely on analysis of that which is outside the text as well because the experiences of Tyler and Otoh appear as asides, not unlike the experiences of transgender individuals in nonimaginary Caribbean societies through the structure of terror.

Heterocapitalism and Environment

Tyler's non-binary identity reads as female (or feminine homosexual man) because their successful display of feminized caretaking work is subject to the process of heterocapitalism, which flattens a queer identity onto a binary system. The previous analysis establishes how this representation alongside that of Otoh's transition takes place within the margins of the main narrative of the cisgendered Mala Ramchandin expressing the limitations of both western conceptions of narration and scientific discourse on gender. In this final section, I will develop the process of heterocapitalism further to include how terror is felt within the representations of nature in *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Of course, in assigning nature the ability *to feel*, it could be argued that I am anthropocizing the environment in the exact way for which I have criticized colonial scientists. Therefore, instead of claiming it is nature that *feels*, I want to suggest that some characters are capable of feeling *for nature* the terror it experiences as such a capability for nature will remain outside of language and the text. Heterocapitalism as a process affects nature as it imposes a binary system on plants where one does not exist so neatly, and in commodifying the flora of the Caribbean reifies the hierarchical and destructive relationship between humans and the environment.

Mootoo is deeply critical of the division between nature and culture, as I have pointed out previously. In her representations of the Caribbean environment, she reveals this most clearly. Ambrose Mohanty, Mala's lover communicates the hierarchy established by western

epistemologies, especially that embraced by the Christian theologians, which he begins to study under:

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

Upon learning this premise, Ambrose quits theology and becomes an entomologist, studying insects with his scholarship money instead. He is the character in the novel best attuned to expressing terror imposed on nature, mainly because Mala's retreat and empathy appears pathologized by her own trauma. Ambrose identifies in this passage the hierarchical relationship between nature and culture that has perpetuated colonial consumption practices for centuries. He even describes the conditional acceptance for the category of Man based on race as well. I begin this last section on the process of heterocapitalism and representation of environment because Ambrose's interpretation of Christian theology articulates the central challenge to traditional western environmental ethics that many feminist utopias and even writing of male conservationists engage in—minus the apt condition of race. To de-center ourselves from our conception of inhabitants of the earth, or conversely, to include humans as just one species in that which we call nature has been the purpose of many creative works. The problem with many of them, however, is that they attempt merely to reverse the hierarchy, praising pure, pristine nature and condemning cruel, unjust culture. Feminist utopias in particular run the risk of

aligning femininity with those ideas of pure, pristine nature, and as Merchant has established, such a relationship has served to perpetuate just the kind of feminization of domestic and caretaking work to which Tyler falls victim. I want to suggest in this last section that Mootoo's greatest accomplishment in *Cereus* is the representation of an ambiguous nature indigenous to the Caribbean, which if we are to see humanity as a part of, not a ruler over, can better help us to understand the diversity and hybridity among humans as well.

Mootoo includes examples of the ways in which Caribbean landscapes are commodified: law officials visiting the Ramchandin home to investigate admire the worth of the mudra tree and peekoplat birds, bringing bird cages to trap and sell them (187). While these provide obvious examples of commodities recognized in nature, the cereus flower is the central image through which the process of heterocapitalism can be identified. The flower makes its appearance early in the novel between queer characters. First, Lavinia Thoroughly presents it to Mala's mother. Then, a clipping of the cereus plant is brought to Mala by Ambrose and Otoh Mohanty. It is also present as Tyler converses with John Hector about his queer brother. Obviously a symbol of queerness, the flower blooms once a year, at night, and produces a sickly sweet odor that attracts many insects and functions as an aphrodisiac to humans with its "dizzying scent" as well (Mootoo 134). As Hoving argues, "the cereus both covers and points at the incestuous father's body behind the wall against which it had grown, linking the decay and delight of Mala's space (the yard) to the unspeakable horror of the father's space" (162). Hoving also lists the importance of the cereus flower in marking time in the blossoming love between Tyler and Otoh as they promise to wait until the flowers' bloom to consummate their relationship (162). The flower is clearly associated with sex, and mostly transgressive sex. The cereus plant is cactus-like and unobtrusive except when in bloom. It's also hermaphroditic "boast[ing] of both a stamen and an

ovary, parts usually designated as respectively male and female” (Hoving 162). Instead of reading the cereus plant as a symbol of border-crossing as Hoving does, I want to suggest that this plant challenges the idea of borders altogether. Its very in-between-ness speaks to that of Tyler’s and the inability of western scientific and narrative language to account for that which we have not categorized. The process of differentiating and labeling in order to best serve the needs of capital is illustrated here in the ways which both human and non-human life are subject to the same kind of terror; and this terror can only be felt in the silences, in language’s limits.

Conclusion

This chapter’s analysis has shown the rigidity of language in (dis)allowing me to express Tyler’s oppression as belonging in an argument about women and structures of terror in the Caribbean. Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley writes in *Thieving Sugar*, that the language available to produce such theoretical work presents its own challenge:

In using the phrase *women who love women*, then, and in respecting that the masculine, feminine, and androgynous cultural workers whose texts I analyze all return to this term, I remain painfully attuned to the historical reverberations of a contested noun, a problematic marker of humanity. (14)

Tinsley’s project examining eroticism between women in the Caribbean keeps at the center of analysis “a historically constructed understanding of women’s bodies and landscape” both of which are deeply affected by the regulation of labor (3). Tinsley feels the narrow available meanings for gender categories, and she argues that Caribbean literature challenges these categories to expand their meanings. *Cereus Blooms at Night* certainly tests the limits of language to represent gender and environment outside of colonial epistemologies. Tyler’s experience remains partially obscured and partially misrepresented because of these limits.

By tracing the historical devaluation of caretaking labor and examining a text where a character's self-identity becomes flattened and misrepresented, we are able to witness the effects of heterocapitalism as a terror-inciting process. Tyler's experiences are central to understanding how the gendered division of labor and western narrative conventions deny subjectivity; Tyler's inclusion in the feminized labor of caretaking as it appears in *Cereus Blooms at Night* traces the limits of representation for trans identities in language and narration. The hesitancy with which Tyler speaks of their own pain and trauma enacts the violence against non-normatively gendered people as they inhabit the margins of the narrative but not the central storyline. This process of heterocapitalism is shown to enforce a gender binary and reproduction of labor by relegating nonprocreative noncitizens to the margins, in both a figurative way and quite literally in the narration.

Overall, Mootoo's novel is an engaging critique of imperial scientific discourse that intervenes in the silence imposed on many Caribbean societies around the issue of sexual violence. Mala Ramchandin's narrative of abuse, isolation, and finally community distinguishes between perverse acts of violence and queer desires based on consent and identity. Though much of *Cereus Blooms at Night* centers Mala's trauma and recovery, the novel still portrays more sexual diversity within the Caribbean than many other texts and uses this to explore the interconnectedness of nature and culture. Mootoo illustrates a move towards harmony between the two rather than the hierarchical relationship on which western society relies.

CONCLUSION

FROM THE NANNY TO THE NURSE

When I first chose to focus on terror in several Caribbean women's novels, the number of corpses and scenes of extraordinary violence exerted their pull. While these images might have produced a vivid research project on the spectacle of the tortured body, I became more interested in the scenes surrounding the grotesque violence that connected them to larger structures of the economy, politics, and ideology. It was no longer the dramatic scenes of violence, but the strong feelings that accompanied smaller acts or objects that interested me. Encountering Saidiya Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection* in between chapter drafts produced a belated perspective that influenced chapter rewrites instead of the conception of the project from the start, but I am indebted to Hartman's theorizing of the domestic and mundane experiences of women in the African diaspora as well as her approach to texts. Hartman's analyses of the less dramatic moments that nearly pass unnoticed when juxtaposed with spectacular violence of beatings and rape began to guide my examination of the texts that I had chosen. This approach dovetailed with the materialist framework already guiding this project from the beginning, that of Raymond Williams in his concept of structures of feeling. It became clear, in the process of writing this, that domestic activities and mundane moments—more specifically, acts of violence portrayed as mundane---narrated by women were the very places in the text where affect announced its importance. Women experience terror in the domestic space as they associate the feeling with the cause of their suffering—the multiple processes produced and intensified by hetero-patriarchal global capitalism. This set of processes, traced to the very roots of what and how we distinguish human from non-human, I collectively label as the structure of terror in Caribbean women's fiction.

It is no accident that the opening chapter examines nannies (domestic workers) while the final chapter focuses on nurses—two types of caretaking work—labor often performed by women and centered on caring for the unproductive bodies of children, the sick, and the elderly regardless of gender, like bookends of the (re)productive life. The chapters in between indeed examine the (re)productive life of women and transgender people and the processes which lead them to experience terror in mundane activities, such as getting an education, falling in love, or working inside or outside of the home. The Caribbean women’s narratives chosen here also draw a clear parallel between western representations of the Caribbean environment and gender, as both are consistently articulated through enlightenment-defined scientific discourse produced by imperial societies. Sylvia Wynter argues that colonization must remain central to our understanding of how knowledge of the human has been created within a system of domination, and her theories form the backbone of this project.

Wynter’s theory of the human centers race in defining and negating *civitas*, the body of citizens reflecting the conditions of economic production. Denise Ferreira da Silva describes Wynter’s theory in “Before Man: Sylvia Wynter’s Rewriting of the Modern Episteme,”: “she focuses on the ways in which the architectures of colonial juridical-economic power are encoded, and thus sustain, what it means to be human while also offering a refiguring of humanness that is produced in relation to the monumental history of race itself” (93). Because social hierarchies become solidified in juridical architecture, Ferreira da Silva explains, they become “*the* ethical gauge for the members of the global polity” (103). Wynter’s theoretical work makes her one of the earliest decolonial scientists, engaging how cultural conceptions and misconceptions have shaped scientific discourse. Katherine McKittrick, the editor of the recent collection of essays on Wynter’s archive from which I have gained a clearer understanding of her work, writes,

In the social sciences and the humanities, three overlapping research themes delineate why science matters and, consequently, why we might turn to Wynter's intellectual contributions: some analyses address the ways in which the racial underpinnings of science have long informed analyses of social inequalities, poverty, racial and sexual discrimination, citizenship, and belonging (scientific research leans in favor of racially and economically privileged groups); research on genomes, blood quantum, miscegenation, the bell curve, evolution, familial ties, intelligence testing, reproductive technologies that brings into focus meaningful racial formations (racial/ethnic groupings are differentially knotted to scientific research, testing, and resulting conclusions); investigations that take up the body, phenotype, skulls, height, hair, racial passing, and gender comportment reveal biological differences among humans (the 'kind' of sexual body matters). (148)

McKittrick identifies the ways that the applications of science are lived by structural inequalities. Even though race as a concept is socially produced, science is not exempt from racism because scientists are still people, and overwhelmingly representative of hegemonic epistemologies. Wynter argues that we experience the world and feel our experience both biologically and culturally (bios/mythoi); *Scientia* is her term for describing this simultaneous being (McKittrick 154). Her work is central in discussing the purposeful separation of nature and culture in post-Enlightenment theory that has surfaced multiple times in this dissertation, but Wynter's impressive canon is often overlooked as participating in identity politics or shelved as Black Studies. Such categorizing has reproduced the segregation in which Alexander Weheliye intervenes, placing Wynter beside Agamben and Foucault in order to better recognize the debates in which she enters. I also recognize her significant contribution to the direction of my own

analysis and anticipate more scholars engaging with her complex theories. Knowledge production and its naturalization in scientific discourse is just one specific process identified in these chapters.

The Caribbean authors chosen here also reject the devaluation of the feminine, the body, and nature by enumerating the processes by which women and transgender people are made to experience terror, as Caribbean literature is revealed to be an ideal vehicle for doing so. Women's stories often unsettle the image we have of both the home and the Caribbean as an inviting, relaxing space. Supriya Nair argues that "Contemporary Anglophone Caribbean literature...often deliberately halts the gratification one may expect from an 'enjoyable' reading experience where one mentally vacations in the Caribbean through the text" (2). Nair's work also identifies the paradise-hell binary of Caribbean literature as reductive, so her "detours" wind through examples which lie in-between. My own choice to explore the domestic and the mundane experiences is also a choice to escape the extreme representation of the Caribbean infernal stereotypes with "heaps of destruction" as Jamaica Kincaid aptly describes. These novels are not exclusively about terror—most have uplifting or hopeful endings even—but these examples of Caribbean literature by women exemplify the processes by which terror is created in the seemingly private space of the home.

Though my intentions were to describe and analyze as many processes within the structure of terror that I could readily identify and support, these processes are by no means exhaustive. My scope as well was limited to Anglophone Caribbean texts and one Francophone text in translation. This is just one large pattern that emerged in reading and re-reading these texts, but with so many more authors writing in multiple other languages, including Spanish and creoles, Caribbean literature offers so many more options to expand even this particular project.

I also narrowed my scope to novels and novellas. Including poetry and drama would certainly expand this project and perhaps identify new processes within the structure of terror, or perhaps textual characteristics registering terror felt by characters. There is much more work to be done in identifying more processes or in finding new ways in which the existing processes are felt. The very nature of historical materialist readings suggests that re-writings and re-readings are continually practiced and needed. From nannies to nurses, these social processes have only begun to name and describe the structure of terror lived and felt by women of the Caribbean.

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