TRANSNATIONAL ROMANCE: THE POLITICS OF DESIRE IN CARIBBEAN NOVELS BY WOMEN

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EMILY TAYLOR MEYERS

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Emily Meyers

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This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Comparative Literature by:

Karen McPherson, Chairperson, Romance Languages
David Vazquez, Member, English
Tania Triana, Member, Romance Languages
Judith Raiskin, Outside Member, Womens and Gender Studies

and Richard Linton, Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies/Dean of the Graduate School for the University of Oregon.

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Approved: _____
Dr. Karen McPherson

Writers in the Caribbean, like writers throughout the postcolonial world, return to colonial texts to rewrite the myths that justified and maintained colonial control. Exemplary of a widespread, regional phenomenon that begins at mid-century, writers such as Aimé Césaire and George Lamming take up certain texts such as Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and recast them in their own image. Postcolonial literary theory reads this act of rewriting the canon as a political one that speaks back to power and often advocates for political and cultural independence. Towards the end of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Caribbean women writers begin a new wave of rewriting that continues in this tradition, but with certain differences, not least of which is a focused attention to gender and sexuality and to the literary legacies of romance. In the dissertation I consider a number of novels from throughout the region that rewrite the romance, including Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Maryse

Condé's *La migration des cœurs* (1995), Mayra Santos-Febres's *Nuestra señora de la noche* (2006), and Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996). Romance, perhaps more than any other literary form, exerts an allegorical force that exceeds the story of individual characters. The symbolic weight of romance imagines the possibilities of a social order—a social order dependent on the sexual behavior of its citizens. By rewriting the romance, Caribbean women reconsider the sexual politics that have linked women with metaphorical constructions of the nation while at the same time detailing the extent to which transnational forces, including colonization, impact the representation of love and desire in literary texts. Although ultimately these novels refuse the generic requirements of the traditional resolution for romance (the so-called happy ending), they nonetheless gesture towards a reordering of community and a revised notion of kinship that recognizes the weight of both gendered and sexual identities in the Caribbean.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Emily Taylor Meyers

PLACE OF BIRTH: Lakenheath, United Kingdom

DATE OF BIRTH: July 30, 1979

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls

DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature, 2009, University of Oregon
Graduate Certificate in Women's and Gender Studies, 2009, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Arts *summa cum laude* in English and Spanish, 2001, University of Northern Iowa

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Caribbean Literature
Postcolonial Literature and Theory
Feminist Theory
U.S. Latino/a Literature
Globalization Studies

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellow, Comparative Literature Program, University of Oregon, 2005-2009

Graduate Teaching Fellow, Department of English, University of Oregon, 2003-2005

Graduate Teaching Fellow, Department of Romance Languages, University of Oregon, 2001-2003

GRANTS, AWARDS AND HONORS:

Miller Family Scholarship, Department of Women's and Gender Studies, University of Oregon, 2008

Beall Dissertation Award, Comparative Literature Program, University of Oregon, 2007

Graduate Student Support Research Grant, Center for the Study of Women in Society, University of Oregon, 2007

Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship, University of the West Indies, Barbados, 2005-06

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To my family

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: REWRITING THE ROMANCE, RE-VISIONING THE NATION

> Caribbean women's writing tends to be concerned with all that has gone before into the shaping of Caribbean societies: colonization and its consequences, the effects of slavery and indenture, the meaning or meaninglessness of independence. There is a concern with formation—formation of the society, formation of the individual—*and with reclaiming and revoicing*... And Caribbean women, in addition, have a concern with themes of female sexuality...
>
> —Merle Collins (emphasis mine, 8)

In Maryse Condé's 1995 novel *La migration des cœurs* [*Windward Heights*] the two traditional endings for romance plots collide: marriage and death. *La migration des cœurs* is a rewriting of *Wuthering Heights*, set in Guadeloupe at the turn of the nineteenth century. All of the characters in *Wuthering Heights* appear in *La migration des cœurs* in various guises, including both Cathys, Heathcliff, Linton, and Nelly, with the addition of a few more. Catherine Earnshaw becomes the beautiful mulatto Cathy Gagneur, Heathcliff is transformed into a handsome black man named Razyé, and Linton becomes the white planter Aymeric de Linsseuil. Cathy Gagneur, like Catherine Earnshaw, dies early in the narrative after an unhappy marriage to Aymeric. Like Catherine, Cathy Gagneur is reunited with her lover before death, and it is her affair with Razyé that kills her. She dies giving birth to Razyé's daughter.

In *Wuthering Heights*, we catch barely a glimpse of Catherine's corpse. Brontë is discrete about the intimacies of death; Nelly mentions only that Catherine's "coffin remained uncovered, and strewn with flowers and scented leaves, in the great drawing

room" (155). In Condé's novel, Cathy's body takes center stage. The description of her wake borrows from *Wuthering Heights*, but takes more details from Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. Like Emma, Cathy is buried in her wedding dress with a crown of flowers in her hair: "Revêtue de sa robe de mariée, son diadème de fleurs d'oranger enserrant le velours sombre de ses cheveux, Cathy était étendue sur un lit dispose dans le mitan d'un des salons du rez-de-chaussée, le salon aux hortensias…" (89) ["Dressed in her wedding-gown, with her diadem of orange blossom clasping the dark velvet of her hair, Cathy lay on the bed placed in the middle of the hydrangea drawing room" (84)]. Like Charles Bovary, Aymeric is the only person at the wake that grieves Cathy's passing. The rest of the mourners, all members of Guadeloupe's white plantocracy, feel relief that a racial interloper has gone out of their midst.

I begin with this scene because it references two novels that subvert traditional romance plots in radical ways in order to engage with specific national problems. In traditional romance plots, marriage becomes the means to establish new social orders, but in all three of these novels, the marriages are miserable failures. In *Wuthering Heights* and *La migration des cœurs*, the marriages are themselves barriers to true love, keeping Cathy and Heathcliff and Cathy and Razyé from each other when it is clear that they belong together. Instead of happy symbolic marriages, we get grief-stricken lovers and dead wives. Of course we can read these women's deaths as punishment for their extramarital affairs, but I think it is more interesting to consider that the plot device that traditionally contained female sexual "deviance," death, does not occur until after the marriages. In this way, these characters become a part of both endings, marriage and

death, and the authors have space to consider what might be some unhappy national problems. Brontë's tragic tale of impossible love is in fact a rendering of English class conflicts and expanding British empire, Flaubert's Emma would not be so wicked if her sexual want was not an indictment of the greedy consumerism of the French bourgeoisie, and Cathy Gagneur would have been much happier if her social circumstances had not demanded that she marry the white Aymeric as her only chance to access wealth in a colonial Guadeloupe controlled by the white planter aristocracy.

Maryse Condé's playful attention to the romance plots of *Wuthering Heights* and *Madame Bovary* is not a unique phenomenon in the Caribbean. A number of other women writers from across the region, most famously Jean Rhys, have rewritten canonical colonial romances. In this project, I examine how Rhys and contemporary Caribbean women writers Maryse Condé, Mayra Santos-Febres and Dionne Brand rewrite the romance. This rewriting, or re-visioning (to use Merle Collins's term) performs two main functions: it serves to express the range of female sexuality in relation to a complex matrix of race, class, and gender and it engages in the problems of defining national and transnational communities. By rewriting the romance, these authors reorder the symbolic imaginary of romance used to represent the emergence of a new society. In the texts that they rewrite, romance has served various purposes, but has, by and large, served to reinforce the rule of the elite. *Jane Eyre*, for example, extols the economic benefit of English colonialism while simultaneously arguing for the preservation of the boundaries of an English national "race": Jane Eyre, as solidly English as English can be, is our heroine because she saves Rochester from the possibility of begetting mixed race

children with the racially suspect Bertha Mason. While we cannot say that Jean Rhys's rendering of this love story is properly a romance in its form, we can trace the residue that remains from her act of rewriting the romance and examine the significance of a text that so tragically details the consequences of colonialism for women in the Caribbean.

Sexual Politics

Although literary scholars have begun to analyze the representations of sexuality in contemporary Caribbean literature, to date there has been little research on the ways in which Caribbean women rewrite certain forms in order to represent these sexualities and to question power. This project turns to love stories and romances specifically, examining how selected Caribbean authors explicitly rewrite national and colonial narratives of desire. Romance, perhaps more than any other literary form, exerts an allegorical force that always exceeds the story of individual characters. A kiss is rarely just a promise of love, a quest is more than an individual journey: the symbolic weight of romance imagines the possibilities of a social order—a social order dependent on the sexual behavior of its citizens. Thus, we have the nation on the one hand and sexual identity on the other. Love stories create the world we live in and also establish the parameters of acceptable sexuality. As Alison Donnell argues, "…sexual politics is often the nexus at which pressure from the private and public spheres of the national build up to a crisis point and create a fracture in constructions of the national" (204). The form that can represent these pressures, I argue, is often the romance, and it is at the level of the romance that Caribbean women writers can challenge the literary heritage that has

supported colonial and patriarchal representations of Caribbean sexuality and society. These women counter the racist notion, informed by the legacies of slavery, that black and Creole women are lascivious, hypersexual creatures. These authors are clearly aware of the symbolic weight of rewriting sexual subjects: to rewrite sexual relations carries with it an inevitable social commentary. A consideration of the sexual politics contained in both the original texts that these authors rewrite, and in the rewritings themselves, will allow us to examine the contours of postcolonial, neocolonial, and colonized nations within the Caribbean.

My choice of texts for this project is not meant to be a comprehensive examination of all instances in which this phenomenon of rewriting the romance appears. Instead, I analyze select examples from the Francophone, Anglophone and Spanish-speaking Caribbean in order to demonstrate that this tendency in Caribbean women's writing transcends both national and linguistic space. My treatment of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* in the first chapter establishes her work as literary predecessor to many of the texts that follow. *La migration des cœurs*, for instance, pays direct homage to Rhys's novel in the reappearance of Amélie (the maid seduced by the Rochester character) as Hubert Gagneur's mistress and in the use of Dominica as a place for Cathy and Razyé II's ill-fated honeymoon. All of the texts I examine in the project explicitly represent female sexuality and engage in a tradition of rewriting and re-voicing. Situated in the relatively new field of study that examines Caribbean women's writing as a discrete body of work, my argument rests on the assumption that gender plays a large role in a writer's worldview.[1] As many scholars have noted, Caribbean women's writing shares a number

of concerns with male writing in the region, including the dismantling of colonial power, the treatment of the migrant, slavery, the intersections of race and class, and the difficulties of language. But as Evelyn O'Callaghan argues, women writers maintain a particular vantage point that is often a postcolonial feminist one and is always a gendered one (*Woman Version* 9). She suggests that we approach Caribbean women's writing as a type of "dub version," a remix that "utilizes elements from the 'master tape' of Caribbean literary discourse (combining, stretching, modifying them in new ways); announces a gendered perspective… and generally alters by recontextualization to create a unique literary entity" (11). Thus Caribbean women's writing represents a continuation and modification of previous literary traditions.[2]

The depiction of sexual relationships lies at the heart of romance. Whether these relationships are veiled in innuendo or glossed over with proclamations of true love, the fact of romance, at least historically, lies in the reproductive energies of heterosexual unions. Happy marriages promise the dawn of a new society, not because two individuals have found happiness in each other, but because the happy marriage will result in a new generation. Although not always explicit, love stories are most often also sex stories, and as such, not only articulate cultural norms about sexual behavior but also establish the parameters of acceptable sexual identities. Anglophone Caribbean literature, as Donnell argues in her chapter "Sexing the subject: Writing and the politics of Caribbean sexual identity," has, until recently, been characterized by a silence regarding sex and diverse sexual identities. Donnell positions writing from the 1990s onwards as a new critical moment that has "called into question the dominant matrix of race, ethnicity, gender,

class, and nation through which Caribbean literary forms and cultural identities have been discussed... both locating a significant absence within models of identification and supplementing this model by writing sexual identities into the Caribbean matrix" (181). Donnell argues that Anglophone Caribbean narratives written before the 1990s were generally "'innocent,' avoiding any direct or explicit discussions of sexuality" (182), largely because these narratives focused on childhood. Donnell points out that this focus on childhood experience prevents the texts from addressing adult sexuality: "These texts focus on the growth of political, cultural, and even gender awareness at the expense of that other kind of transition, the development of a sexual identity, which is what actually marks the crossing from child to adult world" (182). These narratives of childhood left sexual identity a "literary unspoken" (182).

While the tandem forces of Victorian sexuality and the legacies of a conservative Anglican religious doctrine helped to shape this literary silence regarding sexuality in the Anglophone Caribbean, in the Spanish-speaking and Francophone Caribbean, Catholic ideology played a large role in determining the acceptable limits of female sexuality. Sexuality in all regions was always understood in relation to race, and while European colonial powers employed race differently in each region, white power in all cases was carefully guarded through the policing of female sexual subjects. The acceptable range of female sexuality was limited and we see this reflected in literary texts. I would not argue that the same type of resounding silence characterizes Spanish-speaking texts (see, for example José Martí's *Amistad funesta* in which he depicts the fatal consequences of desire between women), but there is a correspondence between the era outlined by

Donnell, the 1990s to the present day, in which Anglophone Caribbean writers are breaking the silence surrounding sexuality, and the publication of texts that do similar work in the Spanish-speaking and Francophone Caribbean. For example, Mayra Santos-Febres' novel *Sirena Selena vestida de pena* [*Sirena Selena*] (2000) tells the story of a transgendered *bolerista*, Mayra Montero's *La última noche que pasé contigo* [*The Last Night I Spent with You*] (1991) is a graphic sexual depiction of the licentious unraveling of a middle-aged couple's marriage, and Gisèle Pineau's 1995 novel *L'esperance-macadam* details the horrific consequences of sexual abuse.

The relative silence regarding sex and sexuality in Caribbean narratives has been mirrored in the literary criticism of Caribbean literature. In earlier postcolonial theory, for instance, the categories of race, class and nation often superseded those of gender and sexuality in the analysis of literary texts. Since the mid- 1990s, however, there has been a growing body of criticism that reasserts the importance of these categories and includes, among many others, Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather* (1995), Laura Briggs's *Reproducing Empire* (2002), Ann Laura Stoler's *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (2002), and Belinda Edmondson's *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative* (1999). My hope is that my project will contribute to a growing body of Caribbean, and postcolonial, literary criticism that combines central tenets of feminist thought with an analysis of the workings of colonial power. In fact, I would argue that many contemporary literary works cannot be fully understood unless we start from the central belief, coming from black feminist theorists such as Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith, that all oppressions are

linked.[3] To assert the importance of gender and sexual identities, as I argue the narratives in this project do, is to question not only the workings of racist, imperial power but also the oppression of women in heteropatriarchal societies.

In its analysis of the meaning of sexual relationships in novels by Caribbean women, my project relies most heavily on postcolonial and third world and third wave feminist theory. I use postcolonial theory to frame these writers' practice of rewriting colonial and hegemonic texts. As Carine M. Mardorossian writes, there is a long-standing tradition in postcolonialism of rewriting Western texts: "The practice of rewriting has been seen as exemplary of the field since its inception, since postcolonialism in all its guises has similarly been concerned with replacing colonialist images of difference with more empowering representations from the margins" (7). Mardorossian traces three main forms of postcolonial textual analysis: 1) reading how colonial texts "reproduce or contest the ideological categories of representation that justified colonialism"; 2) reading colonial texts against the grain to uncover the resistance of the postcolonial subject; and 3) analyzing how "new literatures that have emerged from the once colonized countries are 'writing back to the center'" (12). My work in this project engages in all three forms of textual analysis. In each chapter, I read the source text closely. In the first two chapters, for example, I read *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* from a postcolonial and feminist perspective in order to trace how and why Rhys and Condé choose these texts to rewrite. In chapters three and four, I examine how women rewrite earlier postcolonial texts. Mayra Santos-Febres, for example, responds to and rewrites the work of Rosario Ferré, a writer who emerges out of second-wave feminism and earlier discourses of

Puerto Rican nationalism. In the last chapter, my consideration of Dionne Brand is situated in relation to earlier nationalist, not colonial, texts in order to trace how transnationalism is understood through the lens of desire between women. My use of both postcolonial and feminist theory is a complementary process, as the two methodologies often share similar concerns. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin note in the first edition of *The Empire Writes Back*, both feminist and postcolonial theory question forms and modes, unmask patriarchal and colonial assumptions underlying the formation of canons, and reread classical texts in order to demonstrate how these assumptions operate. This work "offers the possibility of reconstructing the canon" and changing the "condition of reading for all texts" (175-176). The subversion of patriarchal literary forms informs a feminist project of rewriting the canon in a practice similar to the subversion of colonial literary forms for postcolonial revision of the canon. The texts I examine in this project do both.

Romance Defined

Defining romance is a necessary but difficult task because the term tentacles out into so many realms of literary scholarship. For this project, I employ "romance" to explore a number of interrelated threads, including romance as narrative mode, the Gothic novel, the romance novel, romance as love story, and the national romance. Barbara Fuchs understands the interlocking manifestations of romance as a type of literary strategy that often exceeds questions of genre. In her historical and critical overview of the term, she does not attempt to isolate a single definition but instead

"demonstrates how different conceptions of the term emerge dynamically, in opposition to other types of literary production" (2). Most importantly, she argues that romance "may be most useful to contemporary readers if it retains some of its historical commodiousness and *is conceptualized as a set of literary strategies that can be adopted by different forms*" (2; emphasis mine). To turn our attention to what romance "does and enables within a narrative not only reveals its bones, but shows most clearly how it appears within a variety of genres" (2). Thus, while this project most obviously does not concern itself with the *romances*, the narrative poems of chivalric quest and adventure that emerge in France in the twelfth century, or with the popular Harlequin *romances* per se, or with the idea of Shakespeare's later plays as *romances*, it nonetheless recognizes the relationship these genres have to each other and continues to explore some of the same elements contained within these more specific, generic categories of romance. These elements might include "idealization, the marvelous, narrative delay, wandering, and obscured identity, that...both pose a quest and complicate it" (Fuchs 9).

Northop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism* and *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* attempts to locate the spirit or essence of romance, tracing it through the Western literary canon as it appears in epic, drama, and narrative. He variously identifies "romance" as an archetype and as genre, arguing that the structures of romance descend from folktales and religious myth. In fact, romance is a secular staging of the battle between good and evil, transformed from the world of the divine into the world of humans. Frye analyzes this battle in regards to the hero's quest and the eventual pairing of hero and heroine despite the obstacles to their union. Romance plots often

contain vestiges of earlier forms of romance, including the ties between quest and eros most clearly defined in medieval chivalric romances. The modern notion, for example, that romance is often used to allegorically represent the nation, is related to the concept, in classical romance, of the relationship between eros and epic. In romance, we see the blending of epic, where quest and war represent fighting for society (nation), and eros, the love interest that interferes with this business of state. So while modern romance is not epic, the allegorical representation of society in romance can be traced back to romantic elements contained in epics such as the *Aeneid*. Fuchs argues that it is through the *Aeneid* that "we read epic as an account of warfare leading to the birth of a nation, focused on a martial hero who represents the group. In this context, romance appears instead as a detour or wandering from the teleological thrust of epic, characterized by circularity or stasis and by the seductions of eros and individual adventures" (13). Although romance has suffered the scorn of literary critics for centuries as a fantastical, lesser form, Fuchs demonstrates that in fact the "masculine" thrust of epic has depended on the narrative wanderings of romance. In the *Odyssey*, for example, "the interest of the narrative lies precisely in the obstacles and detours in Odysseus' way; that is, in the romance that delays his progress while advancing the text" (14).[4]

Frye argues that in all cases romance is fundamentally concerned with the projection of an ideal society, from the earliest epics to the incorporation of romance in the development of the novel. Romance continuously emerges in literature because it provides what Frye terms a type of "wish-fulfillment," a projection of the ideal onto the reality of the world:

> In every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy. This is the general character of chivalric romance in the Middle Ages, aristocratic romance in the Renaissance, bourgeois romance since the eighteenth century, and revolutionary romance in contemporary Russia. Yet there is a genuinely 'proletarian' element in romance too which is never satisfied with its various incarnations, and in fact the incarnations themselves indicate that no matter how great a change may take place in society, romance will turn up again, as hungry as ever, looking for new hopes and desires to feed on. (*Anatomy* 186)

Romance in this schema seems to be a voracious monster, waiting to consume the desires of a community for a different, more ideal reality. It also churns from one social strata to another, so that just as one class is projecting its ideals, another rises up to challenge the idealization of those in power with different formulations of romance. This recirculation of romance might also explain the variety of formal incarnations it has assumed and also the different versions of society that have been projected onto romance. The types of communities imagined through the romance in epic form are different from more contemporary forms of social organization articulated in the novel, for instance. As a number of critics, including Margaret Anne Doody and Ian Duncan, have argued, the novel does not escape the demands of romance so much as incorporate it into the form itself, most explicitly in the romance novel but also in the historical novel, the Gothic novel, and novels of revolution.[5]

Jane Eyre and *Wuthering Heights*, although often not recognized as such, can be read as romance novels. The romance novel is arguably the most easily recognized subgenre of romance because it unfolds according to a predictable formula. Pamela Regis, in her work *The Natural History of the Romance Novel*, argues that the romance novel is "a subset of both comedy and romance in its larger sense" (28). Referring to Frye's *The Secular Scripture*, Regis argues that the "essential elements of the romance novel's plot can best be identified and analyzed through the set of narrative events linked to comedy's ending in marriage with suitable changes made to account for the heroine's central role in the romance novel" (28). Like Rachel Blau DuPlessis, among many others, Regis reads the "happy" ending of the romance novels as one of the singularly most important elements of the genre. The resolution contained in romance is an ordering impulse that organizes chaotic forces that often threaten the society in question. Most scholars of the romance novel would agree that in order to be classified a romance novel, there must be a happy ending (the promise of marriage between the two lovers). In fact, most publishers of romance novels dictate certain formulas for the novels published in their series. So while the circumstance of the romance may differ, the endings always remain the same. In addition to the ending, Regis outlines seven other elements that she deems essential to the romance novel:

> In one or more scenes, romance novels always depict the following: the initial state of society in which heroine and hero must court, the meeting between heroine and hero, the barrier to the union of heroine and hero, the attraction between heroine and hero, the declaration of love between heroine and hero, the

> point of ritual death, the recognition by heroine and hero of the means to overcome the barrier, and the betrothal. (30)

Regis argues that all of these elements must appear to satisfy the generic demands of a romance novel. As we can see from her definition, the romance novel is formally and explicitly heterosexual—each condition depends on the existence of a hero and a heroine. In the following chapters, I will show how the implicit racial paradigms of the romance novel also insist on whiteness as I examine the ways in which Jean Rhys and Maryse Condé rewrite the Brontë romances.

Of the eight essential elements that Regis outlines, the point of ritual death in romance novels signals the moment when comedy can become tragedy.[6] In a romance plot, if the heroine "succeeds" and marries, then we have all of the elements to satisfy the requirements of comedy, of which the romance novel is a subgenre. If, however, the point of ritual death becomes the point of actual death, as is the case in many of the novels I write about in this project, then the romance plot does not satisfy the demands of a romance novel and we have tragedy. DuPlessis argues that these two endings, death and marriage, are the traditional resolutions for romance. In nineteenth-century British novels, marriage rewards heroines who give up their quest for selfhood, whether it be sexual or vocational, to become good wives and mothers. Death, on the other hand, contains those characters who threaten to become independent women: "Death comes for a female character when she has a jumbled, distorted, inappropriate relation to the 'social script' or plot designed to contain her legally, economically, and sexually" (15). DuPlessis argues that in nineteenth-century texts, death comes for protagonists when they

express their selfhood, a selfhood most often represented by their sexuality. Female protagonists die when they violate the sanctioned parameters of established romance by committing adultery, losing their virginity, or having any type of generalized female passion (DuPlessis 15).

These conventions of romance continue to flourish today, as we can see in the booming romance novel industry of Harlequin and Mills and Boon. But many women writers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have chosen to resist and even to rewrite romance. In her book, DuPlessis traces a clear preoccupation for many twentieth-century women writers: the investigation of "how social practices surrounding gender have entered narrative" (4). For all of the writers in DuPlessis's analysis (Virginia Woolf, Olive Schreiner, Anne Sexton, H.D., Adrienne Rich, among others) the romance plot, as an expression of social norms and practices that oppress women, becomes a "major site for their intrepid scrutiny, critique, and transformation of narrative" (4). These writers intervene in the narrative structure itself, because as a narrative pattern, the romance plot "muffles the female character, represses quest, valorizes heterosexual as opposed to homosexual ties, incorporates individuals within couples as a sign of their personal and narrative success" (5). DuPlessis argues that these women "write beyond the ending" of traditional romance plots, inventing transgressive narrative strategies that "express critical dissent from dominant narrative" (5). These strategies include the invention of communal protagonists, the representation of woman-to-woman bonds, reparenting, and the projection of narrative into the future in the form of speculative fiction.

If the romance plot proves a threat to white women's subjectivity, as DuPlessis argues, then it is a double threat for women of color. Because the romance formula requires that the female protagonist be a "lady" (sexually pure and often economically secure), the inclusion of woman of color as female protagonists is impossible in this formula. In colonial representation, women of color are denied access to the categories of sexual purity and the elite social class. In order to shore up the racial purity of "ladies," women of color became everything that the white "lady" was not. In the Caribbean, as in other slave societies, black women were represented as the Manichean other to the white mistress. Kemala Kempadoo outlines how this racialized sexuality was used to consolidate colonial power and domination:

> Slave women were cast in colonial imaginations as promiscuous, 'cruel and negligent as a mother, fickle as a wife,' and immoral. Black femininity was often represented as naturally 'hot constitution'd,' and sensuous in an animal-like way, lacking all the qualities that defined 'decent' womanhood or women of 'purity of blood.' The sexual imagery, leaning on associations between black womanhood and natural earthy instincts, licentiousness, immorality, and pathology, was often painted to arouse disgust and abhorrence for purposes of maintaining slavery by the plantocracy or, alternatively, to illustrate the abolitionists' cause by pointing out how slavery degraded the lives of Africans. It did not, however, deter European male pursuit of sexual intercourse with black women or fascination, delight, and pleasure with the black female body...black women—enslaved or free—were defined as the sexual property of white men. (31)

These ideas of black female sexuality ensured that black women could not usurp the place of the white "lady" in the plantocracies. These fictional sexual characteristics were used to justify slavery, ensure that white men would not marry black or mulatto women, and institutionalized rape, sexual abuse, concubinage, and prostitution (Kempadoo 31). And while many abolitionists and early women suffragists drew parallels between the status of wives and slaves, one very important difference (among many) between the two was the transfer of wealth and property. The position of wife guaranteed, in most cases, some transfer of wealth, to either the wife or the children. Black women, denied access to marriage, were also denied access to the inheritance of capital for themselves or their children, despite the sexual relationships forced on them by white men.[7]

When Caribbean women rewrite the romance plot, they must address and undo these requirements of "the lady." Jane Bryce outlines how the requirements of the "lady" heroine impact Caribbean women:

> the romance heroine is typically of a lower social status than the hero, but in marrying him she is transformed, like Cinderella, into a 'lady'. She could not, however, achieve this transformation, unless she already possessed the attributes of 'ladyness'—modesty, propriety, grace under pressure and a good clothes sense…The aspiration, implanted in the Caribbean feminine consciousness by colonialism, to 'respectability' and 'ladyhood', is… shown to be chimera, a siren call which repeatedly wrecks the self esteem of Caribbean women on the rocks of contradiction. (110)

In the romance formula, the heroine must be a lady, and in order to be a lady, the heroine must be white. This is the obstacle many characters face in the Caribbean rewritings of traditional romance: Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Cathy in *La migration des cœurs*, and Isabel in *Nuestra señora de la noche*. Although they secure the love of the hero, they are never white enough to succeed in the romance formula. They cannot escape the racial bind of the romance, which, as Bryce puts it, is that "the obverse of the white lady's chastity is the myth of the black woman's lasciviousness, while the obverse of the familiar and the domesticated is the unknown and mysterious" (114).[8]

The Politics of Romance

It is clear then that who is doing the imagining determines the ideals that are projected in romance. As we have seen in the examples above, colonial romances like *Jane Eyre* project the racism inherent in the discourses of British empire by constructing romances that idealize racial purity. In the following chapters, I will argue that patriarchal ideology projects an idealization of women as wives and mothers in national romances. Responding to these projections, the novelists I examine here recirculate the form of romance to offer a unique perspective on both the place of women's sexuality and the ideal formulation of society. To undertake this analysis, then, we must bear in mind Fredric Jameson's response to Frye's theories of romance. Jameson adapts Frye's structural methodology by insisting on a historicizing and dialectical model of genre criticism. He aims to recoup the political power of romance, arguing against previous Marxist critics who championed realism as the only legitimate literary form for social

change. He argues that the "spirit" or "world-view" of romance is in fact historically determined:

> We will therefore abstract the following working hypothesis: that the modal approach to genre must be pursued until, by means of radical historicization, the 'essence,' 'spirit,' 'world-view,' in question is revealed to be an ideologeme, that is, a historically determinate conceptual or semic complex which can project itself variously in the form of a 'value-system' or 'philosophical concept,' or in the form of a protonarrative, a private or collective narrative fantasy. (115)

This "ideologeme" is "itself a form of social praxis, that is, as a symbolic resolution to a concrete historical situation" (117). Jameson identifies a type of "spirit" inherent in a genre, but refuses to accord it universal status, as Frye does. Instead, the "spirit" is an "ideologeme" that changes depending on social conditions and circumstances. The ideologeme exceeds mimesis: it is not "a mere reflex or reduplication of its situational context, but as the imaginary resolution of the objective contradictions to which it constitutes an active response" (118). Jameson argues that genres, including romance, are social contracts between a writer and a specific public, and as such, contain ideologies: "in its emergent, strong form a genre is essentially a socio-symbolic message, or in other terms, that form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right. When such forms are reappropriated and refashioned in quite different social and cultural contexts, this message persists and must be functionally reckoned into the new form" (140-141).

In the case of multiple or competing ideologies, we have a combination of heterogeneous forms, a situation that Jameson argues helps to explain complexities of the

novel: "The novel is then not so much an organic unity as a symbolic act that must reunite or harmonize heterogeneous narrative paradigms which have their own specific and contradictory ideological meaning" (144). The novel contains romance as one of its "narrative paradigms." Jameson reads the emergence of this particular paradigm as one that occurs during "times of trouble," or when "two distinct modes of production, or moments of socioeconomic development, coexist" (148). To resolve or champion one mode of production or socioeconomic development over another, an "ordering impulse" emerges from romance that seeks to make the case, as it were, for one vision of society over another. Thus, romance is not so much about the battle between universal forces of good and universal forces of evil, as Frye would have it, but rather about the positioning of one form of society as the legitimate and ideal one. The novels I examine in this project emerge during "times of trouble," especially in regards to the place of the nation and nation-state in relation to the forces of globalization and the demands of late capitalism. Rhys, Condé, Santos-Febres, and Brand all recognize the dangers the demands of nationalism and national allegiance pose to women, but an outright rejection of the social formation of nation is not tenable either, because the nation-state itself would seem to be the last bastion of resistance in the onslaught of transnational capital, itself a legacy and continuation of U.S. and European colonialism. Caribbean women writers, then, have the difficult task of attempting to reimagine an inclusive community that reorders the patriarchal shape of the nation while at the same time rejecting and resisting the transnational forces of globalization and imperialism. With this in mind, we have to question the limits of romance as a form and the capacity of novels by Caribbean

women to both reject certain forms of society and posit new ones. The novels in this project might be seen in light of what Jameson says about *Le Rouge et le noir*: "We may now, therefore, see *Le Rouge et le noir* less as an example [of romance] than a kind of immanent critique of romance in its restructuration of its form" (129).

Benedict Anderson, Franco Moretti, and Doris Sommer, among others, have all traced how the novel as a literary form is implicated in the formation of nations and nation-states. Anderson argues that the nation is an imagined political community, made possible through the rise of print-capitalism and the corresponding mass publication of books and newspapers. Moretti expands Anderson's argument, maintaining that the novel was in fact the most suitable literary form to represent the expansive nature of the nation-state, able to capture in its scope what previous literary forms could not. Whereas people could conceive of their village or city, the limits of the nation-state needed a literary form that could encompass it: "But the nation-state? 'Where' is it? What does it look like? How can one see it? …Well, the nation-state found the novel. And viceversa: the novel found the nation-state. And being the only symbolic form that could represent it, it became an essential component of our modern culture" (17). Doris Sommer has argued that national romances became foundational fictions for Latin American nation-building projects in the nineteenth century. To resolve conflict, these novels presented marriages and unions between disparate members of the nation and employed eros to foster a love for country, patriotism, as the allegorical extension of the love shared between two characters. Sommer's work builds on Anderson to trace how the novel was fundamental to nation-building projects that emerge from independence movements.

In the Caribbean, this relationship between the novel and the nation is often complicated by the fact that many Caribbean societies are not nation-states in the ways outlined by Moretti and Sommer in relation to Europe and Latin America. Many retain their status as colonial possessions, including Puerto Rico, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and the Dutch Lesser Antilles. Even those nations that are formally declared independent nation-states remain under the thumb of world super-powers and their economies, locked in a neocolonial relationship that diminishes the sovereignty of many nation-states in the Caribbean. Barbados, for example, although independent since 1966, has currency that is permanently tied two-to-one to the U.S. dollar, and whose economy remains dependent on tourist dollars from the United Kingdom and on the business of off-shore companies, often from other parts of the former British commonwealth, including Canada. In Martinique, the ATMs dispense euros and the signs for the post office are identical to those you find in France. The affairs of state are often subject to military intervention, as in the case of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Grenada in 1983, an event elegantly condemned in Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*. Nations in the Caribbean are thus subject to varying degrees of transnational intervention, a type of "transnationalism from above" that we can map onto legacies of slavery and colonialism in the region.[9] The current economic order of globalized late capitalism builds on the structures established by European powers during the height of European colonization and expansion. Thus, while nations in the Caribbean have varying degrees of state sovereignty, national formation and the articulation of national communities occurs in uneven power relationships with the U.S. and Europe.

The absence of a political nation-state does not negate the fact of nationalism, as evidenced by national sentiment in places like Puerto Rico or Guadeloupe. Often labeled cultural nationalism, the sense of belonging to a national community does not necessarily depend on advocating for that community's political independence. Jorge Duany, in his book *The Puerto Rican Nation On the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States*, adjusts the parameters of national communities as described by Anderson. Although Duany agrees with Anderson's assertion that nations are "cultural artifacts of a certain kind" (4), he does not agree that nations are necessarily imagined as sovereign or as limited to a certain territory (15). Duany explains the limitations of imagining nations as Anderson does: "Anderson's original formulation of nationalism tends to take for granted that communities are imagined from a fixed location, within a firmly bounded space" (15). Duany sees Puerto Rico as metaphorically *la nación en vaivén* (the nation on the move) because there is a constant, fluid and multidirectional flow of Puerto Rican people between the island and the United States. As a colony of the United States that remains Spanish-speaking despite over a century of U.S. control, Puerto Rico is neither a sovereign state nor a state of the Union. Its population remains divided between supporting commonwealth status and becoming the fifty-first state, and only a small minority advocate for independence (2). Yet Puerto Rican nationalism remains very strong; Duany asserts that while Puerto Ricans value their U.S. citizenship and the freedom of movement that it offers, most Puerto Ricans are Puerto Rican first and U.S. citizens second (2). Duany addresses a number of questions concerning Puerto Rican nationalism and identity: under such fluid migration conditions, "what is the meaning of

Puerto Rican identity? Where is it located? How is it articulated and represented? Who imagines it and from what standpoint? How can a people define themselves as a nation without striving for a sovereign state?" (2). Duany uses the metaphor of "the nation on the move" to address some of these questions, pointing to the "fluid and hybrid identities of Puerto Ricans on the Island and in the mainland" (3). Duany redefines the nation not as a "well-bounded sovereign state but as a translocal community based on a collective consciousness of a shared history, language and culture" (4). In this revised definition, it seems even the idea of the nation as a political imagined community (as defined by Anderson) is in question. Indeed, Duany makes an important distinction between political nationalism and cultural nationalism. Political nationalism, "based on the doctrine that every people should have its own sovereign government" is not synonymous with cultural nationalism, "based on the assertion of the moral and spiritual autonomy of each people" (5). Duany illustrates the difference in the Puerto Rican context, arguing that most Puerto Ricans "now insist that they are a distinct nation—as validated in their participation in such international displays of nationhood as Olympic sports and beauty pageants—but at the same time they want to retain their U.S. citizenship, thus pulling apart what the very term 'nation-state' implies" (5).

The nation and conceptions of nationalism are thus linked, but not dependent on, the political structures of nation-states. Rather than reject the nation as irrelevant in an era of increasing power for transnational capital, the nation remains a relevant organizing principle in Caribbean society. As Shalini Puri argues, the celebration of post-nationalism and hybridity coincided with the rapid increase in transnational capital, and was often a

celebration that only benefited a certain segment of the global elite. She rejects the idea of a post-national world and posits instead that we begin to think of communities transnationally:

> Transnationalism is devoted to studying aspects of human experience and societies that cannot be contained within the boundaries of a nation-state. As a lens of analysis, it includes in its purview transnational nationalisms, transnational antinationalisms, and strategic internationalisms. In contrast, post-nationalism, which I reject, declares the nation effectively dead as a political and analytic category. (6)

She defines nationalism not as an ideology per se but rather as a "'framework' for political activity, and a structure of feeling" (10). The nation, and nation-state, can be the site of both freedom and unfreedom, depending on the articulation of acceptable national subjects, but the outright rejection of nationalism as a structure of feeling does not account for the power of communities to resist the type of "transnationalism from above" that threatens the autonomy of people within those communities. We can also now think of a non-insular nationalism that could expand its parameters of inclusiveness, as Puri notes: "To the extent that tensions exist between transnationalism and nationalism, they are not always or necessarily disabling to either; in other words, there are constant and mutual accommodations being made between globalization and the nation-state, transnationalism and nationalism" (8).

In this project, then, I trace the project of rewriting the romance as it occurs in these specific political and cultural circumstances. I demonstrate how various

transnational forces impact the articulation of desire in Caribbean novels by women. Belinda Edmondson argues that Caribbean women must rewrite the underlying conceptions of the nation as a masculine space:

> If *authorship* is marked as a specifically masculine, specifically *gentlemanly*, enterprise, and national narratives are fundamental to nation formation, then in order to engage in an insurgent Caribbean nationalism the female writer must re-vision what constitutes literary authority itself by rewriting the paradigm of the gentleman author. (*Making Men* 5-6)

They must also rewrite the legacies of representation inherited from colonial discourse about Caribbean women's sexuality, a site often used to shore up conceptualizations of European female subject and her place in the imperial nation. Rewriting the romance does not always result in the creation of new romances, as we shall see, but it does expose the forces that drive the representation of desire by those who employ love, sexuality, and the family to outline the limits of acceptable communities.

Rewriting the Romance

In the first chapter, I argue that Jean Rhys is the foundational figure for this act of rewriting the romance. Although *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) has received much critical attention in the way it rewrites *Jane Eyre*, this chapter will focus on how Rhys rewrites *Jane Eyre* as a national romance and to what effect. I am not suggesting that *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a romance novel, but that as a rewriting of a romance, it contains within it certain elements of a romance, including Antoinette's nearly unspoken relationship

with Sandi. I examine how Rhys rewrites the romance formula in such a way as to establish Antoinette and Sandi as the proper heroine and hero of the tale. While *Jane Eyre* positions Rochester and Jane as the hero and heroine, and Bertha Mason as the barrier to their true love and "happy" union, Rhys positions Rochester as the barrier to the happy union between Antoinette and Sandi. Read symbolically, Rochester is the barrier to a happy national union—because of him, she is unable to "marry" Jamaica or the West Indies. Sandi's identity as mulatto also disrupts the romance formula, and what we are left with in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a narrative composed of the collapsed traces of romance. This chapter establishes Rhys, and her project, as the literary precursor to the writers I examine in the rest of the project.

In the second chapter, I turn to Maryse Condé's 1995 novel *La migration des cœurs* [*Windward Heights*]. I argue that Condé rewrites *Wuthering Heights*, an English Gothic romance, in order to respond to both colonial discourse that defines sexual identities in relationship to racial identities (white women as "pure" wives, mulatto women as prostitutes, black women as sexual animals) and to male nationalist discourses such as *créolité* that champion black women as the mothers of the Creole nation. *La migration des cœurs*, like *Wide Sargasso Sea*, rewrites a romance novel in order to engage in debates about cultural nationalism. Condé chooses Brontë's novel because *Wuthering Heights* reveals the tragedy of love made impossible by nationalist projects. Whatever Heathcliff's actual identity, read by many critics as Irish or possibly Indian, he nonetheless is the dark Other that threatens the old English order. Cathy and Heathcliff's desire, one that succumbs not even to death, buckles under pressures to preserve the

boundaries of an English nation under threat from its empire abroad. Condé, transplanting the plot of *Wuthering Heights* to colonial Guadeloupe, rewrites these colonial conceptualizations of both race and gender.

Chapter three moves away from how Caribbean women rewrite colonial women writers to how Caribbean women writers respond to each other, focusing specifically on the context of Puerto Rico, a nation that can be defined as a stateless nation, similar to Martinique and Guadeloupe as *departements* of France, in its neocolonial relationship to the U.S. This chapter examines Mayra Santos-Febres's response to the work of Rosario Ferré, specifically Ferré's short story "Cuando las mujeres quieren a los hombres"["When Women Love Men"] (1976) and Ferré's novel *The House on the Lagoon* (1995). Ferré's works operate in the tradition of the Puerto Rican family romance, and as such, are centrally concerned with love stories and interracial sexual relationships. Santos-Febres's novel *Nuestra señora de la noche* (2006) explicitly rewrites Ferré's short story in her re-vision of the story of Isabel La Negra, the famous madam of Ponce, and also responds to the Isabel character in Ferré's later novel. Santos-Febres, I argue, continues Ferré's feminist work but also offers a critique of Ferré's national politics. Santos-Febres, in rewriting the story of Isabel La Negra, simultaneously argues for a reconsideration of Puerto Rico as a black Caribbean nation and reveals how desire, love, and marriage operate in a racialized system of exchange still haunted by the legacies of plantation economies.

The fourth chapter positions Trinidadian-Canadian writer Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996) as a novel of revolution. Like many other novels of

revolution, it relies on a romance between two characters to articulate the painful intimacies of struggle. Brand's novel, however, is one of the first in the Caribbean to narrate this revolutionary struggle in the context of desire between black women. I argue that Brand must rewrite the heterosexist, nationalist conventions of the revolutionary romance in order to represent the transnational scope of women's resistance. In her novel, set in Grenada during the American invasion and in Toronto during the 1970s and 80s, women are subject to neocolonial power and patriarchal oppression, but also find the means to resist it in the arms of one another. Women's desire for each other thus exceeds the limits of the nation-state as the novel takes the form of a transnational romance.

My hope is that this project will contribute to the growing body of feminist and postcolonial comparative scholarship that considers how gender and sexuality are shaped by transnational forces. All of the novels in this project take a complicated stance on issues of national identity, because national formulations have often marginalized female subjects. The solution, however, is not to reject the nation. In fact, because of the transnational forces "from above," I argue that these novels engage in a discourse that attempts to imagine what a transnationalism "from below" can do to articulate inclusive communities at home that resist invasion from abroad. The intimate space of desire contained in love stories and in the articulation of sexual relationships becomes an important locus for this investigation because it is in this space that all subjects can be represented. Imagining a love story that reconfigures racist and heteropatriarchal formulas opens up political possibilities while at the same time resisting imperial power.

Notes

[1] See the work of Edmondson, O'Callaghan, Esteves and Paravisini-Gebert, and *Out of the Kumbla*, Ippolito's *Caribbean Women Writers*, Pyne-Timothy's *The Woman, the Writer, and Caribbean Society* and Anim-Addo's *Gender and Genre in Caribbean Women's Writing.*

[2] The publication of writing by Caribbean women is not, as O'Callaghan and many others have noted, merely a contemporary phenomenon. Women in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean have been writing for almost as long as their male counterparts, Gerturdis Gómez de Avellaneda's *Sab* (1841) being the more famous example. Although the literary domain was almost exclusively accessible to the élite, some black women published their writing, Prince and Seacole as notable examples. O'Callaghan's *Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939* helps to establish the historical trajectory of women's writing in the region and notes that the perception that women did not begin writing until recently is one that emerges from the exclusion of women from the canon: "As feminist scholarship has demonstrated, female-authored texts are not so much missing from national archives, as ignored... Determing the 'absence' (or not) of early women's writing then, involves asking who are the arbiters of value at a particular time, and what ethnocentric or gendered discourses inform their judgements" (3-4).

[3] See Barbara Smith's 1977 article "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" in which she argues that "a black feminist approach should have a primary commitment to the exploration of the interrelation of sexual and racial politics and that black and female identities were 'inextricable elements in Black women's writing" (Carby 8). See also Lorde's *Sister Outsider.*

[4] In a similar vein, Lynne Pearce makes the case for a chronotope of romantic love. Pearce expands Mikhail Bakhtin's conception of chronotope to include what she argues is a gendered specificity of all spatio-temporal relations. A chronotope of romantic love, like Bakhtin's adventure chronotope, can be empty time, as seen in the radical or magical dislocation of time/space when two people fall in love. Or a chronotope of romantic love can be heavy with time, as feminist writers weigh the effects of the domestic sphere on their female protagonists.

[5] Duncan also identifies this recirculation of the form: "For us, romance must always be romance revival, meaning not a synchronicity of archetypes across history but an active cultural work of the discovery and invention of ancestral forms, in other words the construction of the archetype as rhetorical figure. The novelist needs 'to re-create the myth if he is to make full use of it', in a process that is allusive rather than vatic, not so much visionary as revisionary" (7). The revisionary nature of romance also explains the wide variety of forms it takes. As Duncan notes, in the last fifty years, romance in literary criticism "has signified a courtly or chivalric fiction of the late Middle Ages, a fanciful or erotic or sentimental enhancement of a situation or event, any unlikely story, a love

affair, highly conventionalized mass-marketed novels read by women, a narrative with a quest in it, four of the last plays of Shakespeare, the American novels of Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, and a super-genre containing all fictional forms and figures that is ultimately the form and figure of a transcendental human imagination" (10).

[6] Regis pulls this element of romance from Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (Regis 35). Frye explains death's relationship to romance such that an "extraordinary number of comic stories, both in drama and in fiction, seem to approach a potentially tragic crisis near the end, a feature I may call the 'point of ritual death'...Sometimes the point of ritual death is vestigial, not an element in the plot but a mere change of tone. Everyone will have noted in comic actions, even in very trivial movies and magazine stories, a point near the end at which the tone suddenly becomes serious, sentimental, or ominous of potential catastrophe" (Frye 179).

[7] As Hazel Carby writes, comparing black women to white women of the elite planter class in the antebellum American south: "As a slave, the black woman was in an entirely different relation to the plantation patriarch. Her reproductive destiny was bound to capital accumulation; black women gave birth to property and, directly, to capital itself in the form of slaves, and all slaves inherited their status from their mothers" (24-25).

[8] Carby outlines a similar paradigm in the American south. From the 1820s until the Civil War, the "dominating ideology used to define the boundaries of acceptable female behavior was the 'cult of true womanhood'" whose basic tenets included piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (23). This feminine ideal, however, could not exist outside of a dialectical relationship to black womanhood. Carby explains: "the figurations of black women existed in an antithetical relationship with the values embodied in the cult of true womanhood, an absence of the qualities of piety and purity being a crucial signifier. Black womanhood was polarized against white womanhood in the structure of the metaphoric system of female sexuality, particularly through the association of black women with overt sexuality and taboo sexual practices" (32). To the extent that all slave societies strictly policed female sexuality, we can trace a similar "metaphoric system of female sexuality" in the Caribbean.

[9] The fact of colonizing also affects the colonizing nation-state, as Anderson notes. In what he sees as the last wave of nationalism, colonial states become national states. The transformation is made possible by the inevitable instillation of national ideologies by the colonizing powers into the colonized populations. This is the ultimate paradox (and as Fanon and Césaire have noted, the ultimate reason for the decay of colonizing nations) of a colonial power that claims to be an "officially national" state: as such, it is caught between recognizing sovereign nations or peoples and colonizing them.

CHAPTER II

CREOLIZING THE IMPERIAL ROMANCE: JEAN RHYS AND *JANE EYRE*

The 1993 film adaptation of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), directed by John Duigan, is widely recognized as a cinematic failure and criticized for its overly wrought erotics and exoticization of its Caribbean setting. Nonetheless, a few successful scenes remain, including one that does not appear in the novel but that captures the spirit of Rhys's concern with romance and the sexual politics of empire. The scene depicts Rochester attending a ball in Jamaica discussing Antoinette with members of the colonial elite. After some terse exchanges, one of the men expresses that it is their duty to return inside to dance with the "wallflowers." The next shot is of a line of young black men, stationed as servants, followed by a shot that pans down the line of the white women who are the supposed wallflowers. The irony is expressed visually: while there are not enough white men to go around for dancing, here are black men, closer in age and more handsome than the white men the women must dance with, who remain unavailable because of the taboo against interracial relationships. Their visual placement suggests that both the white women and the black men share a similar longing, perhaps for each other, but certainly for autonomy.

As Rochester dances with one of the white Creole women, she attempts to make conversation. Commenting on the fact that there was snow "at home" (in England), she

attempts to relate to Rochester as if they were both English. He replies: "But surely, as you were born in this country, this is your home." She is shocked, exclaiming "Certainly not, Mr. Rochester! Even in the good times, it was no fit place for a lady." This character cannot be affiliated with a Creole national identity because it would negate her claim on the category of "lady" and trouble her mission to marry an Englishman. The next scene cuts back to Rochester and Antoinette's honeymoon house, where two black servants are dancing in a repetition of the movement between Rochester and the young woman in the previous scene. The young woman berates her partner, insisting "You're supposed to lead." And follows with: "How can you be a gentleman when you smell like a horse?" These two scenes highlight what roles are available to which members of a colonial Jamaican society. Although the motions and poses may be the same for the two black servants dancing, whiteness is the key commodity to any claims of "lady" or "gentleman."

I cite these scenes because they distill the novel's central concern with romance. While there has been some critical attention to the ways in which Rhys rewrites certain elements of the romance in *Jane Eyre*, in this chapter I explore how *Wide Sargasso Sea* reflects a rewriting of romance on a number of registers, including romance as narrative mode, the Gothic romance, and the romance novel. In the first half of the chapter I outline how *Jane Eyre* functions as an imperial romance, one which uses the creole "Other" of Bertha Mason to construct an acceptable white English female subject capable of domesticating English men who, as colonizers, expose themselves to the "dangers" of an "impure" empire. In the second half of the chapter, I argue that *Wide Sargasso Sea*

rewrites the imperial romance of *Jane Eyre* and questions colonial assumptions about sexual and racial purity. Rhys writes a type of creole romance, one which uses discourses of love and desire to theorize the complexities of creolized identities. With a focus on the figure of the white Creole woman, Rhys exposes how romance has been used in colonial texts to subjugate colonized subjects. Although Rhys never fully rejects the assumptions of colonial ideology, her novel was one of the first to undertake the project of rewriting the romance in the Caribbean. As such, her work is an important precursor of what I term here the transnational romance, a mode that uses love and desire to demonstrate how national communities, and in particular female members of those national communities, are shaped by and subject to multiple national and imperial forces.

Legacies of Gothic Romance in *Jane Eyre*

In an interview with Elizabeth Vreeland, Jean Rhys reveals at least two motivations for writing *Wide Sargasso Sea*:

> When I read *Jane Eyre* as a child, I thought, why should she think Creole women are lunatics and all that? What a shame to make Rochester's first wife, Bertha, the awful madwoman, and I immediately thought I'd write the story *as it might really have been*. She seemed such a poor ghost, I thought I'd write her a life. (Vreeland 235, emphasis mine)

One the one hand, Rhys intends to address the stereotype of the white Creole woman, and on the other, to write her into history, to explain how the story "might really have been."[1] Taking up Bertha's story, however, requires more complexity than merely adding another

point of view to Brontë's novel. For Bertha to have a life, Rhys must engage *Jane Eyre* on a number of registers, including those of realism and romance. The mad Creole in the attic is not an accident of plot, but a figure on which the entirety of *Jane Eyre* rests. She defines what Jane is not and embodies the threat of sexual excess and racial invasion. The multiplicity of genres contained in *Jane Eyre* resonate through her character, and she is so tightly bound to these conventions that Rhys must rewrite Brontë's tale at the level of both form and content. To more fully understand how Rhys undertakes the rewriting of form, we must first trace the manifestations of romance in *Jane Eyre*, including romance's relationship to realism, the Gothic romance, and the romance novel.

As I have outlined in the introduction, the privileging of realism in the definition of the novel emerges from a desire to cleanse "serious" novels of any possible association with more "feminine" forms of writing. This tendency in literary criticism is linked to a patriarchal and teleological understanding of the novel's development in Europe, specifically in Britain. In its ascendancy the novel was seen to replace earlier, more "backward," forms of romance. As Northrop Frye puts it in *Anatomy of Criticism*: "Romance is older than the novel, a fact which has developed the historical illusion that it is something to be outgrown, a juvenile and undeveloped form" (306). Brontë's decision to include elements of romance in her novel placed her at some risk in this regard. Writing under the male pseudonym Currer Bell, she attempted to avoid the charge of being another "silly woman novelist," but nonetheless, the inclusion of romance was generally regarded as one of the novel's "defects" by contemporary reviewers.[2] Brontë is

writing at a time when Gothic romance has fallen out of favor, and her return to elements of romance rocked the boat of Victorian literary convention (Wolff 104).

Frye situates Brontë in relation to a type of Romantic revival, emerging along with Scott as part of a "mysterious Northumbrian renaissance, a Romantic reaction against the new industrialism of the Midlands" (306). Frye understands romance in a myriad of ways, but in relation to realism, the romantic is one of three organizations of myth in literature: there is the undisplaced myth that is concerned with gods and demons and exists outside of the realm of humans; there is the romantic tendency "to suggest implicit mythical patterns in a world more closely associated with human experience;" and there is realism, a tendency which places more "emphasis on content and representation rather than on the shape of the story" (139-140). In Frye's understanding, a text like *Jane Eyre* exhibits a romantic tendency because it uses the mythical structures typically allocated to tales of gods and demons in order to tell tales about mere mortals. It is romance in this sense that Sandra Gilbert references in comparing *Jane Eyre* to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*: Jane embarks on a mythic quest-plot of an Everywoman whose journey through various obstacles presented by a patriarchal society (oppression, starvation, madness, coercion) leads to the promised land and natural paradise, Ferndean. No Celestial City waits for Jane, but Nature itself promises to mend the wounded Rochester and enclose the happy couple in its tranquil greenery (Gilbert 490). Reading Jane as this sort of allegorical heroine elevates *Jane Eyre* to the status of romance, a form that exists between the novel and myth. In this scheme, again from Frye: "The romance,

which deals with heroes, is intermediate between the novel, which deals with men, and the myth, which deals with gods" (306).

Helen Moglen reads *Jane Eyre* as emblematic of the type of romance Frye describes, especially in regards to characterization in romance, which seeks not so much to create "real people" as to create "stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes" (304). Rather than dismiss this form, Frye regards it positively, noting that the creation of these archetypes helps to explain why "the romance so often radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks, and why a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping around its fringes" (304). Moglen notes that *Jane Eyre*'s allegorical qualities appear in the novel's repetitive structure, one which emulates a fairy tale or a quest-romance in which "characters, situations, and symbols must be rehearsed again and again, the heroine experiencing with each new revolution an increment of pressure and intensity, until the ultimate resolution of conflict is achieved" (108). She compares the novel to the fairy tales of the "dispossessed princess," tales like *Cinderella* that distance the heroine from a family structure, leaving her alone to pass through a number of trials, all of which prove her moral worth, until the prince recognizes her royalty hidden beneath the trappings of poverty. This recognition leads the prince to "acknowledge their kinship and, through marriage, bestow upon her the family, wealth, and status which are the external signs and guarantees of her true value" (108).

What makes *Jane Eyre* interesting, both now and when it was first published, is not so much its use of romance as the ways in which the novel blends elements of romance with conventions of literary realism. John Maynard argues that Brontë creates

an "exceptionally fertile hybrid," a "new Gothic," one that reuses the stock Gothic events and trappings to create characters with greater depth. Maynard notes that *Jane Eyre* draws on multiple elements of romance, including the Gothic: "More generally, we could speak of a new romance or a new unrealism, for Brontë dips not only into Gothic but also into fairy tale, Bible and religious paradigm, or myth for structures, images or themes that she can turn to use in bringing out psychology more effectively" (94). Delia da Sousa situates *Jane Eyre* as a model for later novels that also challenged the strict doctrines of realism:

> In a specific sense, *Jane Eyre* is a romance because it is a love story. More generally, the novel might be described as a romance in that... it pursues the desires and fantasies of the protagonist, and of the reader... 'Realist' novels frequently contain a good deal of romance, in all the senses outlined here. Indeed, *Jane Eyre* influenced the way in which many subsequent realist novels combined romantic elements into their narratives. (92)

Lest we stray too far from the implications of these formal innovations, Robyn Warhol reminds us that destabilizing generic conventions creates possibilities for social commentary. She argues that the two Janes in the novel, the younger Jane who is our heroine and the older Jane who narrates the tale, occupy distinct generic spaces: "...in *Villette*—as in *Jane Eyre*—the heroine and the narrator, though they are the same 'person,' are inhabiting two separate genres of fiction. The heroines are living a Gothic romance, and the narrators are telling a realist tale" (26). Warhol reads this multiplicity of genres and the splitting of Jane into both narrator and character as a method for Brontë to

question Victorian gender dichotomies: "Ultimately, I am hypothesizing that the refusal to be either realistic or Gothic, to write from the position of either a narrator or a character, is linked to a subversive impulse against a Victorian insistence on being either masculine or feminine, either male-identified or female-identified in life and in writing" (35). One could also read Brontë's decision to publish under the male pseudonym Currer Bell as a further destabilization of the boundaries of gender/genre, although it would seem the feminine Gothic heroine becomes encased in two masculine frames: that of the realist, rational narrator and that of the "male" author.

Enclosing the female Gothic in these narratives that were more aligned with "masculine" reason and authorship enabled *Jane Eyre* to be taken seriously by contemporary critics while at the same time allowing Brontë to explore issues of female sexuality. Brontë is borrowing from an earlier tradition of Gothic writing, exemplified by the work of Clara Reeve and Ann Radcliffe, among others. Novels like Reeve's *The Old English Baron* or Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* were widely read and established some of the conventions of the form. Cynthia Griffin Wolff asserts that the Gothic romance was so popular during the eighteenth century because it dramatized female sexual experience while at the same time remaining "safe": "Because the heroine was generally devoid of passion, these novels might rehearse the potent and complex elements of feminine sexuality while appearing to reinforce the social definition of women as basically 'pure' and 'passive'" (104). Wolff argues that in these romances, "the process of feminine sexual initiation found respectable, secular expression," however limiting (111). Wolff surmises that these novels were so popular with women

because they represented women as sexual beings, a fact that their society was often "at pains to deny" (99).

Wolff identifies a number of Gothic conventions, which Brontë both adopts and modifies to suit her purposes. All Gothic novels situate danger in interior, domestic spaces. There might be a haunted apartment, a secret room, a treacherous cave, tunnel, or basement (99-100). These secret spaces are often compared to wombs and vaginas by critics who read the Gothic houses as symbolic of women's bodies and the terror of these interior spaces as a fear of developing female sexuality (see, for example, the red room Jane is locked in as a girl for disobeying her aunt). If the heroine can stay away from these spaces and resist the urge to go snooping around, then she will usually be safe. These terrorizing interior spaces are contained within Gothic buildings, usually a castle, abbey, or manor house, that function symbolically as the site for the heroine's struggle with her sexuality: "Thus the 'Gothic' building (whatever it may be) that gives the fiction its name may become in this treatment of the tradition a way of identifying a woman's body… when she is undergoing the siege of conflict over sexual stimulation or arousal" (100-01). In a nod to earlier conventions of romance and myth, time and space are often not clearly defined in the novels, set in a type of "never-never land," "existing beyond the reach of spatial or temporal constraints" (101). At the level of plot, the heroine is presented with two choices: a "chaste" lover or a "demon" lover. Wolff sees these two choices as a reflection of the conflicted nature of the heroine's own longing. The choice she makes determines her success and establishes her right to preside over the Gothic building. Of course, she must choose the "chaste" lover, and in fact, he is always the hero

of the tale, for whom the heroine declares her preference early in the narrative. In this sense, the Gothic romance also anticipates the formula of the modern romance novel: "Generally the heroine declares her preference for the hero very early in the novel; an obstacle to their union is discovered; and they remain throughout the story—pining, faithful, (exchanging, at best, a chaste kiss)—to be rewarded at the very conclusion with the gift of matrimony" (103). An important element of the Gothic that is picked up in *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *La migration des cœurs* is the spectre of incest. Wolff notes that the heroine's aversion to the "darkly attractive" demon lover is usually justified through the taboo of incest: he turns out to be a father or an uncle, clouding the entire tale with the threat of the most forbidden desire and comes to represents dangerous sexual passion.

Wolff claims that although Gothic romances enjoyed less popularity in Victorian England, we can nonetheless find their truest translation in *Jane Eyre*. Although the novel reinvents and rejects certain conventions of the form, including the tendency to blur space and time and the two-dimensional "puppet" heroine (106), Brontë continues to address the same problem that plagued previous authors of the Gothic romance: the dilemma of feminine sexuality (106). Taking up this dilemma, she translates the Gothic romance into literary realism, and the result is a novel "composed out of the constituent parts of romance—a specific, contemporary story that nonetheless evokes elemental feelings with great force" (106). Wolff argues that *Jane Eyre* seeks to repossess the sexual inclinations of women. In previous Gothic romances, the sexual desires of women were deflected onto men: passive women had their choice between the embodiment of passion (the

darkly attractive "demon" lover) or chastity (the hero). In Brontë's fiction, there is a reintegration of these forces as Jane asserts, wandering the very Gothic stairways and hallways of Thornfield Hall, that women feel just as men do. The dilemma for Jane, Wolff argues, is that the repossession of her sexuality poses certain dangers. She must eliminate the "primitive, narcissistic, amoral element of raw passion" and replace it with a sexuality that allows Jane to function within the confines of a rigid society. As Wolff puts it: "A 'real' woman must be able to function in a 'real' world, and she must domesticate even her sexuality in some degree. It becomes Jane's task then to find a median position between complete denial of sexuality and unchecked expression of desire" (108). I would add to this analysis that if Jane essentially succeeds in this endeavor of establishing a sanctioned, domestic sexuality, there are plenty of women in the novel who fail to do so, Bertha Mason and Céline Varens chief among them. The economic and psychological consequences of their adoption of the "amoral elements of raw passion" are made apparent throughout the text: Rochester himself doling out the punishment to these women when they take other lovers, or when he suspects them of doing so.[3]

Rochester is, however, himself entirely contained within Jane's first-person narration. We know him only as Jane knows him, and he becomes both the embodiment of Jane's passion and the hero of the tale. As Wolff notes, in a further revision of Gothic romance, Jane does not choose the "chaste" lover, St. John Rivers, but instead the dark, "demon" lover Rochester. She inverts the form in this respect, because Rochester is Jane's choice from the beginning, and St. John Rivers is introduced later in the story as a

potential obstacle to the marriage between Jane and Rochester. In this sense, part of the scandal might be that Jane marries the man who embodies her sexual passion, rejecting the possibility of a loveless marriage that Rivers can promise her. Wolff argues that Rochester can only become the husband after his mutilation in the fire, because it scales his character down from the dangerous, demon-lover who embodies sexual passion to the domesticated, "real" man whom Jane loves and now must care for (110).

The most potent symbol of the Gothic romance in *Jane Eyre* remains the figure of Bertha Mason. She is the danger that haunts Thornfield Hall, and the threat to Jane and her happiness with Rochester. Wolff argues that by adopting fantastical elements of the Gothic romance, Brontë can express the danger of unchecked sexual passion on two registers: the fantastic and the real. Bertha is a ghostly presence, but she is also the West Indian Creole wife. She is a "real" woman in the real world, but also an "embodiment of unchecked animal passion" (109). Her symbolic force wafts through the novel, haunting both the hallways of Thornfield Hall and Jane's conscience as a warning of "the possible consequences of [Jane's] own desire should it develop entirely without restraint" (109). Bertha can perform both of these functions because Brontë combines the fantastical elements of romance with those of realism, allowing Bertha to exist as a ghostly presence the reader rarely confronts (109). Bertha can exist in a realist narrative as well because she is a monster built upon assumptions of an imperialist attitude about race and sexuality. Although slightly exaggerated, Bertha's tendency to alcoholism, animalistic passion, loose morals, and violence would not have seemed a fantastical departure from the reality of West Indian Creole women, as perceived by those in the metropole.[4]

Jane Eyre and the Romance Novel

The Gothic novel is intimately related to the romance novel. While the Gothic may be read as a romance novel, the romance novel is not necessarily Gothic (it does not rely on specific conventions like the haunted apartment, for instance). The romance novel has had an uneasy relationship with literary criticism. In its contemporary form, most notably Harlequin romances, it has only recently begun to garner serious critical attention. Many scholars have scorned the romance novel because of its repetitive formula and almost exclusively female readership, and it has been reviled by many feminist critics for the ways in which the formula supports patriarchal oppression. However, recent studies, especially Pamela Regis's *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* and Tania Modleski's *Loving with a Vengeance*, take the romance novel on its own terms in order to understand its mass-market appeal and its place in literary history.[5] Both Regis and Modleski claim the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British novel as progenitor to the contemporary romance novel, citing such canonical works as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Jane Eyre*.[6] Modleski asserts that Brontë can be credited with inventing a number of the characters and situations of popular contemporary romance (38).

Reading *Jane Eyre* backwards through the lens of popular romance reveals the debt contemporary forms owe to Brontë's novel. Modleski outlines the formula dictated for all Harlequin romances:

> …a young, inexperienced, poor to moderately well-to-do woman encounters and becomes involved with a handsome, strong, experienced, wealthy man, older than herself by ten to fifteen years. The heroine is confused by the hero's behavior since, though he is obviously interested in her, he is mocking, cynical, contemptuous, often hostile, and even somewhat brutal. By the end, however, all misunderstandings are cleared away, and the hero reveals his love for the heroine, who reciprocates. (28)

Jane Eyre, of course, exceeds this formula at many points and also, as Modleski notes, often subverts it (38). The formula is more complicated and drawn out in Brontë's text. There are a number of misunderstandings and almost-weddings before Jane can declare in the last chapter "Reader, I married him" (382). Modleski reads these variations from a romance formula as subversion: when Jane runs away from Thornfield after discovering the existence of Bertha, Rochester's West Indian wife, she runs away not to bring Rochester to his knees and compel him to seek her out, but rather in order to find herself. In the lengthy narrative stay with her newly discovered cousins, the Rivers, Jane achieves a certain moral and economic independence. As Modleski reads it, Jane "is running away from, rather than into the fantasy, since to stay with Rochester would mean going against the law and her own sense of right" (38). Only after Bertha's death in the fire, and Rochester's Biblical punishment (he loses a hand and an eye attempting to rescue Bertha from the flames) can Jane and Rochester properly marry. Jane's assertion of her independence runs throughout the novel, so that even when Rochester is pretending that he intends to marry Blanche Ingram, Jane tells him that if he marries, she will leave.

Rochester compares her declaration to the frantic efforts of a wild bird struggling against a net, and Jane replies: "'I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will; which I now exert to leave you'" (216). Jane will not have Rochester at any cost and demands that he recognize her humanity *as a woman*, a bold claim in Victorian England when women were forced to depend on men legally and financially. Ironically, Rochester ensnares her immediately after her declaration, offering his hand in marriage. Although Jane puts up a fight, she eventually agrees. *Jane Eyre* is a romance novel in that it eventually ends in marriage, but it retains elements of subversion because the marriage occurs on Jane's terms, not Rochester's.

Regis, like Modleski, argues that *Jane Eyre* is a romance novel, albeit one that is flexible in its form. Citing the work of scholars who have grappled with the formal questions surrounding *Jane Eyre*, including Moglen, Sandra Gilbert, and Harold Bloom, Regis notes that the novel incorporates elements of a number of genres, including romance (in the sense outlined by Frye), the mythic quest-plot of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, a hybridized form of Gothic romance that Bloom terms a "northern romance," a feminist fairytale, and the *Bildungsroman* or novel of education (85-86). I would argue that in loosely adhering to the romance novel formula, as outlined by Modleski, the novel is able to accommodate these various forms. For example, the novel begins with Jane's childhood and she does not meet Rochester until almost a hundred pages into the text. Her detour to the Rivers costs another eighty pages. The spaces in between the required elements of a romance novel permit Brontë to include elements from other genres.

Regis, as I have outlined in the introduction, identifies eight essential elements of the romance novel, all of which occur in *Jane Eyre*: the description of the state of the society in which the courtship between hero and heroine occur, the meeting of the hero and heroine, the barrier to their union, the attraction between the hero and heroine, their declaration of love, the point of ritual death, the recognition by the hero and heroine of how they can overcome the barrier, and the betrothal (30). Jane is courted by both Rochester and St. John. The barriers to her union with Rochester are both real and manufactured. Rochester pretends to court Blanche Ingram, a beautiful and wealthy member of the nobility. Her wealth and beauty contrast sharply with Jane's plainness and poverty, a contrast that emphasizes the considerable barrier a woman like Blanche poses to any union between Rochester and Jane (87). Blanche, of course, is an imagined threat created by Rochester to test Jane's love for him. Bertha Mason, locked in the attic, presents a very real barrier, both physically and legally, to Jane and Rochester's wedded bliss. Both Jane and Rochester suffer a ritual death, Jane on the moors and Rochester in the fire. The barrier is overcome once Bertha is dead and Jane assures Rochester that no other barriers remain (89). He fears there is another man and that Jane will not want him because he is too old and maimed. Jane assures him none of these conditions are the case, and we get a second proposal and, eventually, a marriage and the birth of their son.

***Jane Eyre* as Imperial Romance**

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that these elements of the plot can be read as Jane's movement through illegitimate and legal family spaces, suggesting that *Jane Eyre*

represents a "sequential arrangement of the family/counter-family dyad" (309). At the beginning of the novel, the Reeds are the legal family, and Jane, as their charge, the representative of the "near incestuous counter-family" (309). At Thornfield Hall, Jane finds herself in the same position, with "Rochester and the mad Mrs. Rochester as the legal family and Jane and Rochester as the illicit counter-family" (309). By the end, however, Jane and Rochester become the central, sanctioned family. Spivak argues that Jane's move from counter-family to legal family is predicated on the "unquestioned ideology of imperialist axiomatics" (310). Jane is able to form her legal family because Bertha's status as less-than-human weakens "her entitlement under the spirit if not the letter of the Law" (312).

Spivak, noting that Marxist critics such as Terry Eagleton have read Jane's position in relation to Bertha as a question of class, and feminist critics like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have read Bertha in psychological terms as Jane's dark double, insists that we read Bertha Mason in the context of British imperialism. Indeed, she begins the essay with two 'facts' that nonetheless had received little attention (in 1985) in the reading of nineteenth-century British literature: that it should be impossible to read such literature without remembering that "imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English" and that the "role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored" (306). That these two facts had been so disregarded attested to the "continuing success of the imperialist project, displaced and dispersed into more modern forms" (306). With these claims and analysis of *Jane Eyre*, we can situate Spivak's essay as one

of the first to do a postcolonial reading of the novel (unless we count Rhys's novel as the first).[7]

Another important contribution that Spivak makes in this essay is to reveal the complicity of feminist literary studies with the logic of imperialism. While many feminist critics had championed the protofeminism of Brontë's novel, Spivak outlines how this consolidation of female individualism that Jane undertakes is entirely dependent on the colonial Other. In fact, reading *Jane Eyre* in relation to English perceptions of Indian widow-sacrifice, Spivak argues that *Wide Sargasso Sea* powerfully articulates this relationship: "I try to extend, outside of the reach of the European novelistic tradition, the most powerful suggestion in *Wide Sargasso Sea*: that *Jane Eyre* can be read as the orchestration and staging of the self-immolation of Bertha Mason as 'good wife'" (321).

Reading the romance plot of *Jane Eyre* and understanding its Gothic elements in light of imperialism reveals not only the ways in which the novel seeks to make the case for English women's rights but also the ways it predicates the granting of those rights on certain sexual behaviors. In the novel, national identity and sexual identity are intricately bound. Bertha cannot claim Englishness because she is marked as Creole, both legally and through her behavior and appearance. When Mr. Briggs, the solicitor, interrupts Jane's first wedding ceremony with Rochester, he reads a document signed by Bertha's brother, Richard Mason, attesting to Bertha's origin and parentage. The document identifies Rochester's property and national origin as English but Bertha is the daughter of "Jonas Mason, merchant, and of Antoinetta his wife, a Creole" (247). Like mother, like daughter: Bertha as a Creole is presented in opposition not only to Rochester's

Englishness but also to Jane's. She possesses none of the characteristics to which Jane can lay claim, including reason, modesty, or even humanness. Indeed, Rochester insists that he has the right to marry Jane because Bertha is less than human. He tells the visitors, inviting them to the attic where he keeps Bertha: "You shall see what *sort of being* I was cheated into espousing, and judge whether or not I had the right to break the compact, and seek sympathy with *something at least human*" (249, emphasis mine). Jane, at least, is human. Not a resounding declaration of love, but an important distinction when the stakes of national identity are reflected through the formulations of romance.

If we read the novel as representing the state of the society in which it is set, as Regis argues is one important element of romance novels, then we can follow some of the allegorical implications of Jane and Rochester's union. While Jane is certainly a daring heroine by nineteenth-century standards, choosing the darkly attractive "demon" lover over the chaste St. John Rivers, she is a less transgressive figure when we read her within the context of British empire, as Spivak has shown. Jane's character ultimately makes the case that English citizenship should be extended to white women of the educated middle class, but to make this argument the novel has to tackle the patriarchal assumptions of hysterical sexuality that women dangerously embody. Brontë's novel shifts this hysterical sexuality onto the colonial Other, demonstrating through comparison the faculties of reason of which white English women, especially those separate from the decaying decadence of the aristocracy, are capable. Rochester describes to Jane how unsuitable Bertha is, relating the first years of their marriage:

I found her nature wholly alien to mine… her cast of mind common, low, narrow,

> and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher… What a pigmy intellect she had—and what giant propensities! Bertha Mason,—the true daughter of an infamous mother,—dragged me through all the hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste. (261)

Although Rochester admits he gained wealth through the marriage, his spiritual inheritance is indigence, tied to a being whose nature was "the most gross, impure, depraved" he has ever seen (261). He implies that her insanity is caused by her impure and unchaste behavior, perhaps even the result of contracting syphilis.

Needless to say, the novel takes great pains to establish how national identity cannot emerge from a union such as this. No celebration of hybridity or mixing to be found here; instead we find an insistence on "pure" categories: sexual, racial, and national, all categories Rhys will methodically question and undo in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The Creole woman lends herself to the monstrous in Victorian fiction precisely because she threatens these categories. Her origins are masked in secrecy; her proximity to racial Others suggests not only that her sympathies could lie with them (undermining colonial authority), but also that her body (or her mother's) might lie with them as well. This suspicion of women's reproductive energies and the unknowable womb are themes we will return to in the next chapter, when Maryse Condé picks up Rhys's project of exploring the boundaries of Creole romance, but for now we turn our focus to *Wide Sargasso Sea* and its critique of *Jane Eyre* and imperial romance.

***Wide Sargasso Sea* and the Creole Romance**

If *Jane Eyre* is situated in the historical context of Victorian England and the height of British Empire, then *Wide Sargasso Sea*, written roughly a century later, emerges from the decline of the British Empire and the processes of decolonization and struggles for independence in the former British colonies in the Caribbean. There is some evidence to suggest that Rhys began the novel as early as the 1940s,[8] although the final version was begun in 1957 (she considered titling the novel *Creole* at this point). It was finally published in England in 1966. The first of her novels to be set in the West Indies (her earlier novels were set in Europe)[9], it is the work that defined Rhys as a Caribbean author. Rhys was born in Dominica in 1890, but she left the Caribbean in 1907, returning only once for a brief visit in 1936. Her literary activity was stalled throughout the 1940s and 50s, a silence that one might attribute to the disruption in publishing caused by the second World War. Judith Raiskin argues, however, that this silence coincided with the rise of national and decolonization movements in Africa and the Caribbean, and notes that while Rhys's earlier fiction contained a number of ambivalences about colonial relationships, it was only after the struggles for independence that Rhys fully realized her complex analysis of colonialism that we see in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In the years she began writing the novel, the Federation of the West Indies was formed and the Labour Party was gaining ground and would win elections in Dominica in 1961. Although Dominica did not become an independent nation until 1978, a year before Rhys's death, the political mechanisms were already in place during the time Rhys was writing her final novel.

The critical reception of the novel in some ways mirrors Rhys's own struggles to understand her subject position in relationship to England and the West Indies. Her identity as a white Creole writer living in Europe has been a point of contention for Caribbean literary scholars, including Edward Kamau Brathwaite, who claimed in his 1974 work *Contradictory Omens* that white Creole experience could not speak to the realities of the majority population in the Caribbean:

> White creoles in the English and French West Indies have separated themselves by too wide a gulf and have contributed too little culturally, as a group, to give credence to the notion that they can, given the present structure, meaningfully identify or be identified, with the spiritual world on this side of the Sargasso Sea. (38)

Other scholars insisted on claiming Rhys and *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a part of Caribbean literary tradition, including Wally Look Lai, the first West Indian to write about Rhys's novel and also the first to claim it as West Indian in his 1968 essay "The Road to Thornfield Hall" (Rhys 103). Look Lai argued against the notion, widely held in the initial reviews of the novel, that *Wide Sargasso Sea* was an English novel, and deplored the fact that not one review of the novel had appeared in a West Indian newspaper or magazine. A few years later, Kenneth Ramchand in his 1976 work *An Introduction to the Study of West Indian Literature*, uses the case of Rhys to pose two important questions in regards to West Indian literature. *Wide Sargasso Sea* forces us to ask "What makes a novel a West Indian novel? And what do we mean when we say a writer is a West Indian writer?" (91). He traces Look Lai's argument that Rhys is a West Indian writer because

her novel is about the West Indies, and ultimately offers another perspective on the novel, arguing that a novel is West Indian if it "challenges West Indians to understand the world and their social relations better, and with such authenticity that the challenge cannot be ignored even if we want to set it aside" (107). Since these debates in the 1960s and 70s, Rhys has become firmly entrenched in the canon of Caribbean literature. A consideration of these debates, however, reveals deep anxiety about national identity and racial identity in the Caribbean. Furthermore, these debates also expose the extent to which literary scholarship was and is shaped by European notions of national and cultural identity. The transnational movements of exile and immigration often complicate the positioning of writers within a certain national canon, while also disturbing the elision of whiteness with citizenship. We see this clearly in the term "Black British" used to describe contemporary writers like Zadie Smith, herself a descendent of immigrants who left the Caribbean for England after the war. Such debates also expose the suspicion that members of the colonial elite cannot be accommodated in new national and regional formations in the Caribbean that reject claims to white power.

Rhys's investigation of the relationship between the Creole and the metropole remains an object of fascination for literary scholars and writers in the Caribbean, despite the controversy surrounding the reception of the novel and its place in the canon of Caribbean literature. Foregrounding the issue of nationalism, a number of scholars have traced how the struggle of Creole and metropole transcends the identity of the characters to embody the political struggles for independence in the twentieth century.[10] Lee Erwin makes the case that the novel in fact occupies a space between nationalisms, positing a

"response to the loss, rather than the recovery, of a 'place-to-be-from,' enacting a struggle over identity which is a peculiarly modern rereading of West Indian history" (143). Raiskin also notes this oscillation between national poles in Rhys's fictional characters: the "doubleness of their identities—as both Caribbean and English while also neither Caribbean nor English—forces them to shift between the two national 'realities'" (147). Rhys uses this confusion about national, and racial, identity as a means to explain Bertha's madness in *Jane Eyre*. Rewriting the character as Antoinette, she resists the representation of white Creole women as depraved creatures and instead offers an indictment of the material consequences of empire. As Antoinette tells the Rochester character on their honeymoon: "'So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all'" (61).[11] Antoinette, unmoored from any recognized claim to a national identity (whether it be English or West Indian), is desperate to find herself. It is this quest, ultimately an unsuccessful one, that becomes her undoing in the narrative.

As I have outlined in the introduction and the above section on *Jane Eyre*, struggles for national identity are often represented through love stories. In the remainder of this chapter, then, I turn my attention to how we can read these struggles of national identity in the context of romance in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. A number of scholars have noted the importance of romance in the novel, including Joyce Carol Oates, Peter Hulme, Jane Bryce, and Sandra Drake. Oates argues that the novel is an anti-romance, "a reverse mirror image of Jane Eyre and Rochester's England" (44). As an "anti-romance," the novel tears apart the appealing love story between Jane and Rochester in Brontë's text to

reveal the struggles for power and representation. Hulme positions Rhys's novel as a Creole family romance, a rewriting not only of *Jane Eyre* but also of Rhys's family history. Bryce argues that "romance in its wider sense" informs much of Caribbean literature, including travel narratives and the "paradigmatic *Wide Sargasso Sea*" (124). Drake is one of only a few critics to pay much attention to a sublimated love affair in Rhys's novel: the romance between Antoinette and Sandi Cosway. As in *Jane Eyre*, romance assumes a number of symbolic mantles in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In fact, Rhys must work through these layers of romance in order to rewrite the story. Rewriting *Jane Eyre*, Rhys also confronts the interplay of romance and realism, the Gothic romance, and the romance novel. Rewriting the romance on each of these levels allows for the discursive space to imagine a Creole character with a full range of complexity and exposes the extent to which love stories function politically to both resist and reinforce power, be it national or colonial.

Before turning to these three stages of romance, it is useful to revisit Hulme's argument about how the novel functions as a creole family romance. This review will help outline the important changes Rhys made to the family structures of *Jane Eyre* and will clarify a number of key issues when we examine Antoinette's affair with Sandi, as well as set the stage for a more nuanced definition of the term "creole." Hulme argues that the novel is loosely based on Rhys's own family history (a genealogy of slaveholders), and so becomes a "kind of extended autobiography or creole family romance" that offers "in some sense a 'compensation' for the ruin of that family at the time of Emancipation, a compensation, though, which also serves to occlude the actual

relationship between that family history and the larger history of the English colony of Dominica" (76). Hulme's article highlights the changes Rhys makes to the chronology, topography, and family relationships in *Jane Eyre*. He argues that Rhys adjusts the temporal setting of the novel to align it more closely with her own family history. He notes that although Rhys was generally unspecific about dates, she writes to her editor that the novel begins in 1839. In *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason and the "hell fires" of the West Indies are situated sometime before 1820, but certainly before emancipation in 1833. Hulme points out that these chronological changes suggest Rhys might have modeled Antoinette on her great-aunt Cora, who was born in 1825 (78). Reading the topographical changes, it becomes clear that Jamaica and Dominica, Rhys's birthplace and home for sixteen years before she moved to Europe, are woven together. Rhys had never been to Jamaica, and so the estates in *Wide Sargasso Sea* are modeled on plantations owned by members of her family, including Geneva and Amelia in Dominica. Rhys changes the names to Coulibri and Gran Bois, both historical Dominican plantations. The honeymoon island, although never named, is clearly Dominica: the place names and reference to Caribs, natives to Dominica, correspond to Rhys's birthplace, as well as the mention of commerce with Martinique, a fact true of Dominica but not of Jamaica (78).

Rhys makes important changes to the family structures in *Jane Eyre* as well. In *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason is the biological daughter of Jonas and Antoinetta Mason. She has two brothers: Richard Mason, who writes the letter that stops Jane and Rochester's first attempt at marriage, and a younger brother, who Rochester discovers exists after he

marries Bertha, a brother who is a "complete dumb idiot" (*JE* 261). Hulme points out that the black population of Jamaica is not represented in *Jane Eyre*, unless we read its presence in the descriptions of Bertha's dark hair and "discolored face" and the mention of Bertha's Creole lineage, an indication at least of some worry about Bertha's "tainted blood" (79). In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, however, Rhys introduces a new family structure which creates the narrative space to articulate the white Creole woman in relation to other racial groups in Dominica, including the white elite, the mixed race bourgeoisie, and the majority black population. Antoinette is the child of a Mr. Cosway and her mother, Annette. She has only one brother, Pierre, who is sick and dies in the fire. Her mother remarries a Mr. Mason, whose son Richard Mason becomes Antoinette's stepbrother. Her biological father, Mr. Cosway, has affairs with other women, including interracial affairs that result in another wing of Antoinette's family, whom she calls her "coloured relatives." Mr. Cosway's possible sons include the mixed race characters Alexander and Daniel Cosway. Alexander's son Sandi, Antoinette's eventual lover, is also her nephew.

Hulme argues that the lack of clarity about these relationships is a deliberate attempt to open up and confront Brontë's use of the term Creole. Splitting the white family into a biological and step family also allows for a spectrum of symbolic commentary, as Hulme notes: "the Cosways becoming the old planter family destroyed by Emancipation, the Masons representing new capital from England, scornful of slavery but ignorant of the West Indies" (80-81). Rhys's text reveals the distinctions apparent in these colonial relationships. While the dominant discourse of English superiority remains, the "norms" are split: the white planter class in the West Indies and the white British

operate in different ways in the novel. The British/Creole binary is further unraveled by revealing the complexities of the Creole, as Hulme notes:

> The white English 'norm' is still present... but the creole otherness to that norm is no longer the undifferentiated realm of the alien tropics—lunacy, sexuality, excess, so memorably articulated in the story that Rochester tells to Jane Eyre... Instead 'creole' is broken down into black, white, and coloured, and further subdivided with Annette and Christophine coming from Martinique and being therefore alien to the 'English' creole of 'Jamaica.' (80)[12]

This new family structure stirs in the Rochester character a deep anxiety about the nature of Creole family relationships. Looking at Antoinette, he thinks she resembles Amélie, a mixed race servant who works at the honeymoon house in Dominica: "For a moment she looked very much like Amélie. Perhaps they are related, I thought. It's possible, it's even probable in this damn place" (*WSS* 76-77). His horror increases throughout the narrative, as he receives blackmail letters from Antoinette's half-brother Daniel, who reveals Antoinette's relationship with Sandi.

Hulme outlines how Rhys's family history inflected the contours of *Wide Sargasso Sea* in order to break apart the often overly general categories of "colonial" and "postcolonial." He argues that ultimately *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* "do finally belong to the same world," because both texts are negotiating issues of West Indian slavery (85). Although *Jane Eyre* uses the category of "Creole" in such a way as to homogenize difference, especially in the face of what it means to be English, *Wide Sargasso Sea* undertakes a similar quest, albeit one with much more attention to the

nuances of racial difference. As Hulme notes, Rhys defined herself in opposition to the metropolitan norms of "Englishness," yet her novel, although centrally concerned with issues of race and slavery, is "fundamentally sympathetic to the planter class ruined by Emancipation" (72). The novel is ultimately preoccupied with finding a space for a (white) female Creole subjectivity, and in this search lays bare the assumptions of colonial superiority without fully rejecting them.

This complicated stance in relation to the English metropole is one of the defining characteristics of the white Creole class and of the concept of Creoleness more generally. As a category, it disturbs the notion that race and national identity are separate categories. It can describe plants and animals, as in those of colonial origin, or syncretic cultural, linguistic or religious practices (Raiskin 3). In regards to people, the meaning of the term has changed over time. The term itself comes from the sixteenth century and the Spanish *criollo*, describing a child born to Spanish parents in the Americas (as opposed to *gachupín*, or a colonizer born in Spain). But the same term was also used to describe slaves of African origin born in the Americas (a *criollo* slave as opposed to a *bozal*, a slave newly arrived from Africa). In this context, the origin of the term was used to signify a geographical or national distinction, rather than a racial one (Raiskin 3). In fact, in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, as in other parts of Latin America, the white *criollos* mobilized around this category of identity in order to declare independence from Spain, using it as a national identifier of difference. Although "Creole" often assumed a claim to whiteness, especially in the nineteenth century and more so in the French and English

colonies in the Caribbean, by the twentieth century it often carried a racial modifier, distinguishing between "white creole" and "black creole" (Raiskin 4).[13]

The addition of this racial modifier could also be attributed to that fact that Caribbean and African writers and philosophers began to reclaim the term as a means to describe and theorize the contours of heterogeneous national communities that emerged from the struggles for independence. Thus Braithwaite uses the term in *Contradictory Omens* to discuss Jamaica as a creole society and to examine the processes of creolization. He uses the term both in its original sense, as he describes it: "In Jamaica… the word was used in its original Spanish sense of **criollo**: born in, native to, committed to the area of living, and it was used in relation to both white and black, free and slave. It is in this sense that it will be used in this study" (10). He defines creolization as a specialized version of acculturation, or the process by which one culture absorbs another, and interculturation, a more reciprocal activity that is a process of intermixture and enrichment for both sides (11). Creolization started

> as a result of slavery and therefore in the first instance involving black and white, European and African, in a fixed superiority/inferiority relationship, it tended first to the culturation of white and black to the new Caribbean environment; and, at the same time, because of the terms and conditions of slavery, to the acculturation of black to white norms. There was at the same time, however, significant interculturation going on between these two elements. (11)

This interculturation was in fact horrifying to newly arrived British colonists when they observed the behavior, language, diet and customs of their colonial "cousins" in the West

Indies, all significantly influenced by African languages, belief systems, and customs practiced by slaves. The Rochester character in Rhys's novel (and, for that matter, the original Rochester in *Jane Eyre*) reflects this same horror observing Antoinette and the social environment of the West Indies. *Wide Sargasso Sea* seems most interested in this particular fact of creolization, tracing how Antoinette is subject to the interculturation of living in a creole society (in the sense that Braithwaite uses it), rather than much attention, if any, to the effects of acculturation on the lives of former slaves.[14]

This inability to recognize interculturation and to insist on acculturation helps to explain how the Rochester character fails to recognize the reality of the West Indies when he arrives to marry Antoinette. He attributes his initial confusion to a fever, and much of his account of his first days in Jamaica is fragmented and disjointed, including his recollection of his wedding. Like Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, who insists that he was married to Bertha "almost before I knew where I was" (260), the Rochester character marries Antoinette without his full faculties of "reason." His notion of reality is entirely determined by England, so that at every turn, the landscape, food, people, customs, language, and belief systems of the West Indies are compared to English ones. Looking at Antoinette, he regards her eyes: "Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either" (39). Of course, we know she is not of "pure English descent" because her mother comes from Martinique, but Rochester reads her otherness as "not English." This insistence that the world he finds himself in is "not English" occurs again a few lines after observing Antoinette's eyes when he notices that the people around him are "talking not English but the debased

French patois they use in this island" (39). As he realizes how "not English" everything is, the sense of oppressive menace increases. Of the landscape, he insists it is "too much": "Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near" (41). Everything seems in excess, and the standard by which it is judged is England.

Like *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* blends elements of realism and romance, blurring the lines between "reality" and the fantastical or mythical. Rhys even makes a nod to those earlier writers of romance, Byron and Scott, when the Rochester character discovers their books on a shelf in the honeymoon house. Unlike in Brontë's text, however, this blending of romance and realism does not establish a quest-like narrative, as it does for Jane. Rather it reveals how the epistemological framework of empire is unable to fully comprehend the reality of those places outside of the metropole. Antoinette thinks of England as a dream, and indeed the narrative slips in and out of dreams until becoming fully dream-like by the end, but the Rochester character insists the West Indies is a dream (and sometimes a nightmare):

> 'Is it true,' she said, 'that England is like a dream? Because one of my friends who married an Englishman wrote and told me so. She said this place London is like a cold dark dream sometimes. I want to wake up.'
>
> 'Well,' I answered annoyed, 'that is precisely how your beautiful island seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream.'
>
> 'But how can rivers and mountains and the sea be unreal?'
>
> 'And how can millions of people, their houses and their streets be unreal?'

'More easily,' she said, 'much more easily. Yes a big city must be like a dream.' (48)

Rochester resents that Antoinette challenges the reality of England, a reality that is his touchstone for understanding the world around him. While he does not continue the dialogue, after Antoinette's insistence that a big city is like a dream, he thinks to himself, "No, this is unreal and like a dream" (48).[15] Throughout the second part of the novel, narrated mostly through his character, the tension between what is real and what is false increases, especially when he begins to receive letters from Daniel Cosway, Antoinette's half-brother, telling him the true story of Antoinette's life and revealing her love affair with Sandi.[16]

As the Rochester character spends more time at the honeymoon house, he begins to accept certain things as possible, or even real, such as ghosts and zombies. Just as *Jane Eyre* borrows from fairy tales, so too does *Wide Sargasso Sea*, an element of romance that is woven throughout the novel. Antoinette's terrified stillness in the menacing garden at the beginning of the novel is mirrored later when the Rochester character finds himself lost in the forest near the honeymoon house, a convention that occurs in many European fairy tales, including Hansel and Gretel and many others. After he reads the letter from Daniel, revealing the truth about Antoinette and her family, Amélie tells Antoinette that "he look like he see zombi" (60), an observation that becomes true a couple of pages later, when, disoriented and lost, he finds the ruins of a stone house in the forest and then sees a small girl, who screams and runs away. It is not entirely clear if the Rochester character thinks she might be a zombie, but he does ask Baptiste, who finds him and

saves him, if there is a ghost or a zombie that lives in the woods. He is convinced that there is, insisting while he is lost that he was "so certain of danger" that when he hears Baptiste he does not answer. He also feels as if the forest is "hostile" and that he is being watched (62). He might also have been mistaken for a zombie himself, which caused the little girl to scream, in which case Rhys is cleverly reversing the positions that Rochester and Bertha occupy in *Jane Eyre*. While Bertha is the source of terror in the Gothic formulations of *Jane Eyre*, the Rochester character becomes terrifying for a brief moment in this scene. It also means that both the Rochester character and Antoinette become zombies at some point in the narrative of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a condition of life-in-death or death-in-life that blurs the boundaries of the human and situates the narrative in a liminal, mythic space between the world of "men" (as Frye puts it) and the world of the spirits.

It is important to outline these elements of romance in a broader sense because these concerns with reality help to position *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a Creole romance. If one of the characteristics of white Creole subjectivity is uncertainty concerning national identities or allegiances, as Raiskin and Erwin point out, then casting the two national spaces in question, England and the West Indies, as fantastical or dream-like reinforces this national uncertainty. These doubts about national integrity are present in *Jane Eyre*, but the fantastical is used as a way to reinforce Englishness, as we have seen above, casting the West Indies as Hell and England, in contrast, as celestial. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, however, both places are dream-like and menacing and full of danger, although the West Indies comes out slightly ahead of the cold and damp dream England Antoinette

imagines at the end of the novel. These particular interventions into the romance mode of *Jane Eyre* allow Rhys to construct a localized, West Indian environment that challenges the assumption that only what is English is "really real," competing for recognition on the same plane as some mythical "England" in the minds of the characters.

Rhys creates this localized environment not only through the construction of a West Indian reality but also through reference to other creolized systems of belief, including obeah, a syncretic Caribbean religion. It is through the use of these local systems of belief that Rhys rewrites another element of romance in *Jane Eyre*: the Gothic. As we have already seen in the forest scene described above, when the Rochester character is convinced he is encountering a zombie, the Gothic becomes specifically Caribbean in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In *Jane Eyre*, the "Creole" gives the novel its Gothic shape, in the figure of Bertha as the terrifying sexual other, but it is the Creole constructed by colonialist ideology as a means to ensure the boundaries of English superiority. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the Gothic is imbued with a creoleness that in fact questions these assumptions of imperial power. Sylvie Maurel argues that Rhys's rewriting of the Gothic "makes a distinctive contribution to post-colonial counter discourse, questioning the cultural hegemony of European knowledge-systems, unsettling Eurocentric readings of the West Indies and challenging the self-legitimizing narratives of the metropole. Instead of taking its cue from such narratives, as Charlotte Brontë's does, Jean Rhys's effects their dethroning" (109). A specifically Caribbean, Creole Gothic undoes colonial discourse, or at least disrupts it in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Ghosts,

terror, haunting figures, witchcraft, and magic are both the result of colonial history and the means through which characters resist its legacies.

Andrew Smith and William Hughes, in their introduction to *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre*, argue that both the Gothic and theories of postcolonialism respond to and resist theories of the subject that emerge from Enlightenment humanism that posit the Cartesian subject as the model for what can be considered human. The shift in Enlightenment humanism, they argue, placed new emphasis on how the subject knows, not on what the subject knows, and invested the definition of the human with the requirements of rationality. This shift in how the subject knows led to the creation of racial hierarchies that would establish the logic of European colonialism. Thus the Gothic and postcolonial theory are concerned with the "otherness" of Enlightenment humanism, which depends on the contrast of the rational, knowing subject with the irrational, less-than-human subject in order to create the human:

> The claim that such a position relies on the exclusion of "otherness" finds its corollary in the Gothic's fascination with raising often difficult questions about what it means to be human. The Gothic use of non-human and ab-human figures such as vampires, ghosts and monsters of various kinds is calculated to challenge the dominant humanist discourse, and thus becomes, as this volume shows, a literary form to which postcolonial writers are drawn, as well as constituting a literary form which can be read through postcolonial ideas. (2)

As we saw in the analysis of *Jane Eyre* above, Brontë is most concerned with establishing white English women as rational subjects, an argument that insists on the

recognition of white, English women as fully human. She uses the Creole figure as a contrast to demonstrate how women might also not be human, as when they are "tainted" by racial mixing and lose their claims to reason through sexual excess and debauchery. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys uses elements of the Gothic to destabilize the Rochester character's identity as a rational subject, placing him in a position usually occupied by the heroine of Gothic tales. In Rhys's rewriting, it is the Rochester character who seeks to uncover a secret and who is excluded from certain systems of knowledge. His quest to uncover the "secret" of the West Indies threatens to dismantle his subject position as colonizer: to "know" the secret means he must accept as true two possibilities that were previously unimaginable: that obeah is real and that Antoinette desires a black man.

Wide Sargasso Sea contains the Gothic in each of its three parts. The first section is narrated by Antoinette and recounts her childhood and adolescence. The second is narrated mostly by the Rochester character, aside from a brief interruption when Antoinette narrates her experience going to Christophine to ask for a spell to make the Rochester character love her. The third section is narrated by Antoinette after she has been taken to England and this is the section that ultimately links the novel with *Jane Eyre*, as Antoinette is cared for by Grace Poole and actually sees Jane appear in a hallway dressed in white (106). Carol Davison argues that we can understand these sections as variations of the Gothic, the Rochester character's "Imperial Gothic adventure" is enclosed between two narrative sequences that are Antoinette's "Female Gothic" (Smith 150). The Imperial Gothic, a subgenre of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Gothic fiction that "taps anxieties about the degeneration of British institutions, the threat of going

native, and the invasion of Britain by demonic colonial forces" is replayed by the Rochester character in a postcolonial text that picks up these anxieties about home and empire characteristic of Gothic narratives in the nineteenth century (Smith 137). The Female Gothic, as discussed above in relation to *Jane Eyre*, advances a critique of "enlightened paternalism" (Smith 138). Davison in fact argues that *Jane Eyre* was most likely one of the first texts to combine the Empire Gothic and the Female Gothic, a generic innovation that has led to much debate among literary scholars who have, in Davison's view, read the Female Gothic without much attention to the function of the Empire Gothic as a genre in the narrative (Smith 139). This combination of genres is clearly taken up again when Rhys rewrites the text, separating the two more distinctly so that they exist side by side without ever fully intertwining, a formal separation that mirrors the distance between the Rochester character and Antoinette.

The Rochester character's "Imperial Gothic adventure" is characterized by his quest to know the secret of the West Indies, a will to knowledge that reflects the colonialist mindset of invasion and conquest. For the Rochester character, however, this is a quest forever frustrated. Like Annette's second husband Mr. Mason, whose inability to "read" the West Indian world around him leads to the revolt that burns down the manor house at the beginning of the novel, the Rochester character is unable to fully read the new world around him, a fact that he attributes to his "fever" but that is rather, according to Maurel, a "symptom of his realization that Jamaican reality cannot be fully incorporated into the bulk of prior knowledges" (117). Like the heroines in Gothic romances, Rochester seeks a secret: "It was a beautiful place—wild untouched, above all

untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret. I'd find myself thinking, 'What I see is nothing—I want what it hides—that is not nothing'" (51-52). Like the Gothic heroines, the Rochester character will be safe if he resists the urge to go snooping around. Rhys presents safety as psychological safety: he will remain comfortable in his assumptions about the world if he does not attempt to know too much. Of course he cannot resist his quest to uncover Antoinette's secrets, and in the process comes into contact with obeah practices. These encounters place him at certain risk of becoming "creolized" himself. Like Antoinette, he would have to suffer the collision of belief systems that confuse one's place in the world. By the end of the novel, as they are packing up to leave the honeymoon house, this danger of knowing too much reveals itself:

> So I shall never understand why, suddenly, bewilderingly, I was certain that everything I had imagined to be true was false. False. Only the magic and the dreams are true—all the rest's a lie. Let it go. Here is the secret. Here.
>
> (*But it is lost, that secret, and those who know it cannot tell it.*)
>
> Not lost. I had found it in a hidden place and I'd keep it, hold it fast. As I'd hold her. (100-101)

The interruption of his thoughts by the voice in italics suggests at the very least an internal debate that is unresolved, but could also suggest some kind of split in his personality. Regardless of the degree of the split, the presence of a dualism is evidence that the Rochester character has begun to struggle with the complexities of a creolized subjectivity. To escape this fate, he forces Antoinette to leave and accompany him back

to England, where he assumes his destiny to become the dark Gothic "hero" of *Jane Eyre*.

Unlike the Rochester character, Antoinette understands and recognizes the systems of knowledge that are so threatening to him. Although she does not understand England, she does know enough to hide her insane mother and her love affair with Sandi from the Rochester character. She also knows to ask Christophine for a spell to make the Rochester character love her, after he discovers the affair with Sandi. Christophine warns that obeah is "not for *béké*" and that "bad trouble come when *béké* meddle with that" (68). She warns Antoinette that what she can give her will only bring the Rochester character to her bed, but that Christophine does not have the power to make him love her (68). Antoinette insists that she can make him love her if they have sex again, and begs Christophine for the potion. This act sets the stage for a battle in which the Rochester character conjures his own type of witchcraft, calling on the power of language to assert his rights to power as patriarchal, and colonizing, figure. He calls on the letter of the law in his debate with Christophine, threatening her with arrest for her actions as an obeah woman, and he calls Antoinette "Bertha," an act that she recognizes as an attempt to control her, telling him: "'Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that's obeah too" (88). After he calls her "Bertha," she begins to become that character from *Jane Eyre*, turning into a zombie like her mother. The Rochester character uses the magic of language to affect change on "reality," calling Bertha into being, and becoming "a true son of the Empire, and a Gothic

husband… as he figuratively murders his wife by annihilating her voice and identity" (Smith 150).

If Antoinette's narratives belong to the Female Gothic, then she must have a choice between a "good" lover and a "bad" lover. If in *Jane Eyre*, this choice for Jane is between Rochester and St. John Rivers, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the choice is between Sandi and the Rochester character, and as in other Gothic romances, the fate of the heroine depends on the choice she makes. The consequence of choosing the wrong lover is death, and the reward for choosing the right lover is happiness, marriage, and children. It is clear that Antoinette makes the wrong choice, dying in the fire at Thornfield Hall by the end of the novel. Like Brontë, Rhys plays with the trope of the "light" and "dark" heroes of Gothic romance. As outlined above, one of Brontë's innovations is to imagine how Jane can choose what appears to be the dark, "demon" lover and still have a happy ending. Rhys is unable to formulate a way for Antoinette to choose her literarily "darker" lover Sandi, although he is clearly her choice for any possibility of a happy ending. As in *Jane Eyre*, the qualities of light and dark are reversed so that the "lighter" hero becomes the villain by the end of the novel, and the darker lover the hero. However, unlike Jane, Antoinette does not have the power to resist those forces that will determine her choice, and she is forced to marry the Rochester character in order to maintain any claims to white, colonial identity.

The love affair between Antoinette and Sandi is Rhys's most direct attempt to creolize the colonial romance of *Jane Eyre*. Braithwaite claims that sexual relationships between whites and blacks in Jamaica were powerful sites of interculturation: "it was in

the intimate area of sexual relationships that the greatest damage was done to white creole apartheid policy and where the most significant—and lasting—interculturation took place" (19). Despite the violence and exploitation characteristic of most of these relationships, the colonial mandate to socialize people into separate racial groupings was most challenged by "the ramifications of personal relationships (need for a mistress, imitate the paradigm)" and brought "new, unexpected exchanges into each group's repertoire of behavior" (21). Rhys articulates a sexual, and romantic, relationship between a white character and a mixed race character as a means to challenge the assumptions of colonial romance. In a reading of *Jane Eyre* as a romance novel, the formula depends very much on the same policies and ideology that Braithwaite identifies as "white creole apartheid policy." The barrier to Jane and Rochester's happy union is the racially suspect other, and overcoming this barrier solidifies both characters' claim to whiteness and English national identity. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, however, the formula is reversed and the happiness of the characters depends on the rejection of these categories of racial purity. The Rochester character is introduced as the barrier to Antoinette and Sandi's relationship, a barrier that is never overcome. Because the barrier proves insurmountable, what would be a ritual death for the heroine in a romance novel becomes an actual death in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Rhys's novel is not a romance novel in the sense that *Jane Eyre* is, because in retracing the formula of romance, it reveals where it breaks down. When the romance collapses, what is left is tragedy.

Antoinette mentions Sandi only three times. She recounts how he came to her aid when she was being bullied on the street by two children on her way to the convent

school. She tells the Rochester character that Sandi taught her how to throw a rock when she protects the Rochester character from the crab in the swimming hole. The final mention of him is when she is remembering their last time together before she was forced to go to England, staring at the red dress she wore with him, spread out on the floor of the attic in Thornfield Hall. The Rochester character learns of their relationship through Daniel Cosway and Amélie, and these revelations lead to his transformation into a villain, as outlined above. Sandra Drake reads Sandi's significance as analogous to that of Tia and Christophine in that it is only through these characters that Antoinette can hope to resolve her identity crisis, rejecting Europe and embracing the black Caribbean (99). Sandi represents the emergent bourgeoisie, a class that will become key to national independence in the Caribbean, and thus their love affair, like so many, becomes a symbolic register for social formations. Sandi and Christophine battle against the Rochester character, not only for Antoinette, but also for national independence: a fight that is a "struggle for Antoinette's survival—for the survival of the Caribbean—against European patriarchy and empire, the struggle for a voice to reinscribe a past history and construct a future out of indigenous cultural materials" (100).

Like most events in the novel, the revelation of Sandi and Antoinette's love affair reaches the Rochester character through the voices of the black characters. It is Amélie who talks to him about Daniel Cosway, Antoinette's half-brother, who has written Rochester a letter warning him of his wife's penchant for madness and sexual promiscuity:

> 'They say one time he [Daniel Cosway] was a preacher in Barbados, he talk like a preacher, and he have a brother in Jamaica in Spanish Town, Mr Alexander. Very wealthy man. He own three rum shops and two dry goods stores… I hear one time that Miss Antoinette and his son Mr Sandi get married, but that all foolishness. Miss Antoinette a white girl with a lot of money, she won't marry with a coloured man even though he don't look like a coloured man. You ask Miss Antoinette, she tell you.' (72-73)

This is the first point in the narrative where there is an indication of Sandi and Antoinette's intimate sexual relationship, a coupling thinly veiled in the illusion of a marriage consummated. Amélie sets up the fact of Sandi and Antoinette's relationship but also its impossibility. Antoinette could never marry a "coloured man," even if he looks white, because she is "a white girl with a lot of money." When Mr. Mason comes back to the convent and provides Antoinette with a large dowry, he forecloses the possibility of Antoinette's marriage to Sandi. If she had remained poor, and thus not fully white, it might have been possible for her to marry Sandi because he was wealthy and did not look "like a coloured man." In this formulation that associates racial identity with economic class, Rhys highlights how money and access to capital further stratified Jamaica's, and the West Indies', racially segregated society. Amélie's account also helps to explain why Antoinette would marry the Rochester character in the first place. To maintain, or achieve, a position in white society, she had to marry an Englishman who would strengthen her claims to whiteness that were weakened by both her poverty and

her mother's madness. Marrying Sandi might have meant happiness for the two of them, but would have guaranteed her exclusion from white Jamaican society.

Amélie's account is confirmed by Daniel. The Rochester character goes to meet with him, and Daniel tells him about his brother Alexander and Alexander's son Sandi. He tells him that Alexander had a weakness for women, and in the end married a "very fair-coloured girl" from a "very respectable family" (75). Sandi, Daniel tells him, "is like a white man, but more handsome than any white man, and received by many white people they say" (75). Daniel's account repeats Amélie's assertion that Sandi could pass for white. Daniel then tells the Rochester character what he does not want to hear: "'[y]our wife know Sandi since long time. Ask her and she tell you. But not everything I think... [o]h no, not everything. I see them when they think nobody see them. I see her when she...You going, eh?'" (75). Both Amélie and Daniel urge the Rochester character to ask Antoinette to confess her relationship with Sandi, but he never brings himself to ask directly about the affair. At the moment when it seems Daniel is about to narrate Sandi and Antoinette's sexual intimacy, the Rochester character darts towards the door (75). He cannot stand to hear that his wife had been intimate with a man of mixed race, an act that confronts the limits of acceptable white female sexuality as dictated by colonialist ideology. It is the threat of miscegenation which most terrifies the Rochester character, a secret that he cannot stand to have revealed to him and that threatens to destroy him.

We only finally see Antoinette and Sandi together at the end of the novel, when the red dress reminds Antoinette of Sandi and their last days together. She recalls: "I was

wearing a dress of that colour when Sandi came to see me for the last time" (109). Even though Sandi asks her to go away with him, and tries to convince her, Antoinette will not leave the Rochester character. Remembering the scene from her place in the attic, she realizes their last kiss was "the life and death kiss and you only know a long time afterwards what it is, the life and death kiss" (110). Their last kiss represents her last chance to choose life, and to choose to belong to some kind of community. The last sentence of her memory of that time provides some clue as to why she chose Rochester: "The white ship whistled three times, once gaily, once calling, once to say good-bye" (110).[17] One reason she chooses to stay with the Rochester character is whiteness, and the white ship here represents him, and England. By choosing England, she is attempting to find a place to belong, although she realizes when she gets there that she will never belong. This final realization drives her mad and leads to her suicide at the end of the novel.

As we have seen, Rhys rewrites *Jane Eyre* on at least three levels: she engages the novel's preoccupation with realism and romance as narrative modes, she rewrites the Imperial Gothic and Female Gothic from a postcolonial perspective, and she reverses the romance formula, placing the Rochester character as the barrier to Sandi and Antoinette's happy union. In the process, she reveals the uncertainty of national affiliation for creolized subjects and uncovers the extent to which *Jane Eyre* itself depends on a transnational perspective to define what it means to be English, as we have seen in England's contrast to both France (in the character of Céline Varens) and the West Indies (Bertha). *Wide Sargasso Sea* employs romance as a means to theorize the complexity of

creolized subjects, calling into question the very forms of knowledge that colonial discourse depends upon to advance an insistence on racial "purity." This is a project Maryse Condé continues in her novel *La migration des cœurs*, a rewriting of *Wuthering Heights* that responds to the male nationalist discourse of *créolité*.

Notes

[1] As Belinda Edmondson argues, Caribbean literature often functions as historical archive because colonial discourse has erased the stories of the colonized from official histories. I will take up this point again in the fourth chapter on Dionne Brand and her novel *In Another Place, Not Here*.

[2] G.H. Lewes, in *Fraser's Magazine*, writes in 1847: "There are some defects in it—defects which the excellence of the rest only brings into stronger relief. There is, indeed, too much melodrama and improbability, which smack of the circulating-library,—we allude particularly to the mad wife and all that relates to her, and to the wanderings of Jane when she quits Thornfield…But the earlier parts—all those relating to Jane's childhood and residence at Lowood… are written with remarkable beauty and truth" (Dunn 446).

[3] In fact, the line that separates Jane from the immoral women that surround her is a thin one. Jerome Beaty points out in *Misreading Jane Eyre: A Postformalist Paradigm* that *Jane Eyre* combines the Gothic with elements from another genre plagued by anxieties over female sexuality, that of the governess novel. This combination was an unusual one, but Beaty points out the similarities: "The governess and the ghost? Not a familiar mix, but once put side by side it is apparent that the Gothic heroine, captive rather than employee of the villain, is nonetheless, like the governess, defenseless in his household/castle and subjected to the same threats as Pamela and Jane" (60-61). Beaty points out that governesses, unlike other female servants, occupied an ambiguous class position, one which both created the possibility for marriage between governesses and aristocrats but also increased their sexual threat to female members of the aristocracy. The governess in domestic fiction, from *Pamela* onwards, risks becoming a prostitute rather than a wife if she gives in to her master's sexual advances. A similar sentiment holds true in much Puerto Rican fiction, as we shall see in chapter three in the work of Rosario Ferré and Mayra Santos-Febres.

[4] Terry Eagleton reads Bertha in *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* as representative of repressed sexuality: "Jane's guilt about Rochester's passion and her own is strikingly imaged in the grotesque figure of Bertha: the Bertha who tries on Jane's

wedding veil is a projection of Jane's sexually tormented subconscious, but since Bertha is masculine, black-visaged and almost the same height as her husband, she appears also as a repulsive symbol of Rochester's sexual drive. The point of the novel's conclusion is to domesticate that drive so that is ceases to be minatory while remaining attractive. In the end, the outcast bourgeoise achieves more than a humble place at the fireside: she also gains independence vis-à-vis the upper class, and the right to engage in the process of taming it" (32).

[5] As Modleski argues, "An understanding of Harlequin Romances should lead one less to condemn the novels than the conditions which have made them necessary" (49).

[6]Modleski outlines the following genealogy of contemporary romance: "To introduce an admittedly overschematized lineage for the three forms under consideration [Harlequin Romances, Gothic novels, and soap operas], Harlequins can be traced back through the work of Charlotte Brontë and Jane Austen to the sentimental novel and ultimately... to the novels of Samuel Richardson, whose *Pamela* is considered by many scholars to be the first British novel (it was also the first English novel printed in America); Gothic romances for women, also traceable through Charlotte Brontë, date back to the eighteenth century and the work of Ann Radcliffe; and soap operas are descendants of the domestic novels and the sensation novels of the nineteenth century" (*Loving with a Vengeance* second ed. 5-6).

[7] See also Susan L. Meyer "Colonialism and the figurative strategy of *Jane Eyre*."

[8] *The Letters of Jean Rhys*, eds. Francis Wyndham and Diana Melly, 40.

[9] These include *Quartet* (1929), *After Leaving Mr. McKenzie* (1931), *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), and *Good Morning Midnight* (1939). She also published three collections of short stories: *The Left Bank* (1927), *Tigers are Better Looking* (1968), and *Sleep It Off, Lady* (1974) and an autobiography published posthumously, *Smile Please* (1979).

[10] See, for example, Elizabeth Nunez, Vivian Nun Halloran, and Thorunn Lonsdale, among others.

[11] The character who comes from England to marry Antoinette is never given a name in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, although he is clearly a representation of Rochester from *Jane Eyre*. Literary scholars have named the character differently in their analyses, referring to him simply as "the man," or "the Rochester character." I am adopting "the Rochester character" for the sake of clarity here.

[12] This difference between Creoleness in the Anglophone Caribbean and the Francophone is a project Condé picks up in *La migration des cœurs* when Razyé II and

Cathy II honeymoon in Dominica, a clear homage to Rhys's novel. I will return to this point in more detail in the following chapter.

[13] This also explains why Rhys felt she could not title *Wide Sargasso Sea* simply *Creole*, as Raiskin notes: "First for her West Indian stories and then for what was to become the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys considered the title *Creole* and then finally discarded it because it no longer signified merely the white, native West Indian. 'Creole' had also come to define the 'colored' native of mixed racial origin and, more generally, the West Indian culture itself, which was gaining a self-conscious identification separate from the European culture of the colonials" (97).

[14] Because the national communities they are imagining are heterogeneous, both Condé and Rhys engage with and develop theories of creolization to account for the racial and cultural mixing that defines communities in Dominica and Guadeloupe. Theories of creolization emerge in the Caribbean when it becomes possible and necessary to articulate the boundaries of national and regional communities. As Kathleen M. Baluntansky and Marie-Agnès Sourieau explain in their introduction to *Caribbean Creolization*, the forced migration of large groups of people from Africa and India to the Caribbean created spaces of intense cultural and economic exchange. In these spaces, the European obsession with linear origins and subjective purity withered in the face of ethnic difference and racial and cultural mixing (2-3). Although many theorists of Caribbean identity have attempted to replicate this European rhetoric of authenticity, either through privileging whiteness within mixing or essentializing blackness and African origins, it remains that the theorization of Caribbean identity, and Caribbean communities, must rely on a rhetoric that can account for difference and heterogeneity. Although theories of mixing in the Caribbean share many similarities, especially in regards to the shared historical conditions of slavery, Indian indentured servitude, colonial rule, plantation economies, and island or coastal geography, they vary widely according to linguistic region and in their political and ideological charge. Terms for the concept range from creolization, creoleness, *créolité*, *antillanité*, *métissage*, to *mestizaje*. Baluntansky and Sourieau define creolization as "a syncretic process of transverse dynamics that endlessly reworks and transforms the cultural patterns of varied social and historical experiences and identities. The cultural patterns that result from this 'crossbreeding' (or cross-weaving) undermine any academic or political aspiration for unitary origins or authenticity" (3). This definition of creolization refers to more recent conceptualizations of the theory, beginning most notably with the works of Edouard Glissant and Edward Kamau Braithwaite in the 1970s and continuing to the present day. I would argue that theorizing racial difference and racial mixing in the Caribbean extends historically to at least the nineteenth century (for example in the work of José Martí), when theorizing racial difference was an attempt to contain and assimilate it into a national project or colonial community controlled by white or mulatto elites. In the twentieth century, especially in its second half, theories of creolization emerge from members of oppressed majority communities in an attempt to define the national space of

a heterogeneous whole connected to a transnational concept of history and space. These theorists include Glissant and Braithwaite, as mentioned above, and also the Créolistes, Antonio Benítez-Rojo, Wilson Harris, Paul Gilroy, and many others. They also include Jean Rhys and Maryse Condé.

[15] Later, the Rochester character attributes Antoinette's inability to perceive reality as the result of too much romance: "If she was a child, she was not a stupid child but an obstinate one. She often questioned me about England and listened attentively to my answers, but I was certain that nothing I said made much difference. Her mind was already made up. Some romantic novel, a stray remark never forgotten, a sketch, a picture, a song, a waltz, some note of music, and her ideas were fixed. About England and about Europe. I could not change them and probably nothing would. Reality might disconcert her, bewilder her, hurt her, but it would not be reality. It would be only a mistake, a misfortune, a wrong path taken, her fixed ideas would never change" (56).

[16] Although the white characters, mainly Antoinette and the Rochester character, remain the most uncertain narrators, constantly oscillating between dreams and doubts about "reality," all of the black characters, including Christophine, Tia, Daniel Cosway, and Amélie, know exactly what is happening and why. It might be too much to suggest they function as oracles (although the girl outside the convent school does accurately predict that Antoinette will become a zombie, like her mother), they nonetheless provide the only reliable narration and offer the only trustworthy insight into the main characters, as when Christophine tells Antoinette that using obeah on the Rochester character will not work, or when Tia exposes the poverty of Antoinette's family. As Spivak puts it: "*Wide Sargasso Sea* marks with uncanny clarity the limits of its own discourse in Christophine, Antoinette's black nurse" (314). She is the first interpreter and named speaking subject in the text, she calls the Rochester character on his actions, and she recognizes that "black ritual practices are culture-specific and cannot be used by whites as cheap remedies for social evils" (315).

[17] The repetition of the ship's whistle in a sequence of three could also be read as symbolic of the appearance of Sandi throughout the text. Peter Brooks in *Reading for the Plot*, argues that three is the minimum number of repetitions through which a series can be perceived. "Narrative... must ever present itself as a repetition of events that have already happened, and within this postulate of a general repetition it must make use of specific, perceptible repetitions in order to create plot, that is, to show us a significant interconnection of events... Repetition creates a *return* in the text, a doubling back" (99-100). That Sandi appears multiple times in the narrative alone justifies his importance to the plot. Antoinette's unspoken love for him creates the crisis that structures the narrative, emerging at key moments to reveal how her desire cannot be contained even by the narrative process. The repetition of her desire for Sandi signals her doom. As Brooks states, "What operates in the text through repetition is the death instinct, the drive towards the end" (102).

CHAPTER III

A CARIBBEAN GOTHIC: GENDER, NATION, AND THE (DIS)ORDER OF CREOLIZATION

> Le métissage a toujours été la terreur des sociétés constituées qui veulent protéger le ventre de leurs femmes contre le sperme des males étrangers et par consequent contre le changement. [*Métissage* has always terrorized societies that wanted to protect the womb of their women against the sperm of strangers and therefore against change].
>
> –Maryse Condé, "Chercher nos vérités" (309)

Maryse Condé, writing a generation after Jean Rhys, continues the project of rewriting the romance with her 1995 novel *La migration des cœurs* [*Windward Heights*]. As the English translation of the title suggests, the novel rewrites Emily Brontë's innovative take on the Gothic in *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Although most ostensibly concerned with Brontë's text, Condé's intertextuality is expansive, including references to Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (as we saw in the introduction), Marcel Proust's *À la Recherche du temps perdu*, Simone de Beauvoir's *La Cérémonie des adieux*, the Créoliste manifesto *Éloge de la créolité* (*In Praise of Creoleness*), and of course *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Condé acknowledges Rhys's novel both in regards to characters and setting. Amélie, the servant the Rochester character has sex with, reappears as Cathy's father's mistress, described as "une capresse" who had been his mistress for as long as anyone could remember (26). In addition, two couples spend miserable honeymoons in Dominica, the same setting of

Antoinette and the Rochester character's doomed honeymoon. In fact, an entire section of the novel is set in Dominica, in a move that engages in a rewriting of *Wuthering Heights* while at the same time situating the story in relation to a tradition of rewriting the romance begun by Rhys. Even the time of the novel picks up where Rhys leaves off. Rhys sets *Wide Sargasso Sea* in the 1830s, just after slavery is abolished in the British colonies. *La migration des cœurs* also begins post-Emancipation, but the historical event that marks the beginning of novel is the 1898 American invasion of Cuba. The novel's story, however, begins roughly fifteen years before, when Razyé (the Heathcliff character), then a seven-year-old boy, is found wandering in the middle of a hurricane in Guadeloupe.

Although both Rhys and Condé rewrite canonical British romances, the engagement with the source texts and the resulting revisions are quite different. Rhys, as we have seen in the previous chapter, sets out to rewrite a character as a means to correct the stereotypes associated with white Creole women in British colonial discourse. Growing up as a subject of the British empire, Rhys's decision to respond to the charges of *Jane Eyre* are not all that surprising. Condé, however, is born in 1937 in Guadeloupe, then a colony of France (now an overseas department). At sixteen, she moved to Paris, where she completed her high school degree and attended university in the 1950s. In university she met students and intellectuals from around the world and developed an increased awareness of anticolonial and decolonization movements. In this sense, we can understand Condé's work in light of her predecessors from the Francophone Caribbean, including Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon. Condé spent most of the 1960s in Africa, in

Guinea (her first husband, actor Mamadou Condé, was from Guinea), Ghana, and Senegal. In the late 1960s, Condé met her husband Richard Philcox (a white Englishman who became her translator) in London. She completed her doctorate in Caribbean literature at the Sorbonne in the 1970s and has taught widely in the United States and Europe (Pfaff xi). Based on this biography, it is not immediately apparent why Condé would choose to rewrite a British novel that on the surface seems most concerned with the conflict between the yeoman and gentry classes in England.

From the start, *La migration des cœurs* announces that this will be a different type of rewriting. Condé dedicates the novel: "À Emily Brontë/ qui, je l'espère, agréera cette lecture de son chef-d'œuvre. Honneur et respect!" ["To Emily Brontë/ Who I hope will approve of this interpretation of her/ masterpiece./ Honour and respect!"].[1] Condé positions her novel as a reading ("lecture") of *Wuthering Heights* and humbly acknowledges her debt to Brontë's work. Condé, as a postcolonial writer, seems to be playing with which empire to write back to. Françoise Lionnet argues that Condé often "crosses borders and boundaries to find inspiration and to articulate unexpected affiliations" (50). For example, her novel *Moi, Tituba sorcière...noire de Salem* (1986) borrows from Hawthorne's Hester Prynne and Ann Petry's Tituba, while *La Traversée de la mangrove* (1989) recalls Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (50). In fact, this engagement with the Western canon, specifically British and American texts, is characteristic of much of her work, as Dawn Fulton notes: Condé's *Célanire cou-coupé* (2000) echoes Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and her 2001 novel *La belle créole* indirectly engages D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (3). Fulton characterizes Condé's projects of

appropriation and revision of canonical works as transnational, arguing that Condé's disregard for boundaries and borders, her transnational literary project, functions as a disruptive dialogue with postcolonial studies, revealing the struggles to represent difference without exoticizing it or essentializing the "postcolonial subject." Condé steps outside of the trap of binaries often criticized in postcolonial studies. She "writes back" to the "wrong" metropole (England or the U.S., instead of, or sometimes in addition to, France), shifting the engagement of her novels so that her fiction escapes the confinement of colonizer/colonized, an often untenable reduction of identity that perpetuates the power of the colonizer in determining the identity of the colonized. Fulton asserts that this metadiscursive nature of her fictional works allows Condé to read postcolonial theory contrapuntally and "elaborate a prolonged engagement with questions of identity and difference, power and exclusion, politics and aesthetics" (5).

Condé herself has characterized her appropriation and revision of the canon as a type of "literary cannibalism." In an interview with Barbara Lewis, Condé explains that one of her first acts of literary cannibalism occurred when, as a student at the lycée in France, she was asked to write about her life. She was the only black girl in her class, and she knew that the students and teachers expected her to represent herself as someone "'…born in a sugarcane field, the mother dying from hunger, the father working himself to death in the field with a machete and so on'" (9). As the youngest child of an upper-middle class family in Guadeloupe, Condé recounts that she was not acquainted with cane workers, and her Francophile parents insisted on French as the language of the home, rather than Creole. Her identity as a member of the bourgeoisie, however, did not

interest her French classmates, who expected that she conform to the colonial ideas they had about Guadeloupe and its people. Condé decided then to "cannibalize" the life of Joselita, a female character from Joseph Zobel's *Rue cases negres* (which had been adapted into the film *Sugarcane Alley*), representing herself as the character in the autobiographical story she was asked to write. In her adult life, she continues the practice of cannibalizing, which she explains to Lewis:

> But what I mean when I say cannibalize is that, when we write a book, you cannibalize all the lives. In fact, all the time you see yourself in a position that is not yours... People are different in the books that you write so that means you are cannibalizing their lives in order to produce your characters. That is what I meant, and in fact, it is a pleasure when you can really put yourself in that position. For example, *La migration des cœurs—Windward Heights*—poses such a pleasure to cannibalize Emily Brontë, to eat her up for a change. It was wonderful. (9)

In other interviews and in her essays, Condé defines the act of literary cannibalism as both specific to the Americas, in particular the Caribbean, and feminine. In an interview with Lydie Moudileno, she notes, in relation to her novel *Moi, Tituba*, that black women "incarne le plus le danger, le péché, le cannibalisme, paraît encore plus sorcière que la femme blanche" (121) [embody the most danger, the most sin, cannibalism, it seems they are even more like witches than the white woman"]. She uses the word "cannibal" because she is Caribbean ("antillaise"), and because Caribbean people are descendents of "cannibals," the people that Columbus "discovered" in the Caribbean. Condé claims that the cannibal functions in this sense as a literary ancestor (122).[2] By referring indirectly to

Columbus's diary, and his representation of native Caribbean peoples as savage "cannibals," Condé claims a literary heritage and simultaneously recovers a term used in colonial discourse to "other" the colonized. In her formulation, literary cannibalism becomes the voracious recovery of the means of representation, an act that produces not only a new canon but also great pleasure.[3]

Like *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *La migration des cœurs* enters into a discourse concerning the idea of the Creole and the process of creolization. Condé's novel can be positioned within a debate already framed by the work of such writers as Fanon, Edouard Glissant, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, who all theorize the idea of creolization (named variously, and with different theoretical charges, as *métissage*, *antillanité*, *relation*, *créolité*). As a number of critics have argued, *La migration des cœurs* continues Condé's project of responding to and critiquing these writers, largely on the grounds that they exclude women and ignore gender as a crucial component of creolization. In fact, Condé has argued that many women writers in Martinique are silenced by the influence of these Martiniquan writers and their masculinist paradigms. In Guadeloupe, however, she argues that women writers have more space to articulate their concerns: "Je crois que là [in Martinique] le problème est la domination des modèles masculins tandis qu'en Guadeloupe où la situation est plus libre les femmes ont pu parler" ["I believe that [in Martinique] the problem is the domination of masculine models while in Guadeloupe the situation is more for women to be able to speak"] (Anagnostopoulou-Hielscher 72). In this formulation, Condé divides the literary Francophone Caribbean into distinct, gendered spaces. Guadeloupe becomes a site from

which she is able to write back to these masculinist discourses that represent the Francophone Caribbean in terms that ignore gender and perpetuate the myth of desexualized women, idealized in their formulations as the mothers of the creolized nation.

What Condé adds to the discourses of *métissage* and *créolité* are the ways in which gender and sexuality complicate the notion of "authentic" creole identity as postulated by many of the male writers mentioned above. Maria Cristina Fumagalli, in her comparison of *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *La migration des cœurs*, argues that both texts articulate the tragedy suffered by women who are not permitted to achieve or maintain a creole identity: "Ultimately, in both [novels], Cathy and Antoinette/Bertha lose their reason and die because they are deprived of the right to maintain their identity as 'creoles' (whether 'white' or 'coloured') and, as such, to exceed the manichean dynamic of racial discourse" (77). Lionnet asserts that Condé's work makes "visible patterns of transculturation emerging from colonial conflicts" and serves as "a useful rejoinder and a sound complement to the excesses of male-identified *créolité*" (49). Lionnet identifies *La migration des cœurs* as a text concerned with transcolonial processes of hybridization and with transcolonial identities. She favors the term "transcolonial" over more commonly used terms such as "transnational" or "postcolonial" because she wants to emphasize the "spatial dimensions at the heart of the history of colonialism" (48). Identifying these processes as transcolonial, rather than transnational, is more appropriate to the case of Guadeloupe because "one cannot properly speak of the 'nation' in relation to the Francophone Caribbean" (48).

Although I agree that transcolonial is a useful moniker for Condé's work, I regard the term "transnational" as most helpful in understanding the creative innovations of *La migration des cœurs*. Guadeloupe and Martinique are not nation-states, as Lionnet points out, but I would argue that a national impulse and longing to reject the fetters of the French colonial state underlies all anticolonial and postcolonial writing (including Condé's) from the Francophone Caribbean in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. If we understand the nation in the sense that Anderson describes it in *Imagined Communities*, as "an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6), then we can understand both Guadeloupe and Martinique as nations distinct, even, from each other. Of course, neither is sovereign, but the desire to be so, if not politically then culturally without a doubt, is present throughout the literature of the Francophone Caribbean. Anderson also asserts that in "the modern world, everyone can, should, will 'have' a nationality, as he or she 'has' a gender" (5). If this is indeed the case, both Condé and the Créolistes suggest that the assumption of a French nationality will not be allowed without a fight. The Créolistes respond, in fact, with a type of globalized creole nationality, while Condé adopts a more uneasy stance in relation to the idea of the nation itself. Previous formulations of nationalism have often done nothing to resist patriarchy, perhaps because the nation itself relies upon a patriarchal system to function. With this in mind, Condé disturbs the traditional romance of the nation by calling upon transnational literary forces. As Lionnet points out, Condé's "formal practice successfully deconstructs the debilitating myths of purity and racial superiority that continue to haunt her characters because they have internalized...colonial

ideology" (58). These myths of purity and racial superiority emerge from nationalist impulses, as we have seen in the comparison of Rhys and Brontë in the previous chapter. The formal practices that have been used to propagate these myths have often been those of the romance, and it is no coincidence in this case that Condé chooses a Gothic romance to stage her resistance to male nationalist notions of mixing. Thus, while *La migration des cœurs* is transcolonial, as Lionnet asserts, it is also transnational in its attention to form. This chapter builds on the work of Fumagalli, Lionnet, Fulton and Mardorossian and their attention to how and why Condé rewrites *Wuthering Heights*. What this chapter offers to the conversation is a detailed attention to the formal innovations, specifically romance, and the stakes of rewriting the romance in the context of the Francophone Caribbean.

To dismantle male nationalist representations of female sexuality, Condé calls on transnational forces to disrupt the allegorical power of romance relied upon by so many writers to represent the nation. She boldly represents female sexuality, and uses the rewriting of Brontë's text to outline the stakes of national allegiance and sanctioned desire (appropriate love) for women. By detailing the rebellious desires of women, Condé disturbs the notion of the Caribbean woman as one who should choose "her man" from a select script of condoned racial and ethnic identities. In the process, she reveals how de Beauvoir's notion that one is not born a woman, but becomes one is complicated by race, class, and the legacies of colonialism. In this chapter, I will analyze Condé's revision with particular attention to how she employs romance in her quest to dismantle both colonial ideology and patriarchal nationalism. This attention to romance will require an

analysis of Brontë's own revisions of romance and attention to the transnational elements at play in *Wuthering Heights*. Condé cannibalizes Brontë's novel because it offers a genuine engagement with the politics of "stranger" love, or the implications for love and female sexuality when they exceed social boundaries. *Wuthering Heights* was shocking to its Victorian readers for the very reasons that make it useful for Condé in her project. It is the tale of transcendent love, shared by two people who occupy distinct social, racial, and even national spheres. The central horror and obstacle to Cathy and Heathcliff's union is the threat of miscegenation, and in her daring novel, Emily Brontë pushes the boundaries of the Gothic even further than her sister Charlotte. Unlike Rochester, who appears to be the "dark" Gothic villain but who turns out to be the hero, Heathcliff is decidedly the villain but nonetheless the object of Cathy's undying love. In Condé's novel, Razyé is both hero and villain, wreaking havoc on the white planter class in a revenge plot that exceeds national boundaries. Condé does not merely translate *Wuthering Heights* at face value, however. She makes important revisions to the structure of the novel and to the genealogies. The quest for origins in Condé's novel becomes a twisted plot, ending in incest and death. Nonetheless, at the heart of the novel is the romance and the shape of it is decidedly transnational, as we shall see.

Elements of Romance in *Wuthering Heights*

Many critics have read *Wuthering Heights* as a part of a complete Brontë canon, reading Emily Brontë alongside the works of her sisters Charlotte and Anne, perhaps because it was the only novel she wrote before she died in 1848, just shy of her thirtieth

birthday. As women writers, the three sisters were often read as a single unit, due at least in part to the fact that their publisher, T.C. Newby, advertised that Ellis Bell was the true author of all the novels. Even after it was clearly established that the authors were separate people, critics continued to read them as a single author well into the twentieth century. F.R. Leavis, attempting to justify his exclusion of the Brontës from his formulation of the "great tradition," remarked "It is tempting to retort that there is only one Brontë" (Peterson 9). Yet, as Linda Peterson notes, the Brontës expressed significant differences when it came to the articulation of common themes of life and literature, such as school and education, love and marriage, moral failure and evil (9). Emily was less convinced than Charlotte that formal education could be a means for female liberation. Her ambivalence towards the institution of marriage is apparent in her poems and in *Wuthering Heights* (Peterson 10). Marriage, after all, is the cause of Catherine Earnshaw's death in *Wuthering Heights*. In her treatment of morality, Emily also differed significantly from her sisters. While Rochester in *Jane Eyre* must pay for his sins and suffer, Heathcliff undergoes no transformative repentance. As Peterson notes, many critics have argued that "the novel has little concern with traditional definitions of good and evil, but rather that it represents a vision of cosmic forces transcending human morality" (11).

This transcendence of the human and the relationship of *Wuthering Heights* to a world defined by cosmic forces is one element of the novel that aligns it closely with the concept of romance as defined by Northrop Frye. In the previous chapter, we saw how *Jane Eyre* functions as a romance on at least three levels: in its blending of romance and

realism as narrative modes, as a Gothic romance, and as a romance novel. A similar scheme can be traced in regard to *Wuthering Heights*, although the degree to which Emily Brontë's novel functions on these levels differs from Charlotte's significantly. *Jane Eyre*, for example, contains much less romance as mythos, in the sense that Frye outlines, than *Wuthering Heights*. The combination of the Gothic and the domestic novel also takes on different proportions in each. As we shall see, *Wuthering Heights* is decidedly more Gothic and less domestic, although it contains important traits from each genre. And, unlike *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* is less suited to claim a position as an archetype of the romance novel, although the second plot of the novel in which Catherine and Hareton marry could be read in relation to the formula for romance novels outlined by Tania Modleski and Pamela Regis. In both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, romance is used to represent concerns about female sexuality, the anxieties of empire, and the possible shape of an English nation. Because *Wuthering Heights* combines these elements of romance differently, Emily Brontë's representation of these concerns leads us to draw more radical conclusions about female desire, the consequences of empire, and the fate of the nation. Her formal innovations give us a novel that was deeply unsettling for its Victorian readers, for reasons we shall explore below.

Frye, in *Anatomy of Criticism*, argues that from the point of view of form, it is possible to identify four chief strands of narrative fiction: novel, confession, anatomy, and romance. These four strands may be combined with each other, and often are, so that a work of fiction may contain two or three, or sometimes even all four strands. In light of this schema, Frye classifies *Wuthering Heights* as more romance than novel:

> The conventions of *Wuthering Heights* are linked rather with the tale and the ballad. They seem to have more affinity with tragedy, and the tragic emotions of passion and fury, which would shatter the balance of tone in Jane Austen, can be safely accommodated here. So can the supernatural, or the suggestion of it, which is difficult to get into a novel. The shape of the plot is different: instead of maneuvering around a central situation, as Jane Austen does, Emily Brontë tells her story with linear accents, and she seems to need the help of a narrator, who would be absurdly out of place in Jane Austen. Conventions so different justify us in regarding *Wuthering Heights* as a different form of prose fiction from the novel, a form which we shall here call the romance. Here again we have to use the same word in several different contexts, but romance seems on the whole better than tale, which appears to fit a somewhat shorter form. (304)

As we saw in the previous chapter, Frye argues that the essential difference between romance and novel lies in the concept of characterization. While the novel attempts to create "real people" that exist in a "stable society," the romance creates "stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes" (305). Frye asserts that this particular aspect of romance, rather than making it less politically relevant than the novel, in fact demonstrates its power: "Certain elements of character are released in the romance which make it naturally a more revolutionary form than the novel…The romancer deals with individuality, with characters *in vacuo* idealized by revery, and, however conservative he may be, something nihilistic and untamable is likely to keep breaking out of his pages" (304-305). If *Wuthering Heights* is anything, it is nihilistic and untamable, which helps to

explain why reading *Wuthering Heights* is a completely different experience than reading *Jane Eyre*. In fact, Frye playfully asserts that "our best novelists have been conventional to the verge of fussiness," (305) a sentiment not entirely inappropriate when considering the feeling that *Jane Eyre* evokes. The two novels feel so different from one another precisely because of the extent to which they combine conventions of romance with those of the novel. Charlotte was clearly more interested in outlining the boundaries of a stable society and all of its corresponding proscriptions about morality, thus we have the novel, albeit one with enough romance in it to accommodate the "supernatural." While Emily's novel is not without its social constraints, as we will see, it is less invested in a representation of the "real world," thus we have the romance.

Frye is careful to point out that "pure" examples of either the romance or the novel are rarely found in literature. He argues, in fact, that the "popular demand in fiction is always for a mixed form, a romantic novel just romantic enough for the reader to project his libido on the hero and his anima on the heroine, and just novel enough to keep these projections in a familiar world" (305). Indeed, *Wuthering Heights* is clearly a combination of the romance and the novel, and contains enough elements from the novel to make it a wild tale told in a familiar world. Although wild, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange are in a real place, Yorkshire, and the story is reported by two "real" people: Mr. Lockwood and Nelly Dean. These two narrators, of all the characters in the novel, are created "out of the formal stuff of novels," as George Haggerty argues, and are less susceptible to the threat of other-worldly forces (1). Mr. Lockwood, a wealthy socialite from London, comes to the moors to escape a love affair gone awry. He decides

to rent Thrushcross Grange from a certain Mr. Heathcliff, and in so doing, stumbles upon our tale. Due to his own ineptitude navigating the terrain and climate of the moors, he falls ill, and during his convalescence, Nelly Dean tells him the story of Cathy and Heathcliff. Haggerty argues that these two narrators attempt to "novelize" the tale:

> Lockwood, it could be said, attempts to novelize the events he witnesses and indeed to force a novelistic resolution to the action; but his very failure to be convincing is the measure of the inadequacy of his response. His inadequacy, however, is not merely temperamental: it is the inadequacy of a certain kind of novelistic language that his failure both exposes and censures. Nelly, too, attempts to mould her material into novelistic form, and again her failure becomes itself a metaphor for the limits of interpretation. (1-2)

Lockwood fails to be convincing because he consistently misreads the world of Wuthering Heights. On his first visit, he mistakes a pile of dead rabbits for kittens, assuming them to be Catherine's favorite pets. He takes Catherine to be Heathcliff's wife, and when that interpretation is quickly shot down, looks to her cousin Hareton as the husband. Although Catherine does eventually marry Hareton, at this point in the novel she is trapped at Wuthering Heights, held captive economically by her father-in-law Heathcliff, who through marriage acquires both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. Lockwood is trying to impose the frame and conventions of the domestic novel onto the events he witnesses, but this desire to impose a patriarchal order of Victorian domesticity results in the creation of an unreliable narration. Because of what he expects to see, Lockwood cannot fully comprehend the tale in front of him. But without

Lockwood, Haggerty argues, we could not understand it, either. Lockwood and Nelly Dean "translate" the romance into novel form so that we can understand the world of Cathy and Heathcliff. If romance carries with it more allegorical weight than the novel, then the combination of the two should help us understand the meaning of metaphor in relation to the "real world" as represented in the novel. Or, as Haggerty puts it, "Lockwood sees little beyond the immediate contextualizing syntax of his words, and Heathcliff sees nothing but their profound significance. Lockwood is all form and Heathcliff is all meaning…Without Lockwood, that is, Heathcliff would be beyond our power of comprehension as well" (2).

The tensions produced by this blending of the romance and the novel challenge our ability to know the world of the novel, vacillating between Lockwood's attempts to explain it and Heathcliff's utter incomprehensibility. Haggerty argues that this epistemological tension produces the "first truly successful Gothic novel."[4] Indeed, Emily Brontë's revision of the Gothic tradition is revolutionary. Syndy McMillen Conger argues that Brontë redefines the genre, moving beyond the limitations of novels written by women for women in an imitation of male forms and attitudes. Rather, Brontë "deliberately reorders the Gothic experience in order to speak to women about themselves in a new way" (93). She rewrites both the hero and heroine of the traditional Female Gothic, and presents marriage not as an ideal, but as obstacle to female liberation. According to Conger, Brontë is radically rewriting the Gothic heroine, the "physically slight, emotionally passive, and intellectually ill-trained" protagonists of earlier Gothic

novels. With such little to recommend these heroines, Conger asserts that only their "moral impeccability" gives them their stature in these earlier narratives:

> The Gothic heroine is morally flawless; hers is a purity of mind which becomes more pronounced as the turn of the century approaches. She never has a vindictive thought, even in the wake of abuses. She never dreams an unacceptable dream. Her innocence is so thorough in some cases she has virtually no knowledge at all of evil... Of sexuality and physical passion these mythical creatures are equally ignorant, a clue to us that their creators equated passion with evil. (95)

At the other end of the spectrum, these earlier Gothic narratives often contained femme fatale characters who were "imperious" and "passion-ridden" and who had "the independence of spirit, the emotional vibrancy, the ingenuity, and the moral fallibility the heroine often lacks" (95). The femme fatale, however, pays a high price for these strengths, including death, madness, damnation, and unhappiness. In these narratives, the femme fatales were not heroines. In *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë creates heroines who are composites of both the "light and airy" "pure" heroine and the dark femme fatale. Catherine, for example, is independent and imperious, which aligns her with the femme fatale, but she also embodies traits of the standard Gothic heroine: she makes herself physically ill over the loss of Heathcliff, she has an affinity for nature, loses herself in flights of fantasy, and has a tendency to be tyrannized by emotions (96). Like the heroine of Gothic romances, she marries the "light" hero, but like the femme fatale, she dies because of her passion for Heathcliff. Her daughter Cathy is also a composite, as we see

from Lockwood's first encounter with her. She is fair and pretty, but too sullen and rude to resemble the gentle maidens of earlier Gothic fiction.

Like the two Catherines, Heathcliff's character draws on the conventions of both the Gothic hero and the Gothic villain. His status in the novel has posed many problems for readers and critics. We seem compelled both to identify with his character and to reject him, a tension created by Brontë's amalgamation of hero and villain. As Lyn Pykett puts it, "Heathcliff is at once hero and villain, the oppressed and the oppressor, who is simultaneously the bearer of the novel's progressive forces and the embodiment of its contradictions" (113). We identify with him because he resists his oppressors, namely Hindley, but are shocked at his treatment of Isabella and the younger Catherine and the unwavering course of his passion for Cathy and for revenge. Unlike Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, who seems to be the demon lover but turns out to be the "right" lover, Heathcliff is undoubtedly the demon lover, the dark lover, and the "brother" Cathy falls in love with. The aspects of earlier Gothic novels that warned heroines away from such passion, the violence of these lovers, the forbidden nature of incestuous desire, all go unheeded by the independent Cathy, who persists in her love for Heathcliff. Choosing the demon lover in *Wuthering Heights* is extraordinary because of what Heathcliff represents. Unlike Rochester, whose dark demeanor is mitigated by the fact of his wealth and social standing, Heathcliff is an outlier:

> Heathcliff, on the other hand, is a flesh and blood landlord whose crimes are primarily social ones—alienation of a father's affections, usurpation, seduction, tyranny over wife and child—and the story of Catherine's love for him abounds in

> social and psychological implications. Seen in these terms, Catherine is by far the more radical…for she chooses a social outcast, one who pits himself against economic and conjugal privilege and one whose implicit democratic and romantic values could alter the fabric of society. (Conger 98)

Unlike Bertha in *Jane Eyre*, who remains firmly entrenched in her role as femme fatale/villainess, Heathcliff as an outsider exceeds his role as villain. Assigning the male character in this plot the role of outsider allows Brontë more space to question social conventions. Because Heathcliff is a man, he poses more of a threat than Bertha to the internal spaces of the British empire. He can inherit property through marriage, impregnate English women, and fight. His strengths are precisely those aspects of his character that lead us to condemn him in the end, but they are his only tools to fight the injustices of English society, a fact that leads to our ambivalence about his place in the novel as hero or villain.

Brontë's decision to gender the outsider male, instead of female, leads to some interesting complications. Cathy, like many Gothic heroines, must choose between two lovers: Edgar Linton, the fair, wealthy, aristocratic landowner, and Heathcliff, the dark, demon lover, who has nothing (not even a surname) and is an outsider. What is remarkable about the novel is that the "right" choice, Edgar Linton, turns out to be the wrong choice. Conger argues that unlike in earlier Gothic narratives, here Cathy is not simply placed between two lovers, but "feels divided between two lovers" (100). Heathcliff is clearly the right choice for her. As she famously exclaims, "Nelly, I am Heathcliff—he's always, always in my mind—not as a pleasure, any more than I am

always a pleasure to myself—but as my own being…" (88). Cathy chooses Edgar because of material demands, telling Nelly that once she marries Edgar, she can help Heathcliff to rise out of Hindley's power. She cannot marry Heathcliff because they will both be beggars (87). These material reasons, however, are not enough to make the marriage successful, and in fact, Brontë's innovation is:

> to reverse the significance attached to marital and extramarital love. Brontë's heroine is married early in the novel, but this marriage is no resolution as it is in the traditional Gothic. It does not settle conflicts but exacerbates them, and in Brontë's structure, replaces the period of fearful confinement found in the middle of the traditional Gothic novel… for Catherine marriage has seemed a dungeon… In the early Gothic novel freedom is associated with escape from the dark usurper into marriage. In *Wuthering Heights*, however, in a way which underlines Brontë's adherence to the romantic inversion of eighteenth-century values, freedom is inextricably bound to a social outcast and to the lawless—even incestuous—relationship he offers her. (Conger 92)

Cathy dies because she chooses Edgar Linton and refuses the love she is destined to share with Heathcliff. This rejection of marriage as a site of freedom breaks free of the confining roles assigned to women within Gothic fiction. As Conger notes, for the duration of the novel, readers are invited to accept a number of revolutionary ideas about women: that they "should be assumed to have physical and intellectual as well as emotional needs and strengths," that they have "the right to physical, emotional, and intellectual autonomy both before and after marriage… the right to be imperfect—to be

mistaken, passionate, inquisitive, angry, confused, and even selfish or cruel, and still command respect as a human being" and the "right to be outstanding, to be openly intelligent and complex, and still command affection" (105). Giving Cathy and Heathcliff the status of heroine and hero allows Brontë to make these claims in the novel.[5]

Brontë's creation of composite Gothic characters radically destabilizes the Gothic formulas that dictated strict rules concerning female sexuality and the perceived humanity of women. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the acknowledgement of a woman's humanity was often predicated on her sexual virtue, a fact that Charlotte Brontë exploits in her treatment of Bertha, whose sexual excesses provide such a contrast to Jane's rational and prim behavior. Although Charlotte creates a type of composite character in Rochester (we think he is the demon lover but he turns out to be the "right" choice), Emily's innovations in characterization leave the reader no choice but to question received notions of women's sexuality. In addition to these innovations in characterization, Emily, like Charlotte, experiments with the combination of multiple genres, as Pynkett notes:

> *Wuthering Heights* straddles literary traditions and genres. It combines elements of the Romantic tale of evil-possession, and Romantic developments of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel, with the developing Victorian tradition of Domestic fiction in a realist mode. Its use of the ballad and folk material, romance forms and the fantastic, its emphasis on the passions, its view of childhood, and the representation of the romantic quest for selfhood and of aspiring individualism, all link the novel with Romanticism. On the other hand, the novel's

> movement towards a renewed emphasis on community and duty, and towards an idealization of the family seem to be more closely related to the emerging concerns of Victorian fiction. (73-74)

The Gothic and Domestic genres often appear to be at odds with one another in the novel, conflicting and converging in such a way as to destabilize the narrative and the reader's expectations, as we have seen with Lockwood. We expect his narration to frame a Domestic novel, but the Gothic keeps resurfacing, bubbling through the cracks of an otherwise reasonable world to tell Cathy and Heathcliff's tale. Pynkett reads the Earnshaw-Heathcliff-Linton plot as a legend-like tale of an old family disturbed by a stranger in their midst and suggests we can understand it as a type of family romance: it is "a story of changing familial and inter-familial relationships; of sibling rivalry between Heathcliff and Hindley; of the intensely close brother-sister relationship of Catherine and Heathcliff" (75).

The second plot of the novel is aligned more closely with Domestic fiction: Catherine's daughter Cathy is victimized by the demonic Heathcliff, who forces her to marry his son Linton. Cathy, already motherless because Catherine dies in childbirth, loses her father. Then Linton dies, then Heathcliff dies, and Cathy can finally find domestic bliss with Hareton, her cousin raised by Heathcliff in his image. The novel ends with the promise of their happy union, and this plot has been read by many feminist critics as indicative of the novel's conformity to Victorian social standards, recapturing the wildness of Catherine by containing her daughter within the confines of a marriage plot. As such, the second plot rewrites the first in an attempt to contain the disorder of the

Gothic tale. Rather than condemn Brontë for succumbing to the pressures of Victorian sexual and social mores, Pynkett reads this combination of genres as a way for her to even enter into a literary discourse that at the time made women's experiences both absolutely central to literature and utterly marginal to politics. This left women writers with a particularly difficult task, as Pynkett notes: "Any woman who attempted to enter this discourse of literature was faced with a choice of responses: she could accept the dominant definitions of the feminine and write within them; or she could refuse those definitions and attempt either to escape or transcend them; or to engage with and rebel against them" (82). Pynkett argues that Brontë engages in all of these strategies. And indeed the second plot of the novel is not its most inspiring: rather than a victory of the forces of good over the forces of evil, all of the forces of "evil" die off and leave Cathy and Hareton with nothing better to do, it seems, than to fall in love. Their affection for each other seems juvenile and weak in comparison to the passion shared by Catherine and Heathcliff.

Dark Genealogies

In the sexual and romantic relationships in *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff is positioned as both insider and outsider. Mr. Earnshaw finds him on the streets of Liverpool, a young boy starving and homeless and seemingly belonging to no one. Much to Mrs. Earnshaw's consternation, he brings him back to Wuthering Heights. Because no one can understand his "gibberish," the family has no idea where he has come from or what his name is. He is christened "Heathcliff" after a son that died in childhood. After

some initial disagreement, he and Catherine become quite close, so close in fact that a number of critics have read their relationship as an incestuous one. This is certainly in keeping with the Gothic, which often posed the demon lover as an unknown relative, a father, step-father, or uncle, whose identity is revealed only after the heroine rejects him. They grow up together as if they were brother and sister, spending all of their time together and sleeping in the same bed. Eric Solomon even goes so far as to suggest, although there is scant textual evidence for it, that Catherine and Heathcliff could actually be brother and sister if Heathcliff were Mr. Earnshaw's illegitimate son. Solomon wonders why the text gives no reason for Mr. Earnshaw's sixty mile trek to Liverpool (on foot, no less) and insinuates the purpose is amorous.[6] This partially explains Mrs. Earnshaw's strong reaction to the child, as if she had her suspicions as to its origins. Even if this theory does not quite hold together, there is no doubt that the specter of incest looms large in the text, as Solomon explains: "Heathcliff marries his lost love's sister-in-law; his wife's son marries her brother's daughter; Cathy's daughter marries *her* brother's son" (82-83). William R. Goetz reads these incestuous anxieties through the lens of Claude Lévi-Strauss's work on kinship, arguing that when Catherine exclaims "I am Heathcliff" she is "only giving a hyperbolic expression to the fact of her proximity to Heathcliff: she is taking what is already a prohibited (because incestuous) degree of likeness and turning it into an absolute identification" (363). Her rejection of Heathcliff signals what Lévi-Strauss argues is the basic root of all culture: the rejection of incest.

In this formulation, the anxieties about incest prove a testing ground in the novel in the battle between nature and culture. For Lévi-Strauss, the "universal prohibition

against incest marks the common point between nature and culture, the pivot on which the two turn" because at its most basic level all societies seek their own reproduction (Goetz 359). This need to perpetuate a community expresses itself, according to Lévi-Strauss, in "a set of rules governing the exchange or circulation of women; the minimally required rules are the prohibition against incest (without which there might be no circulation or contact between families at all) and, correspondingly, some degree of proscribed exogamy" (Goetz 360). In *Wuthering Heights*, the circulation of women is relegated to the close confines of two families: the Lintons and the Earnshaws, who correspond themselves to culture (the Lintons) and nature (the Earnshaws). The two families reflect a perfect symmetry of each other: a boy and a girl each so that the exogamy required is minimal. But the Lintons do not seem to be eager to marry into a family like the Earnshaws, the wild and drunken Mr. Earnshaw proving to be no ideal patriarch. The plots are further complicated by the presence of Heathcliff, whom the Lintons refuse to accommodate to any degree, dismissing him as a gypsy or Lascar, and by Hindley's marriage to another outsider, Frances. Although she dies quickly, with only enough time in the story to birth Hareton, her presence is disturbing, introduced to the family only after Mr. Earnshaw's death and with no "money nor name to recommend her," as Nelly puts it (58). Unlike Frances, however, Heathcliff is both too much a part of the family and too far outside of it to be an acceptable choice for Catherine. They are too alike, invoking the incest taboo in their proclamations that they *are* each other, a disturbing degree of sameness that disrupts the system of exchange and the circulation of women as a means to maintain a social order. Heathcliff thus comes to represent two

extremes that threaten the social order: he is both too exogamous and too endogamous simultaneously. He is the terribly familiar, an uncanny lover, and the dangerous stranger.

Although the second plot of *Wuthering Heights* has been maligned by critics as the less imaginative half of the novel, or one that acquiesces to Victorian demands about the place of women in society, I see this second round, as it were, as a necessary means for commentary on the current social order. Tracing the genealogical consequences of ideologies that dictate certain choices for women allows Brontë the freedom to detail the tragedy for women who are bound up in an economic system dependent on marriage. *Jane Eyre* is a novel stripped of any genealogy; Jane is an orphan who finds herself a floating signifier in the world, able to choose her own mate, especially after she discovers an inheritance. She has uncles and cousins, but the family never comes too close. She and Rochester have a son at the very end of the novel, but we never see the child or know its name. In *Wuthering Heights*, on the other hand, the families are so close as to be suffocating, the anxieties of one generation passed on to the next and down the line. Catherine is controlled and disciplined by members of her own generation, rather than her father: Hindley becomes the domineering patriarch after Mr. Earnshaw dies, Heathcliff her lover, and Edgar Linton her husband. Unlike in other romances, in which the death of the parents allow the next generation to find its own way and determine its own freedom, Catherine is controlled by her contemporaries and finds her way out of their power only after her death. If *Jane Eyre* plays by the rules, with some modifications, in its portrayal of love, desire, and romance, *Wuthering Heights* pushes those rules to uncomfortable extremes to show where they break down. Catherine marries Edgar, as she knows she

should, but the decision unleashes a destructive fury in the world of the Heights and Thrushcross Grange that threatens to undo it forever. If not for the watered-down romance between Cathy and Hareton at the end, the families would have been destroyed by Heathcliff.

In this way, as in many romances, the family stands in as a representation of the broader social order. Marx argues that the "'modern family contains... in miniature all the antagonisms which later develop on a wide scale within society and its state'" (quoted in Engels, 737). Marx and Engel argue that as wealth increased, the formation of monogamous families emerged, which contain not only the conditions of serfdom and slavery but also guarantee the "subjection of one sex by the other" (739). Indeed, the patriarchal family gives us what Engels argues is the first example of class oppression: "The first class antagonism which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamian marriage, and the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male" (739). Similarly, in *Wuthering Heights*, the drama of class conflict is articulated through the morphing genealogies of the two families. Terry Eagleton argues that while *Jane Erye* uses fiction and fable to smooth over the "jagged edges of real conflict," *Wuthering Heights* confronts "the tragic truth that the passion and society it presents are not fundamentally reconcilable" (100). There is no place for Catherine and Heathcliff's love in the social order, and so Catherine rejects Heathcliff and Heathcliff destroys the social order, occupying at the same time the position of both oppressed and oppressor. Through his character, Eagleton argues, the conflicts between the emerging industrial bourgeoisie and the landed aristocracy take

shape: "Heathcliff's career fleshes out a contemporary ideological dilemma...the contradiction that the fortunes of the industrial bourgeoisie belong economically to an increasing extent with the landed gentry but that there can still exist between them, socially, culturally, and personally, a profound hostility" (115). He comes to represent "a turbulent form of capitalist aggression which must historically be civilized" (116). Heathcliff is both completely divorced from capital as a metaphysical hero, obsessed with his love for Catherine, and a skillful exploiter of material conditions. Thus Heathcliff is both inside and outside the social order of the novel: representing the industrial bourgeoisie he is outside of the agrarian world of the Earnshaws and Lintons, but because the industrial bourgeoisie is no longer a revolutionary class, this position cannot fully map onto his rebellion in loving Catherine. Eagleton argues that the novel "can dramatise its 'metaphysical' challenge to society only by refracting it through the distorting terms of existing social relations, while simultaneously, at a 'deeper' level, isolating that challenge in a realm eternally divorced from the actual" (117). Brontë's text, in other words, employs myth to denaturalize social relationships, and in the process, contains a commentary on class relations as they are represented through the interactions of two families over time.

Heathcliff's conflict with the families also represents the battle between nature and culture, as a number of Brontë critics, including Eagleton, have noted. Heathcliff and Catherine are allowed to roam wild and free until Catherine is taken in to the Grange and "civilized" by the Linton family. When she returns to Wuthering Heights after her convalescence, she descends from the carriage as a lady, requiring assistance from both

Nelly and Frances to remove her hat and coat. Nelly notes that her hands were "wonderfully whitened with doing nothing, and staying indoors" (64). Her cultivation is a barrier to any joyful reunion with Heathcliff: he is reluctant to approach her, and she laughs at his dirty clothes and face. When Hindley became the head of household, he denied Heathcliff access to education with the curate, and forced him to become a servant in the only home he had ever known. Despite Hindley's tyranny, Heathcliff and Catherine remain close, roaming the moors, until her education with the Lintons drives the final wedge between them. Once transformed into a cultivated "lady," she is an appropriate match for Edgar Linton, who proposes to her and sets the tragedy in motion. Thus the novel interrogates the uses of culture in relation to individual freedom, especially for women and "outsiders." Wuthering Heights is a place barely susceptible to culture: the Earnshaws avoid going to church, there is intermittent education, all forms of local vernacular are spoken within its walls. The spread of "culture" from Thrushcross Grange and via Hindley, whose time away at school results in his enforcement of certain norms of behavior, including banishing the orphan Heathcliff from the privileges of the family structure, is an ominous force, and does not produce happiness for any of the characters.

In addition to his class and family status, Heathcliff is also a racial outsider, as a number of recent postcolonial studies of the novel have shown. In this sense, the novel stages the return of the oppressed in relation to British colonialism. Susan Meyer argues, for instance, that Heathcliff embodies the imperialist's fears that the colonized will overthrow the colonizers and subject England to a type of colonization in reverse (119).

Heathcliff collectively embodies the "dark races" of British empire, named alternatively a Lascar (an Indian seaman), a gypsy, "an American or Spanish castaway" (62), Chinese, African, or possibly Irish. Carine Mardorossian asserts that Heathcliff's racial difference is one of Brontë's most radical interventions in the discourse of her time: "she made racial mixing an incontrovertible and lived reality at home in England rather than just the result of questionable but distant sexual practices in the colonies" (94). Recalling Condé's assertion in the epigraph of this chapter, Heathcliff's danger is predicated on his sexual threat, both to Catherine and to Isabella Linton. He is the dark stranger whose reproductive capabilities could undo the white families. His racial identity, however, as Mardorossian argues, is indeterminate, an unstable and unfixed category that sets him apart from a character like Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*, whose racial otherness is unquestionable and originates from the Caribbean. In *Wuthering Heights*, racial difference is also determined by categories of gender and class, as argued both by Meyer and Michie. It is presented as an interrelational category—Heathcliff becomes more "white" as he acquires more capital, a mission he completes through marriage to Isabella Linton. Mardorossian asserts that Heathcliff's racial identity remains unstable because the novel itself exposes the "ideological process through which the inextricably imbricated categories of racial, sexual, and class difference get fixed in discourse as discrete categories of identity" (92).

In this sense, Brontë's novel has been read as a critique of British colonialism. Like many of her contemporaries, Brontë presents women and the colonial other as subject to the same type of power, entering into what would have been a familiar

discourse linking British women with slaves. Meyer reads the feminist politics in *Wuthering Heights* as somewhat less convincing than its anti-imperialist politics. After all, Catherine dies rather quickly, leaving Heathcliff to become the full-blown patriarch and abuser of women himself. The oppressed becomes the oppressor of women, as we see in his abuse of both Isabella and Cathy. But Heathcliff, unlike Bertha, is able to speak back to those, like the Lintons, who seek to exclude him from the social order. After learning of Catherine's decision to marry Edgar, he leaves for three years, a gap in the narrative that is never filled in. He returns with the countenance of a soldier. Meyer, reading his absence in light of the chronology represented in the novel, suggests that he could have fought in the American Revolution, because his absence corresponds roughly to 1780-1783 (115). Although not stated directly in the text, the implication that Heathcliff aided the Americans in the overthrow of British control of the colonies, along with his ability to voice a critique of the "culture" of the Lintons and Hindley, positions him as a character that questions, rather than perpetuates, colonial ideas of the Other.

Brontë's text, however radical, does not entirely escape the legacies of racist colonial discourse. Heathcliff never becomes an acceptable suitor. Rejected by Catherine, he claims Isabella through deception and keeps her through force. He is depicted as savage, cannibal, brute, animal, irrational and driven by passion, all attributes of similar racialized others in Victorian literature (such as Bertha Mason). Most importantly, we cannot go so far as to read *Wuthering Heights* as a celebration of racial mixing. It does posit mixing as a possibility, and does seem to write against the ideologies of racial purity that underlie the prohibitions against miscegenation, but it never allows "miscegenation"

to occur it its full realization. Heathcliff may or may not actually have sex with Catherine (certainly their affair is extramarital to the extent that they are clearly lovers, more than "brother and sister"), but they never have children. His marriage to Isabella is a travesty, and produces one son, Linton, whom Heathcliff intends to make his instrument of revenge in his plot to take over both Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights. Maja-Lisa von Sneidern asserts that although Brontë uses Heathcliff to critique the "myth of Anglo-Saxon superiority," with Linton Heathcliff she "reimposes the taboo against miscegenation" (186). Linton, she argues, embodies all of the characteristics associated in colonial discourse with the mulatto and he "manifests most of the worst accidents and mistakes mixed blood could represent for mid-century England: disease, viciousness, treason, cowardice, duplicity, unmerited power, shiftlessness" (184). Again Heathcliff poses a duality: he is both the rebel fighter, a voice for justice, and the source of "biological" contamination. His love for Catherine is transcendent as long as it remains unconsummated. Brontë stops just short of the most horrifying prospect for the national "dream" of a racially homogeneous, "pure" England. She destabilizes the categories of the social order but does not go so far as to suggest new ones that could accommodate a stranger into the social sphere. The genealogical impulse of the novel demonstrates how power operates but does not create a new order from the disorder Heathcliff creates. Linton dies, Heathcliff's line ends, and the original families reunite in Cathy and Hareton's romance.

The image of Cathy and Hareton does not end the novel, however. Instead, we are left with the supernatural imprint of Heathcliff and Catherine, roaming the moors, finally

united in death as they never could be in life. Nelly reports that a number of the country folk have seen Catherine and Heathcliff walking together, and indeed she seems to believe, against her better judgment, that their otherworldly union is entirely possible. The Gothic in this novel takes the romance entirely outside of the sphere of the social, beyond the world of the human. Even our reliable novelistic narrators, Nelly and Lockwood, are troubled by the challenge the dead lovers pose to the rational order of things. Nelly confesses she no longer likes being alone at the Heights, and seems to fear the possibility of ghosts (287). Lockwood, in the final scene of the novel, gazes at the graves of Edgar, Catherine, and Heathcliff. Per his wishes, Heathcliff is buried next to Catherine (despite the fact that her husband Edgar had already been buried next to her) so that he may dissolve into her. When Edgar died, Heathcliff commanded the sexton to remove Catherine's coffin from the grave so that he could see her face, and then ordered him to remove a side of her coffin, so that when he was buried next to her he could dissolve with her into the earth (249). When he dies, their bodies become one by decomposing into each other. This macabre unity is a far cry from the Victorian notion of marriage as a transcendent joining of souls. The troubling image of three graves where there should only be two end the novel, as recounted by Lockwood: "I sought, and soon discovered, the three head-stones on the slope next to the moor—the middle one grey, and half buried in heath—Edgar Linton's only harmonised by the turf, and moss creeping up its foot—Heathcliff's still bare" (288). The three are sinking into the earth, swallowed by the power of the natural, but only Heathcliff and Cathy live on. This somewhat complicates the neat resolution of many Victorian novels, which often end either in

marriage or death. DuPlessis reads these two endings in light of female sexuality and subjectivity: if

> possession of a hero/husband in the romance story stands for possession of the world, the distortions that might lead to the death of the main female character are clearly related. In some cases, the nonpossession of a hero, the nonaccess to marriage will imply the loss of the world (in death); in other cases, possession by a nonhero—the erotic fall—will lead to death. (15)

Death for Catherine is not, as DuPlessis argues is the case for many female characters, "the negative print of marriage" (15), but is rather her salvation from marriage. In death, she can mingle, join, dissolve into the "stranger" in a way she never could in life.

We are left, finally with a romance that destabilizes notions of Englishness and refuses to relegate female characters to any passive, domesticated sphere. As much as *Jane Eyre* is eager to settle notions of Englishness against the threat of foreignness, *Wuthering Heights* greedily seeks out strangeness to question the limits of power, including those that seek to define a "pure" national identity or the boundaries of female sexuality. The Gothic romance is uniquely suited to these purposes, because Catherine's passion for Heathcliff transgresses so many boundaries, including monogamy and even life itself. This unsettling romance is bound up in discourses of national definition common to many works of Victorian literature, as Cannon Schmitt explains:

> Comparative and negative definitions of English selfhood are invoked with greater frequency as the empire comes into contact with and subdues more and more foreign peoples. And, somewhat paradoxically, an internalization of the

> foreign occurs that results in an uneasy awareness of a hybrid, deeply fractured, and contradictory self… Foreignness, so vociferously defended against, penetrates English domestic space literally and figuratively—a penetration that then serves as the rationale for still more urgent attempts to ensure national purity. Gothic fictions not only registered this work of nation-making but provided a glossary of figures and narrative conventions with which Englishness was defined and redefined. (14)

Wuthering Heights stages the drama of the penetration of the foreign, in all its masculine connotations. Heathcliff's presence destabilizes the national order in a way Bertha could not, leaving us with a text that demonstrates how gender and sexuality in part determine race and national identity and vice-versa. Heathcliff is a threat because he can claim the women, inherit property, and begin a new family line. Bertha, because she is a woman, loses her property rights when she marries Rochester. When female characters in both novels express their passion for the "wrong" lover, they are punished, while men who desire women when they should not eventually find solace, either in marriage or in death. *Wuthering Heights* persists in the literary imagination because it leaves the tensions between the national and the foreign unresolved. Heathcliff remains a figure both inside and outside, hero and villain, a Gothic composite that questions national identity and the boundaries of Englishness.

La migration des cœurs* and *Créolité

This tension between the national and the foreign in *Wuthering Heights* helps to explain why Condé chooses the novel to stage her critique of *créolité*, espoused by a group of Martiniquan writers known as the Créolistes: Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant. Their 1989 manifesto, *Éloge de la créolité* (*In Praise of Creoleness*) espoused a type of globalized national consciousness in response to French cultural imperialism. Writing very much in the tradition of Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Edouard Glissant, they declare: "We are forever Césaire's sons" (80). Building on Glissant's theories of relation, they argue for a non-essentialized world-view that celebrates a polycentric approach to language, culture, politics, and economics (Balutansky 97). They reclaim the term Creole from its historical associations with békés (the white planter class) and propose a shift away from more essentialized notions of identity, such as Negritude. Although Negritude was very important during anticolonialist struggles, they argue that at its most fundamental level it sought to replace Europe with an "impossible Africa" (82). *Créolité* and Negritude, however, share similar goals of rejecting a double consciousness: the terrible condition "to perceive one's interior architecture, one's world, the instants of one's days, one's own values, with the eyes of the other" (76). Instead of adopting "mother Africa" as their foundational matrix, the Créolistes propose to decolonize the imagination by means of a Creole aesthetics and the celebration of Creole language. They claim a brotherhood with other creolized cultures, but their theoretical material and concern is clearly grounded in the Caribbean. They resist any definitive definition of *créolité* and suggest that it is the "*interactional* or

transactional aggregate of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history" (87). Ultimately, *créolité*, especially as it is articulated in art, is "an annihilation of false universality, of monolingualism, and of purity" (90).

It is clear in the *Éloge* that the authors seek to dismantle certain essentialized identities, especially those of race and ethnicity. Much of the criticism of *créolité*, however, has argued that in the rejection of certain forms of authenticity they posit new ones, especially in regards to language and gender. The authentic Creole subject speaks Creole language, and if she or he is an artist, must also create in that language. The Créolistes argue that "[n]o Creole creator, in any field, can ever succeed without an intuitive knowledge of the poetics of the Creole language" (105). They claim that the suppression of Creole by the French was not only a "mouth silence" but also a "cultural amputation" (104). It is not only the French who suppress Creole, however. There are also those who have not developed a sense of Creole interior vision who suppress Creole: "Every time a mother, thinking she is favoring the learning of the French language, represses Creole in a child's throat, she is in fact bearing a blow to the latter's imagination, repressing his creativity" (104). In this formulation, as in their declaration that "we" are all Césaire's "sons," it is clear that the Créolistes assume a universal male subject in their articulation of *créolité*. The mother, repressing Creole language, presents as much of a threat to her son as the French. A. James Arnold argues that:

> The *créolité* movement has inherited from its antecedents, *antillanité* and *negritude*, a sharply gendered identity. Like them, it is not only masculine but

> masculinist. Like them, it permits only male talents to emerge within the movement, to carry its seal of approval. And, like them, it pushes literature written by women into the background... *créolité* is the latest avatar of the masculinist culture of the French West Indies, which is being steadily challenged by the more recently emerged, less theoretically articulated, womanist culture, to borrow a term from the Anglophone West Indies. (21)

Like Condé, Arnold asserts that the masculinist paradigm of *créolité* silences women's voices. It leaves women with no choice but to follow the party line, so to speak, and accept their place as authentic "Creole" wives and mothers.

When faced with this criticism, Patrick Chamoiseau is unapologetic about the masculinist assumptions of his work. In an interview, Lucien Taylor points out that the *Éloge* is basically silent about gender. Chamoiseau replies, apparently incensed:

> I've never been able to understand the 'masculinist' critique of our work; it seems completely unfounded. In fact, I am astonished at how many of my novels have been about women...I portray Creole women who've grown up in a system of extreme violence, which gives rise to personality types that might seem to be virile and masculine. But that's simply how Creole women are.
>
> I refuse to budge before this criticism. Those who make it presume that literature is simply an intellectual discourse about a culture; they forget that it's also a way of bearing witness to that culture, a form of testimony. We can't plaster feminist principles over our narratives just to look good in the eyes of the great feminist discourses still in fashion in the West. We're bearing witness to the Antillean

> imaginary, in which the figure of the *matadora* looms large... This whole line of criticism is inept and inapt. (154)

From this interview, it is clear that Chamoiseau does not understand the gender critique of his work because he repeats some of the same moves that feminist critics reject. He essentializes Creole women by asserting that "that's simply how Creole women are." If Creole women have such a fixed identity, then there need be no room in Chamoiseau's work to contemplate the female subject. He claims that Creole women are masculine, virile, and *matadoras*. Unlike in the *Éloge*, where the (male) Creole subject is in a process of becoming, in this interview, he claims a fixed identity for Creole women. Apparently, if the Creole subject is a woman, there is no process of becoming, it is simply how women are. Chamoiseau also makes another rhetorical move here that is similar to homophobic discourses in the region. Just as many in the region who condemn homosexuality locate its origins in the West, as something foreign to the Caribbean that is corrupt and imported, so, too, does Chamoiseau claim that feminism is an import. Literature, he asserts, cannot simply conform to the feminist ideals that come from without. It would be artificial to simply "plaster feminist principles" over the narratives to "look good in the eyes of the great feminist discourses still in fashion in the West." There is a hint of sarcasm and fatality here. He does not seem to think that the discourses really are "great" because he implies that they will soon be over. They are "still in fashion" but will not always be so. To posit feminism as something "fashionable" trivializes the discourse. By locating feminism as a discourse from outside, Chamoiseau ignores and denies the feminist discourses that arise from within the region.

Condé herself could be seen as one of the preeminent scholars of Caribbean feminist thought. Neither her fiction nor her theoretical work are accounted for in the *Éloge*, even though by 1989 she was a widely published fiction writer and scholar. Chamoiseau, Confiant, and Bernabé would have been well aware of her work. The *Éloge* celebrates, almost exclusively, writing by men; one notes a glaring omission of creative work by women. Although the Créolistes dismiss the work of women writers, Condé takes up their ideas seriously in an edited collection of essays, *Penser la créolité*. Published in the same year as *La migration des cœurs*, the collection responds to the ideas presented in the *Éloge* and offers alternative formulations for what it means to dismantle colonialist notions of purity and authenticity.

In the conclusion to the collection, entitled "Chercher nos vérités," Condé takes issue with the Créolistes for setting up a rigid Creole authenticity based on the use of the Creole language. She argues that their formulations of the Creole subject and of *créolité* do not adequately account for the fact that Martinique and Guadeloupe have become what she terms "lands of immigration" (306).[7] More than seventy percent of the population leaves their native island at some point. The children of these immigrants often grow up in a French cultural context and so might never learn Creole. The cultural forms they practice are usually a mix of what they learn from their parents and from the community they live in, a condition that is not unique to Martinique and Guadeloupe: "The process of transplantation and uprooting that I have just described is common to all of the Caribbean islands, the English-speaking ones, the Spanish-speaking ones, and the Dutch-speaking ones" (307).[8] By immigrating to Europe, the U.S., or Canada,

immigrants' use of language shifts. This is how we find authors like Haitian-American Edwidge Danticat writing not in Kreyol but in English.

Because claims to national identity often rely on a fluency in the appropriate "nation-language," immigrants from Martinique and Guadeloupe are often read as inauthentic national subjects. Immigrants or children of immigrants living in France or elsewhere might not be able to speak Creole perfectly or might not speak it at all. Condé argues against this idea of authenticity associated with living in the home country and speaking fluent Creole. There is a need to redefine what it means to be Caribbean and also a need for the literature of the region to begin to capture this phenomenon of coming and going. Referring to the writers who remain at home, Condé argues that they do not account for the cultural phenomenon of the Antilles, one based on constant movement. Antillian culture is "un constant magma," a culture in motion that cannot be adequately captured in the binary opposition between French and Creole. This opposition is nothing more than "an inheritance of the colonial obsession with the victor and victim" (308).[9] The Créolistes, by insisting that the use of the Creole language is what defines an authentic Creole subject or artist, continue to repeat the power structures set up by colonialism. Condé rejects this idea: "Falsely revolutionary, this linguistic dichotomy is, in reality, rooted in the past and denies the fundamental elements of the social order and power implied in all language" (309).[10] The space for a redefinition of Antillian or Caribbean identity is not to be found by opposing French to Creole.

Condé's critique highlights the irony of the Créolistes' theoretical framework. Seeking to celebrate the mixed subject, the Creole subject, they fix authentic identity by

tying it to Creole language and the *pays-natal*. Rather than reject those who have lived abroad in the colonial centers, Condé argues that there needs to be an acceptance of these new cultural mixings: "We must improve the image of these new cultural mixings that call into question traditional mixings already stratified by custom" (309).[11] These new cultural *métissages* are a threat to the traditional *métissages* as cultural mixings that incorporate a number of languages and establish a multitude of possible identities no longer tied to one nation-state. The fact of hybridity, or the rejection of unity, does not guarantee a liberatory politics for all people in question, as Condé asserts. In fact, the notion of mixing can be traditional, and the gender politics of *créolité* would certainly suggest as much. In her work, Condé articulates other possibilities for mixing that take account of the ways in which gender and sexuality complicate traditional notions of the authentic Caribbean subject. In *La migration des cœurs*, the consequences of stranger love are taken up again in a new context, and the result is a text that offers a critique of both colonial discourse and male nationalist formulations of "acceptable" female subjects. In the novel, the Heathcliff character and the Gagneur family are used to trace the historical shape of Guadeloupe that reveals the extent to which national formation is both troubled by, and constituted on, foreignness and transnationality.

A Pan-Caribbean Mythos

La migration des cœurs is mostly faithful to the Catherine-Heathcliff-Edgar story in its rewriting of Brontë's novel: the Earnshaws are translated literally as the Gagneur family, members of the mulatto bourgeoisie, the Lintons become the de Linsseuils, a

white planter family, and Heathcliff is Razyé, named for the barren heaths and cliffs where he is found as a child by Hubert Gagneur, wandering in the middle of a hurricane. Cathy and Razyé are raised as brother and sister until they are driven apart by Cathy's tyrannical brother Justin. Cathy is wooed by Aymeric de Linsseuil, and when she accepts his proposal, Razyé flees L'Engoulvent (Windward Heights) in despair and heartbreak, which sets the plot in motion. The insularity of *Wuthering Heights*, the suffocating closeness of the two families, is replaced, however, by a sprawling tale, told from the perspective of many characters, from the servants to the white planters and all classes in between. Most of the narrators are women, including Nelly Raboteur, who replaces Ellen "Nelly" Dean as Cathy's nurse and housekeeper. The chapters are variously narrated in first person, third person, and third person omniscient, which creates a comprehensive sense of the fictionalized world of Guadeloupe in the novel. Also unlike *Wuthering Heights* (and perhaps more like *Wide Sargasso Sea*), the action of the novel is variously set at L'Engoulvent, the de Linsseuils' plantation Belles-Feuilles (which corresponds to Thrushcross Grange) and La Solitude, in the economic capital Point-à-Pitre, in Marie-Galante (one of the islands that forms part of the nine-island archipelago of Guadeloupe), and in Cuba and Dominica.

Condé also fills in the temporal gaps in *Wuthering Heights*, most significantly the lacuna in Heathcliff's story concerning his three-year absence from the Heights. *La migration* actually begins with this gap. Razyé seeks his fortune in Cuba during its war of independence, and is conscripted by the Spanish army to fight against the rebels. From the beginning, then, he is an unlikely hero, unconcerned with the plight of nations

fettered to colonial rule and seeking only material gain. He also seeks something else in Cuba: the power to commune with the dead. He becomes an initiate of santería, a sycretic Caribbean religion combining African and Catholic belief systems, and tries to convince Melchior, a revered santería priest, to give him the secrets of communicating with the dead. Melchior is murdered before Razyé can learn them, and he is furious that his plan to control his world through spiritual means has been thwarted. Razyé's ruthless pursuit of spiritual secrets is one means Condé uses to incorporate the element of mythos into *La migration*. As in *Wuthering Heights*, Condé's rewriting stages a cosmic battle that transcends the world of the human. The mythos Condé employs, however, rejects Christian paradigms and embraces a spiritual order specific to the Caribbean and descended from Africa.

While the supernatural return of Catherine and Heathcliff is mediated through the "reasonable" narrative framework of Lockwood and Nelly, who are reluctant to give credence to the existence of ghosts in a world where souls should be assigned to heaven or hell, in *La migration* the ability of the dead to enter the world of the living is taken for granted. In fact, a major revision Condé makes is to remove the Lockwood narrator entirely and to replace it with the multiplicity of perspectives mentioned above. *La migration des cœurs* approaches the incorporation of the supernatural into the novel in a different way, naturalizing it in a manner reminiscent of Latin American magical realism. Cathy narrates her own wake from beyond the grave, for instance, and one of Razyé's sons has a fairly lengthy discussion with his ghost. The supernatural is also naturalized in the novel because much of its possibility emanates from santería and vodoun belief

systems, both widely accepted by the characters themselves in the world of the novel. These spiritual paradigms also serve as commentary on the political realities of Guadeloupe. The Catholic church and Christian mythology are entirely associated with the békés, who use the church as a means to maintain power. Razyé and Cathy both reject the church as youngsters, much to Nelly's dismay:

> ...ces affaires des bon Dieu, ce n'était qu'un attrape fabriqué par les Blancs pour mieux nous soumettre. Cathy et moi, quand nous étoins petits, nous avions inventé une prière de notre convenance..."Nous te haïssons, toi qu'on ne voit jamais, mais qui es assis là-haut dans le ciel. Tu partages sans justice la couleur, les habitations, les terres. Nous ne t'appellerons jamais notre père parce que tu ne l'es pas." (121)
>
> [...all this business about God was nothing but a trap fabricated by the whites to better enslave us with. When we were little, Cathy and I invented a prayer to our liking...'We hate you, sitting invisible up there in Heaven. There is no justice the way you share out colour, plantations and land. We shall never call you our father, cos you're not. (118)]

They recognize the way the church has been used as an arm of French colonialism, and reject a god that could preside over so much injustice. When Razyé is introduced to santería in Cuba, however, he feels more affinity for a religious system that comes from Africa and for deities that created the world for their black children (121). In santería he finds solace because it teaches him that separation from loved ones and even death have no meaning, and that if he learns to see, then he will never be apart from his Cathy (121).

Razyé's interest and practice of these syncretic religions is entirely subsumed to two goals: to be with Cathy and to wreak havoc on the white planter class. In these pursuits, he is transformed into a mythological figure himself. Throughout the novel, he is compared to the devil, a werewolf, a wicked spirit, and is often perceived as superhuman. When he seeks out his son on Marie-Galante, for instance, the villagers see him as a creature from hell and liken him to a meteor, tearing through the wind, rain, and lightning to find his son (248). Cathy is compared to the vodoun goddess of love, Erzulie-Freda, because of her scandalous passion for Razyé (60). The tales that circulate about Cathy and Razyé elevate them to mythical status as well, especially after Razyé joins the socialist uprising that brings the white planter class to its knees and ruins Aymeric de Linsseuil, the man who married Cathy.

After Cathy's death, Razyé becomes frantic to know the secrets of the dead so that he can find her again. His search is frustrated at every turn, however. Every holy man he consults dies before he can divulge the secrets to him. As his quest goes on, his character realizes the ominous promise of the second epigraph of the novel, from Simone de Beauvoir: "Sa mort nous sépare. Ma mort ne nous réunira pas." ["His death has separated us. My death will not reunite us."] He confesses as much to Romaine, a servant whose husband is killed because he fights with the socialists. He tells her that despite consulting all of the kimbwazè and gadèdzafe on the island, he saw Cathy only once, shortly after she died. Even this vision could have been a figment of his imagination, and he despairs that he may never see her again (241). In the novel, in fact, the two lovers are never reunited, not because life after death in the world is impossible, but because the

reunion would seem a too optimistic solution to the troubles of a couple separated by a racist and exploitative colonialist system. That Razyé never finds comfort heightens the tragedy of the sexual politics of this system. Rather than ameliorate the suffering, Condé makes the separation an eternal one. Both Cathy and Razyé speak after their deaths, and both ghosts affirm the unhappy fate that awaits them forever. Condé also refuses a transcendent, spiritual union because she emphasizes, unlike Emily Brontë, the corporeality of their love affair.

Ultimately, the mythological structure of the novel is presented as natural and is used to establish a type of pan-Caribbean mythos. One of the last priests Razyé consults, Madhi, indicates that the fellowship of spiritual leaders is a transnational and transcolonial network of knowledge, citing his experience convening with spiritual leaders of the region during his own spirit quest:

> À quinze ans, mon esprit est allé à une reunion qui se tenait au fond d'une caverne, dans la plaine de la Castañeda...Il y avait là les plus grands maîtres de l'invisible venus de tous les coins de la terre, ceux devant qui le monde se courbe comme une faux: Melchior, que opérait à Cuba et qui n'avait pas encore commis le péché pour lequel il n'est pas de remission, Ciléus Ciléas l'Ancien, qui opérait ici même en Grande-Terre, Déméter le Sage, à Fonds-Saint-Jacques, en Haïti, Escubando Premier, à Santo Domingo, et bien d'autres... (214)
>
> [At fifteen my spirit flew to a deep cavern in the plain of Castaneda...There were assembled the greatest masters of the invisible from every corner of the earth, in front of whom the world bows like a scythe: Melchior, who worked in Cuba and

had not yet committed the sin for which there is no remission, Ciléus Ciléas, the Elder, who worked here on Grande-Terre, Déméter the Wise from Fonds-Saint-Jacques in Haiti, Escubando the First from Santo Domingo, and many others.] (216)

Although Madhi claims these leaders are from all over the world, the only ones he names are those from the Caribbean, many of whom Razyé has consulted in his quest. They are also more powerful than even the white planters, capable of bending the world to their wishes. Condé calls on this pan-Caribbean system of belief to structure the supernatural elements of the novel in relation to African-derived religious systems. Like Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, whose use of obeah questions the epistemological framework of colonial power, Condé includes these supernatural elements in *La migration des cœurs* in order to establish an alternative system of belief that is ultimately more powerful than the colonial order and that unites it to a regional belief system in the African diaspora. Condé transforms Brontë's romantic use of myth and tale into a means to question the power of colonial ideology.

Creolizing the Gothic: Cathy and Razyé

As we have seen, *Wuthering Heights* stops short of articulating a fully corporeal romance between Catherine and Heathcliff, in part because of Victorian prohibitions and fears regarding miscegenation. Brontë sidesteps the issue of racial mixing and the question of its resulting genealogy by *disembodying* the romance, relegating the realization of the union between Catherine and Heathcliff to the spiritual realm. Ghosts,

after all, do not produce children or make claims to material wealth. One of the important postcolonial interventions Condé makes in rewriting the novel is to insist on corporeality and materiality, refusing the lovers a transcendent union and emphasizing instead the reality of their bodies and the weight of their signification in a racialized plantation economy. She takes Brontë's innovations in Gothic characterization a step further, reading the "light" and "dark" elements of the composite Gothic hero and heroine portrayed in *Wuthering Heights* as markers of race. In doing so, she offers both a critique of essentialized Creole womanhood as outlined by the Créolistes and the ideologies of racial purity espoused by colonial discourse.

Cathy Gagneur, like Catherine, is a composite heroine, both in her personality and in her racial identity. Her mother (who dies before Cathy would know her) and father are both mulatto, and although Hubert Gagneur inherits L'Engoulvent from his white father, the family has little wealth and is excluded from the highest positions of power in Guadeloupe because of their racial identity. Hubert refuses to attempt to pass as white, and rejects both the church and the colonial state, allowing his children to run wild, free from the doctrines of church or school. Cathy is wild like her father: Hubert, whom Nelly describes as a man who "ne parlait que le créole et injuriait comme un nègre des bois" (28) ["only spoke Creole and swore like a field nigger" (22)], is indifferent to belonging to the upper classes around him. Cathy, whom Nelly describes as "la digne enfant de son papa" (25) ["the true daughter of her papa" (19)], is just as authoritarian and unconcerned with others as her father. She is beautiful, but imperious and demanding. Nelly describes her as "de la couleur du sirop qu'on vient de sortir du feu et qu'on refroidit au plein air,

les cheveux noirs comme des fils de nuit et les yeux verts" (25) ["the colour of hot syrup left to cool in the open air, with black hair like threads of night and green eyes" (19)]. In Cathy's character, Condé plays on the stereotype of the sensual and sexualized mulatto mistress, associating her with food and the night in this description of her. Condé might risk repeating the stereotype if it were not for the way she reinscribes the aesthetic effects of her characters, reversing the colonial framework that celebrates whiteness as the most beautiful. In her novel, all of the white characters are undesirable, presented as decaying and decrepit or overly feminized and weak, as in the case of Aymeric and Irmine de Linsseuil. The white characters are associated with death, while the black characters and mixed race characters are aligned with vitality and survival. In the case of mixed race characters like Justin, Cathy's brother, the closer they align themselves with whiteness, the more likely they are to die themselves. Justin, unlike Cathy, is able to pass: with "une peau claire, assez claire pour qu'il se gagne à la force du poignet une place dans la société des Blancs" (25) ["with a fair skin, fair enough for him to earn a place for himself in white folks' company through sheer hard work" (18)]. He marries a tubercular daughter of the planter class, Marie-France, and eventually drinks himself to death after she dies.

When Hubert brings Razyé home to L'Engoulvent, Justin is displaced not only by a surrogate son (Razyé quickly becomes Hubert's favorite) but by a black child. Justin, who expects to be adored because he is light-skinned, finds himself relegated to the margins of his father's affections. Because Hubert rejects the impetus to bend to the will of colonial society, he does not favor his light-skinned son and adopts a black child as his own. Razyé's darkness in Condé's novel is explicitly embodied. Nelly describes him:

"Un enfant de sept ou huit ans, sale et repoussant, complètement nu, garçon, et, croyez-moi, le sexe bien formé, nègre ou *bata-zindien*. Sa peau était noire, mais ses cheveux bouclés s'emmêlaient jusqu'au milieu de son dos" (28) ["a dirty, repulsive, seven- or eight-year-old boy, completely naked, with a well-developed sex, believe me; a little black boy or Indian half-caste. His skin was black, and his tangled curly hair reached down his back" (21)]. Importantly, although the blackness of his skin is emphasized by almost every character, his hair functions as a symbol of a mixed racial identity. When Nelly describes his skin, she contrasts his skin with his hair. His skin is black, *but* ("mais") his curly hair falls almost to the middle of his back. It is his hair that indicates he might be *bata-zindien*, with mixed African and Indian heritage.

The description of Razyé's blackness and well-formed sex establish his character at one end of the spectrum of Cathy's desire. At the other end is Aymeric, in whose character Condé embodies almost all things opposite of Razyé. "Aymeric était accompagné de sa sœur Huberte à laquelle curieusement, il ressemblait, en plus efféminé. C'est qu'il était tellement blond, qu'il avait le teint tellement rose et les yeux tellement bleus que les siens l'avaient surnommé «Chérubin céleste»" (44-5) ["Aymeric was accompanied by his sister Huberte whom he curiously resembled, but in a more effeminate way. It was because he was so blond, his complexion so pink and his eyes so blue that his family had nicknamed him 'heavenly Cherub'" (37). Unlike Razyé, Aymeric is extremely white and even more feminine than his sister. Razyé is often compared to the devil, but Aymeric is a "Chérubin céleste." His hair is so blond and his eyes so blue that he cannot avoid being described as angelic. By establishing such an exaggerated

spectrum of blackness and whiteness, Condé is playing with Manichean colonial ideology that associates blackness with all things evil, base, and savage and whiteness with all things good and pure. The exaggeration of Rayzé's blackness, described at numerous points in the narrative as even more black than the black clothes he wears, and Aymeric's whiteness demonstrate how Condé's awareness of colonial ideology allows her to play with the stereotypes to her advantage.

Like Brontë, Condé considers the danger culture poses to women's desire. Justin, like Linton in *Wuthering Heights*, becomes the one to enforce culture, specifically French culture, in the world of L'Engoulvent. After Hubert's death, he decides to attend school and hopes to join the ranks of the planter class. Razyé poses a threat to this ascendancy, as we see when Justin finds him with Cathy. Coming home one weekend, he finds Cathy and Razyé in the kitchen of L'Engoulvent, sensuously eating Jamaican plums (*surettes*): "Le bras passé autour du cou de Razyé, Cathy les glissait une par une dans sa bouche en riant aux éclats. Razyé avalait et grognait de plaisir" (33) ["With one arm slipped around Razyé's neck, Cathy was popping them one by one into his mouth in fits of laughter. Razyé was swallowing and groaning with pleasure" (26)]. Justin is so shocked to find his sister in this erotic tableau that he strikes her, knocking her to the ground. Then he curses at her, resorting to his Creole that he had been trying to suppress: "*Kimafoutiyesa*! Ma fille, qu'est-ce que tu veux? Un ventre à credit? Et avec un nègre encore!" (33).[12] Here he makes it clear that he is replacing Hubert as the father by calling Cathy "ma fille" (my daughter) instead of "ma sœur" (my sister). Although in a less literal sense "ma fille" could also mean "my girl" or "girl," here the added meaning of "daughter" emphasizes

that Justin is now the patriarchal figure in the household and thus entitled to full control over Cathy and her sexuality. He strikes her again when she tries to get up, and bloodies her mouth. The contrast here between her laughing mouth enjoying Jamaican plums with Razyé and her now-bloodied and wounded mouth foreshadows the increasing regulation of Cathy's sexuality. The mouth, as both the site of language and pleasure, is silenced by Justin. Neither Cathy nor Razyé responds to Justin in this scene. He sends Razyé out of the house, "lui cria comme à un chien: --*Dèro! Dèro, mwen di-w! Mache!*" (33) ["shouted at him like a dog" (26)]. He forbides Razyé from ever entering the house again, sending him to work in the fields with the newly hired Indian servants. As for Cathy, he hires an old French nun to teach her "avec le français, un peu d'écriture, mais surtout la broderie, la couture et les bonnes manières" (33) ["French, a little reading, a little writing, but above all embroidery, sewing and good manners" (27)]. Justin violently interrupts Cathy and Razyé's intimacy, not only with his fists but also with colonial and gendered education.

The contrast between Razyé and Aymeric is presented in sharp relief in Cathy's struggles with her mixed race identity. When Aymeric asks her to marry him, Cathy is faced with the fatal choice of turning her back on Razyé, the only person she ever loves, or giving up a life of luxury with the most desired son of a wealthy plantation family. Although she returns to L'Engoulvent a changed Cathy, she does not find it easy to choose Aymeric. His proposal elicits Cathy's confession to Nelly that she cannot imagine someone like her marrying Aymeric:

'…est-ce qu'une personne comme moi peut se marier avec un Chérubin céleste? Tu me connais et tu sais que je ne suis pas un ange du bon Dieu. Au contraire. C'est comme s'il y avait en moi deux Cathy, et cela a toujours été ainsi depuis que je suis toute petite. Une Cathy qui débarque directement d'Afrique avec tous ses vices. Une autre Cathy qui est le portrait de son aïeule blanche, pure, pieuse, aimant l'ordre et la mesure. Mais cette deuxième Cathy-là n'a pas souvent la parole, la première a toujours le dessus.' (48)

[… can someone like me marry a heavenly Cherub? You know me and you know I'm no angel. Anything but. It's as if there were two Cathys inside me and there always have been, ever since I was little. One Cathy who's come straight from Africa, vices and all. The other Cathy who is the very image of her white ancestor, pure, dutiful, fond of order and moderation. But this second Cathy is seldom heard, and the first always gets the upper hand. (40)]

Aymeric's proposal forces Cathy to articulate how her mixed racial identity divides her sense of self. This divide is certainly exacerbated by Justin's insistence she learn manners from the French nun, and by her visits with the de Linsseuils, but it is clear that even before this immersion into colonial education Cathy has felt torn between the expectation that she act like her white, female ancestors. She imagines this white ancestor as a woman who is "pure, pieuse, aimant l'order et la mesure" (48). In this way, she locates the model of femininity in white women. It is the white women who are "pure," while she inherits her "vices" from her African ancestors. In this passage, there is more than a little doubt about this dichotomy on Cathy's part. Although she repeats colonialist ideology,

her lack of specificities about her African "vices" makes it clear that she is merely repeating the idea but is not convinced herself. She imagines her white ancestor embodying many of the traits she simply does not share: she can act the part of a pious, even-tempered woman but she never becomes that person. The first Cathy she describes from Africa always gets the upper hand. It is this Cathy that is the strongest, and it is this Cathy that she must sacrifice in order to marry a white man.

Nelly dismisses Cathy's concerns, telling her that if she marries Aymeric she will ensure her financial security and be the envy of all of Guadeloupe (48). Cathy tells Nelly that this is why she will marry Aymeric, even though she still loves Razyé: "'Je aurai des robes en soie, des chapeaux capelines en paille d'Italie, des domestiques pour me server. Mes enfants seront blancs et riches'"(48) ["I'll have silk dresses, wide-brimmed Italian straw hats and servants at my beck and call. My children will be white and rich" (41).]. Cathy knows that marrying Aymeric will provide her with all of the material luxuries she does not have at L'Engoulvent, but marrying him will also ensure a type of generational security for her children. Her children will be white and rich and members of one of the most powerful plantation families. Although she knows this is the choice she will make, she is unhappy about it, on the verge of tears (48). She confesses that she would never even have considered marrying Aymeric if Justin had not ruined Razyé:

> 'Si Justin n'avait pas fait à Razyé ce qu'il lui a fait, je ne songerais même pas à ce mariage. Mais de la façon dont Razyé est à present, je ne pourrai jamais me marier avec lui. Ce serait une dégradation! Ce serait comme s'il n'y avait plus qu'une seule Cathy, la bossale, la mécréante descendant tout droit de son

> négrier…Avec lui, je recommencerais à vivre comme si nous étions encore des sauvages d'Afrique. Tout pareil!' (48)
>
> ['If Justin hadn't done what he did to Razyé, I wouldn't even be thinking of this marriage. But the way Razyé is now, I could never marry him. It would be too degrading! It would be as if only Cathy the reprobate existed, stepping straight off the slave-ship. Living with him would be like starting over as savages from Africa. Just the same!' (41)]

If Razyé had remained in the house and had been privileged to the few material comforts available to Cathy and Justin, then Cathy might have been able to consider marrying him. Also, if he had stayed in the house, he would have become more like a member of the family, a more legitimate mate with ties to a family community. Because he is exiled to the stables and forced to work in the fields with the Indian indentured servants, he is even further disconnected from the family. This, combined with his blackness and his unknown racial and genealogical identity, makes it impossible for Cathy to choose Razyé despite her love for him. Interestingly, she admits that being with Razyé is her only chance to be a unified subject, to marry Razyé would mean "'Ce serait comme s'il n'y avait plus qu'une seule Cathy.'" The unified Cathy would be a bossale, linked to Africa and everything Cathy is taught is savage and uncivilized. Thus, Cathy's choice to become a unified subject is foreclosed by racist colonial ideology that associates blackness with savagery and vice.[13]

When Cathy dies, her maid Lucinda mourns the fact that her funeral does not suit her. Instead of a béké funeral, she thinks Cathy should have had a wake more like one

given for the people, with storytellers, drums, dancing, and laughter (93). She imagines what a storyteller would have said: "'Mesdames, messieurs, Venez entendre ce qui arrive au crapaud qui veut se faire roi, à la génisse qui se croit jeune fille, à une chaude mulâtresse qui épouse un béké sans graines... Venez voir comment on meurt quand on renie sa culture...'" (93) ["Ladies and Gentlemen, Come and hear what happened to the toad who wanted to be king, to the heifer who thought she was a young girl, to the hot-blooded mulatto girl who married a white Creole with nothing between his legs... Come and see how you die when you turn your back on your culture...'" (89)]. The storyteller Lucinda imagines is male, and it seems Condé is channeling *créolité* here in the imagined indictment of Cathy's actions. Cathy betrays her Creole people, but what Condé highlights is how her gender made any real choice between Aymeric and Razyé impossible. Her retelling also highlights how Cathy is subject to patriarchal power: her brother violently disciplines her, her husband controls all of the wealth. Instead of allowing the lovers to reunite in death, Condé makes their separation eternal as commentary on the complexities of sexual and gender relationships in a creolized world.

Revisionary Genealogies

In *La migration des cœurs*, the genealogies sprawl outward over the historical and geographical space of Guadeloupe. Razyé's reproductive capabilities, instead of being shut down as Heathcliff's were in *Wuthering Heights*, are unmatched by almost any other character. He fathers five children, four with Irmine (who corresponds to Isabella Linton) including Razyé II, and one with Cathy, a daughter also named Cathy. Fulton reads these

revisions as a reversal of a rhetoric of self-containment that we see in *Wuthering Heights*. Condé's new genealogies enact an "opening out of space, of geography, of social spheres, creating a world whose boundaries are difficult to define, much less preserve. The action of the novel moves through various linguistic and cultural settings in the Caribbean archipelago, while major and minor characters outline a network of interconnected families and histories" (68). In so doing, Condé shifts the suggestions of incest from the first plot to the second. Cathy and Razyé, although they grow up like brother and sister, do not seem to have an incestuous relationship. They are different enough, and their lovemaking, although it occurs from a young age, seems a natural extension of their romantic love for one another. The second plot of *La migration*, however, is incestuous. Condé pairs a literal brother and sister, both Razyé's children, who marry and have a child, Anthuria.

The prohibition against intermarriage between whites and blacks in colonial Guadeloupe leads to unions veiled in secrecy and genealogies obscured by false claims to whiteness. These hidden genealogies in *La migration des cœurs* result in an incestuous relationship and marriage between Cathy II, the daughter of Cathy and Razyé, and Razyé II, Irmine and Razyé's first son. In the novel, both children are born on the same day, just before the end of the nineteenth century. Cathy dies giving birth to Cathy II; the child of her union with Razyé serving in the novel as Cathy's final punishment for attempting to become a member of béké society. Razyé II is born at L'Engoulvent and his appearance serves as concrete evidence of Irmine's betrayal of her place in plantation society. Cathy's union with Razyé is transgressive because she is already married to Aymeric and

thus her actions are not only adulterous, but also racially transgressive because she puts the whiteness of the de Linsseuil lineage at risk, a lineage already in danger because she herself is mixed. Irmine's desire for Razyé is transgressive because she refuses her role as a vessel for *béké* children whose whiteness would guarantee them access to power and capital. These children are the products of their mothers' refusal to accept their appropriate gender roles, roles predicated on their racial identities. Their identity as mixed children obscures their origins. Razyé II is never recognized as a member of the de Linsseuil family and Cathy II, to avoid scandal, is never told she is the child of her mother's affair with Razyé. Thus Cathy II grows up at Belles-Feuilles unaware of her half-brother Razyé II growing up in La Pointe in the squalor of his father's neglect.

They meet as young adults in Marie-Galante, a small, impoverished island off the coast of Guadeloupe. Cathy II is forced to move there after her family's ruin and Aymeric's death, caused by Razyé, necessitates that she become a school teacher to support herself. Razyé II moves there to escape his father after Razyé discovers that his son has been sleeping with his mistress. They meet when Razyé II, who has taken the pseudonym Premier-né [First-Born] to conceal his identity in case his father comes to look for him, asks Cathy II to help him prepare for the school diploma. He works as an apprentice to a blacksmith and knows he does not want the life of toil and poverty that such a position would entail. Their first encounter is at the small schoolhouse where Cathy II teaches. Like Cathy and Razyé's relationship, theirs is one immediately defined by conflict. When Cathy II tells Razyé II that she does not know if she is capable of preparing him for the diploma, he replies that she was capable of "'transformer des petit-

fils d'esclaves en marquis'" (230) ["'change grandsons of slaves into marquises'" (233)] at carnival, so she should be capable of doing anything she wants to. She is defensive, claiming carnival was just for fun. Razyé II takes it more seriously, telling her "'Vous auriez pu jouer à autre chose. À ressusciter leurs ancêtres Moudongues ou nègres marrons, par exemple'" (230) ["'You could have played at other things. Dressing them up as Mandingo ancestors or Maroons, for example'" (233)]. Razyé II goes on to ask her if she even knows the history of Marie-Galante and its people. Cathy II, obviously uncomfortable at the lecture she is receiving from an apprentice blacksmith, tries to dismiss him and his disconcerting remarks. She reasserts herself: "'Je sais que nous connaissons des temps très difficiles. Tout le beau travail qu'avait fait M. Schoelcher n'a servi à rien. Les anciens esclaves ne respectent pas Dieu et ne veulent pas travailler…'" (231) ["'I know we're going through difficult times. All Monsieur Schoelcher's fine work has led to nothing. The former slaves respect neither God nor work'" (234)]. Hearing her say this, Razyé II becomes enraged: "'Vouz parlez comme les esclavagistes! Et puis cessez de nous rebattre les oreilles avec M. Schoelcher, M. Schoelcher… On dirait que les esclaves n'ont rien fait pour gagner leur liberté'" (231) ["'You talk like the slave owners… And stop going on about Monsieur Schoelcher, Monsieur Schoelcher. You'd think the slaves did nothing to win their freedom'" (234)]. Cathy II has no reply for this accusation. Raised in a family of former slave owners, she has absorbed the rhetoric of colonial discourse that infantilizes former slaves and places the blame for their oppression within their natures. Cathy II, because of what she has learned from her family and at school, blames blacks for their own oppression: they are poor and

oppressed because they do not respect God and refuse to work. She does not understand how the legacies of colonial rule shape the suffering of the people around her.

In this exchange, Razye II becomes the schoolteacher and Cathy II the pupil. Although he approaches her to teach him, in their first encounter it is Razyé II who educates Cathy II. Educated in colonial schools, and raised in a béké family, Cathy II does not value the African heritage of the people of Guadeloupe. Like Irmine and Aymeric, she believes that the way to salvation for the poor blacks lies not in recovering African culture but in making blacks more "white" or more "French." Razyé II begins to correct her by poking fun at her decision to dress the schoolchildren up as French royalty. He sees how ironic it is to dress up the grandchildren of former slaves as the very people who once enslaved their grandparents. Razyé II does not see this as a game, but as a cultural event with real consequences. It would have been more empowering for the children to dress up as their ancestors, as the people who fought against the slave owners for their freedom.[14]

As in Cathy and Razyé's relationship, education and colonial discourse serve as a site of conflict between Cathy II and Razyé II. At the beginning, Cathy II is very much the mouthpiece of "enlightened" colonial ideology that she inherits from her father and her education. Razyé II is the spokesman for the ideas he has heard from his father and the Socialist party. He is reluctant to approach her for help because he knows she is a de Linsseuil, a family he hates because of what his father has told him and because of what they represent as members of the béké class. When he sees Cathy II, however, he realizes their similarity: "...quand il l'avait eue en face de lui, petite, fragile, et, surprise des

surprises, presque aussi noire comme lui-même, il avait bien compris qu'elle n'avait de Linsseuil que le nom" (233) ["when he came face to face with her—tiny, fragile and, of all things, almost as black as he was—he quickly understood that she was a de Linsseuil in name only" (236)]. This recognition of Cathy II's African ancestry might be the cause of Razyé II's lecture about the Maroons and Mandingos when he first encounters her. Unlike a white schoolmistress, who ostensibly would have no investment in educating her pupils about the African history of the island, Razyé II must find it unbearable to find a mulatto schoolmistress spouting French colonial ideology as if she herself was not the product of the racial mixing the same colonial ideology would seek to prevent. He wonders who her mother is and if she is not the product of a rape (232). That a mulatto would carry the de Linsseuil name does not make sense to him. He knows that his mother was a de Linsseuil, and he hates them for disowning her. If Aymeric had been her father, Cathy II and Razyé II would have been cousins. She does not know where he comes from, but he knows from the beginning that they are family. It is not until later in the narrative that they begin to realize just how close their family ties are.

Cathy II knows, although her family never speaks of it, that she is mulatto. After her conversation with Razyé II, she realizes that "Il ne suffisait pas de donner dos aux Linsseuil sous prétexte qu'elle n'était pas de leur sang. Il fallait découvrir qui elle était réellement" (234) ["It wasn't enough to turn her back on the Linsseuils with the excuse that she was not of their blood. She had to discover who she really was" (237)]. Unlike her mother, who grew up in a Creole space that allowed for African and African-based cultural practices, Cathy II is raised at Belles-Feuilles where the expression of Creole

culture is sharply curbed. For Cathy II, the journey is not to reject Creole culture in favor of béké culture but rather to find a way to recover the cultural knowledge and practices that her upbringing has denied her. Razyé II represents that possibility for her, and this explains why, in addition to their similarities and instant bond they share with each other, they fall in love and run off to Dominica to be married.

Like every other honeymoon in the novel and in *Wide Sargasso Sea* that takes place in Dominica, theirs is ill-fated. By the time they have settled into a life of poverty and realized they may be brother and sister, it is too late for them. Cathy II is already pregnant and there is no way out. Razyé II dreams of escaping but cannot bear to leave her. He loses his desire for her at the same time that he realizes their connection:

> ...son amour pour Cathy diminuait singulièrement. Elle lui pesait comme une charge. Il n'avait plus jamais d'impatiences, d'angoisses et d'élans enflamés vers son corps. Il se forçait à lui faire l'amour et, chaque fois, il avait la sensation sacrilège d'étreindre un autre lui-même, curieusement changé en femme. Il en était venu à la considérer comme une sœur: chérie peut-être dans le fond de son cœur, mais quotidienne, ennuyeuse, voire pénible à supporter. (297)
>
> [... his love for Cathy diminished considerably. She weighed him down like a burden. Her body no longer aroused impatience, anguish, or surges of passion. He forced himself to make love to her and each time he had the sacrilegious feeling of embracing a second self, curiously transformed into a woman. He came to look upon her as a sister—cherished perhaps in the bottom of his heart, but humdrum, boring, even painful to bear. (305)]

Razyé II understands, although he uses fraternal feelings metaphorically here to describe his love for Cathy II, that they are brother and sister. He sees her as "un autre lui-même," his double reincarnated in a female form. As his suspicions increase that their union is incestuous, his sexual desire for her diminishes. Recognizing her body as his own, he no longer desires her.

More horrifying than the act of making love to his sister is the thought of the child to be born as a result. He hopes that "Cathy n'arriverait pas au bout de ses neuf mois, tant il était persuadé qu'en perpétuant la vie ils avaient enfreint un ordre redoutable et très ancien" (299) ["Cathy would never reach the end of her nine months, so convinced was he that by perpetuating life they were transgressing a very ancient and formidable order" (307)]. Whereas Razyé II and Cathy II are the products of interracial unions, unions forbidden by the colonial order to preserve white power, Razyé II and Cathy II's child is the product of an incestuous union.

Cathy II dies, as her mother did, in childbirth. For both characters, the birth of the forbidden child kills them. The child is not born a monster, as Razyé II had feared, but she is, as Irmine exclaims when she sees her, the very image of Razyé (331). Razyé II names her Anthuria, possibly in reference to the anthurium flower native to the Caribbean. Like Razyé, her name references flora native to the island. Razyé II takes her to L'Engoulvent, away from his mother who, after Razyé's death, inherits his wealth and is able to ensure her children a place in the emerging mulatto bourgeoisie. Razyé II wants none of the social regulations or hypocrisy that accompany upper class positions and so flees to L'Engoulvent. The novel ends with Razyé II pondering the fate of Anthuria:

"Une si belle enfant ne pouvait pas être maudite" (337) ["Such a lovely child could not be cursed" (348)]. This uncertain conclusion offers weak consolation, if we read the romances in the novel allegorically in regards to nation. If the child born at the end of a tale offers hope for a new beginning, a child born from an incestuous union becomes a flimsy vehicle to stage the possibilities of a new society. Condé perverts the genealogical logic behind both *créolité* and colonial discourse to stage a gender critique of the sexual politics they espouse.

In *La migration des cœurs*, the romance of *Wuthering Heights* is transformed into a pan-Caribbean and transnational aesthetic that destabilizes both male nationalist and colonial representations of women and female sexuality. While we can understand a text like *Wide Sargasso Sea* writing back to the empire and correcting racialized stereotypes of the other, Condé's novel builds on the fertile metaphorical ground established in *Wuthering Heights* to stage a critique of the policing of women's desire for the Other. Like Emily Brontë, Condé begins to unmoor romance from the nation to demonstrate how transnational forces like the African diaspora or transcolonial forces like the Catholic Church and French models of education impact desire between the characters. In doing so, she also rejects any version of authentic Creole subjectivity. By demonstrating the ways gender complicates notions of *créolité*, Condé opens the allegorical space of romance beyond strict male nationalist definitions and cautions us against believing in the power of love to heal all wounds. We are left with an indictment of both patriarchy and colonialism. In the ruins of romance in the novel, we are also left with a space to consider what romance might look like in a more transnational space that could accommodate

female subjectivity and allow representations of women to move beyond objectifying reifications of women as wives and mothers. The next chapter will consider how Mayra Santos-Febres engages in a similar project in her novel *Nuestra señora de la noche*. Like Condé, she disrupts any easy conflation of women with the nation. In her representation of an infamous madam, Isabel La Negra, she attempts to reorder the tradition of family romances, *la gran familia puertorriqueña*, so prevalent in Puerto Rican nationalist literature.

Notes

[1] All translations of *La migration des cœurs*, unless otherwise noted, are from Richard Philcox's 1998 translation *Windward Heights*.

[2] "J'utilise le mot parce que je suis antillaise et que nous sommes, en principe, descendants des cannibales. Christophe Colomb a découvert des peuples que étaient des cannibales. On est passé de Carib à cannibale. Je vous renvoie pour ça à Edouard Glissant. Le «cannibale» est revendiqué comme l'ancêtre littéraire (122)."

[3] Condé's conceptualization of literary cannibalism draws on Suzanne Césaire's famous declaration on the eve of World War II that "Martinican poetry shall be cannibalistic or it shall not be."

[4] This ability to know the world or not echoes the tension we have seen in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and in fact Rhys may have had *Wuthering Heights* in mind as she wrote the novel, as Joan Givner has noted. In a 1959 letter to Selma Vaz Dias, Rhys complains she has been reading *Jane Eyre* too much and that it was creeping into her writing of *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a horrible imitation. In the next sentence, she also mentions having read *Wuthering Heights* and proclaims it "magnificent in parts" (Wyndham 161). In 1963, she writes to Diana Athill that she looked to *Wuthering Heights* as a model for creating her version of Grace Poole in *Wide Sargasso Sea*: "As to Part III, I *started* the whole thing with Mrs Poole's interview with the housekeeper once for I realised she'd be a key character if the book was told as a *story*. I did a chapter or two then felt she was not talking properly. I read Nellie Dean in "Wuthering Heights" but it did not help" (Wyndham 234). Givner argues that the influence of *Wuthering Heights* on Rhys's novel can be seen in the similarities of setting, similar events (like rock-throwing), and in the similar use of dreams (107). Without Rhys's letters, we might only be left chocking these similarities up to Rhys's revision of the Gothic romance in a general sense, but from the

correspondence it is reasonable to assume that *Wuthering Heights* exerted some influence over the creation of *Wide Sargasso Sea.*

[5] These changes were so revolutionary that Charlotte Brontë, in her preface to the 1850 second edition of *Wuthering Heights*, seemed compelled to apologize for Heathcliff: "Whether it is right or advisable to create beings like Heathcliff, I do not know: I scarcely think it is" (Peterson 24). She attributes the innovations of *Wuthering Heights* to an author who was at the mercy of her creative muses, whose creative gift guided her with little will of her own into creating such a scandalous novel.

[6] Condé cleverly plays on this reading in *La migration des cœurs*. Hubert Gagneur, who correlates to Mr. Earnshaw, finds Razyé wandering the countryside of Guadeloupe after he has seen his mistress, Amélie. Although the affair is not extramarital, because his wife is already dead at this point, Condé, like Brontë, nonetheless situates the discovery of the child in the context of the patriarchal quest, that might or might not involve eros.

[7] All translations of "Chercher nos vérités" are mine.

[8] "Le schema de transplantation et de déracinement que je viens de décrire est commun à toutes les îles des Antilles, qu'elles soient de langue anglaise, de langue espagnole ou de langue néerlandaise."

[9] "un héritage de l'obsession coloniale entre vainqueur et victime."

[10] "Faussement révolutionnaire, cette dichotomie linguistique est en réalité passéiste et nie les découverts fondamentales sur l'ordre et le pouvoir societal impliqué dans toute langue."

[11] "Il faut valoriser les nouveaux métissages culturels qui remittent en question les métissages traditionnels déjà stratifies par l'usage."

[12] In the English translation, Richard Philcox renders this bit of dialogue fully in Creole: "'Kimafoutiyesa! Ti-ma-fi, sé on vant a krédi, ou vlé poté ban mwen? E épi yon nèg anko?'" (26). Unlike in the original, the Creole words are not in italics and so not differentiated from the rest of the text. The decision to place the entire bit of dialogue in Creole in the English translation might be partially explained by the action (in the French: Justin "reprit son créole qu'il abandonnait depuis peu et hurla..."(33) in the English: Justin "revived his Creole that he had been neglecting somewhat and shouted..."(26)), so that as Justin revives his Creole the entire line of dialogue emerges fully in Creole in the English while in the French the one key word "Kimafoutiyesa!" serves as a signal to shade the dialogue in Creole terms although it is expressed in French. This choice poses some interesting problems for the monolingual reader in English, to whom the Creole

would remain unintelligible. Missing the meaning of what Justin says to Cathy cloaks his motivation for striking Razyé in some mystery. Justin is angry because Razyé poses a sexual threat to the family, poised to give Cathy "on vant a krédi" (26). Not only that, but with "yon nèg anko" (26). The English reader would not immediately understand that Justin's violence emerges from the fear of Razyé as the dark Other who will "contaminate" his family via his sister's womb. As a light-skinned mulatto, Justin seeks to prevent Cathy's mixing with any man who isn't white. Rendering this part of the dialogue in Creole glosses over this meaning for a monolingual English reader, but perhaps speaks to a Caribbean reader who might be reading in English but understands Creole or Creoles. A reader in Dominica or St. Lucia, two countries with a history of both French and English occupation, might easily understand this part of dialogue. A reader in other parts of the English-speaking world, such as the United States, might miss the meaning altogether.

On the other hand, and just as interesting, is Condé's decision in the original to write only the first word of Justin's tirade in Creole and the rest in French. A French-speaking reader, with some patience, might be able to piece together at least the surface-level meaning of the dialogue as it appears in the English translation in Creole. One could read these decisions as an attempt to direct the audience of the novel. The English translation could be aimed at a Caribbean audience while the original version, in French, could be targeted to a broader, French-speaking audience. As Condé points out in "Chercher nos vérités," not all people of Caribbean origin in France can speak or read Creole.

[13] When Razyé abandons her after he overhears this conversation with Nelly, Cathy falls ill and only recovers, at least partially, after Aymeric enlists the help of the healer Mama Victoire who uses traditional African practices to cure Cathy: "...c'est Man Victoria qui a rendu la vie à Cathy. Cathy était devenue un zombi et elle lui a donné du sel" (54) ["...it was Mama Victoire who brought Cathy back to life. Cathy had become a zombie and she gave her salt" (47)]. It is important here that African healing practices are the only thing that can save Cathy at this point. Cathy, in trying to sacrifice her African self, almost kills her entire self. As in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the trauma of love and abandonment turns Cathy, like Antoinette, into a zombie. As Christophine treats Antoinette with African healing practices, so too does Man Victoria use traditional medicine to revive Cathy when the French-trained doctors are unable to. Cathy's African self can only be revived using African healing practices. Cathy's zombie-like state also foreshadows the master-slave relationship that characterizes to some extent her marriage to Aymeric.

[14] Razyé II is not the only one dubious about the French education Cathy II brings to Marie-Galante. The villagers do not appreciate Cathy II's efforts to stymie the children's use of Creole. In a tongue in cheek reference to the Créolistes' assertion above that mothers and schoolteachers acted as agents of colonialism in silencing the Creole language in their children, the villagers think: "Malgré tous ses sùccès scolaires, on

n'appréciait pas ce qu'elle faisait à l'école. Est-ce qu'elle n'interdisait pas aux enfants de parler le créole? Le créole, c'est la langue de notre manman, ronchonnaient les gens. Qui l'empêche de sortir de la gorge d'un enfant le rend muet pour la vie" (235) ["Despite all her achievements with the school they did not appreciate what she was doing. Didn't she forbid the children to speak Creole? Creole was our mother tongue, they grumbled. Anyone who prevented its natural expression silenced a child for life" (238)].

CHAPTER IV

THE LABOR OF LOVE: REWRITING THE FAMILY ROMANCE IN PUERTO RICO

> Además, tengo ganas de decirte una cosa terrible, decirte 'en todas las historias de las naciones hay una puta fundadora.' Pienso en Evita Perón, en las madres fundadoras de la nación norteamericana, la mayoría putas. Pienso en La Malinche, mujer vendida como cosa a Cortés. Me gusta pensar en la historia desde esa perspectiva, no desde la del 'padre' legítimo de la patria,o desde la Madre sufrida que pare al pueblo legítimo y soberano; sino desde ese rincón oculto de la Puta escondida que puja a la nación bastarda." [In addition, I want to tell you a terrible thing, to tell you that 'in all of the histories of nations there is a foundational whore.' I think of Evita Perón, of the foundation mothers of the North American nation, the majority of them whores. I think of La Malinche, a woman sold as a thing to Cortés. I like to think of history from this perspective, not from the perspective of the legitimate 'father' of the country [fatherland], or from the perspective of the suffering Mother that gives birth to the authentic and sovereign people; but rather from this secret angle of the hidden Whore that struggles along with the bastard nation.]
>
> —Mayra Santos-Febres, interview posted on her blog, Oct. 25, 2007

This chapter explores how Puerto Rican writers Rosario Ferré and Mayra Santos-Febres rewrite the family romance. Both authors undertake the project of rewriting the literary representation of Puerto Rico as a harmonious national family, or the "*gran familia puertorriqueña*," and offer a feminist critique of the conflation of women as "pure" wives and mothers of the nation. Like Maryse Condé, Ferré and Santos-Febres reveal how race, gender, and sexuality intersect in the national scripts of romance. Ferré, beginning in the 1970s, is one of the first Puerto Rican writers to fully engage in a gender critique of Puerto Rican literary traditions. In her rewriting of the national romance,

Santos-Febres both deconstructs nationalist ideology and rejects the objectification of black female characters that occurred in previous incarnations of romance in Puerto Rican literature. In positioning black female characters as subjects in national and transnational communities, Santos-Febres goes one step further than Ferré in imagining a new type of romance for the organization of communities. As we have seen in previous chapters, the creation of the heroine in romance often depends on a racialized formula to achieve "ladyness." Thus Jane becomes the lady vis-à-vis Bertha, Antoinette forsakes her claims to ladyhood through her relationship with Sandi, and Cathy must reject her African heritage to join Aymeric at Belles-Feuilles. These relationships reveal how race is tied to both gender and class. Cathy becomes "white" by acquiring capital through marriage, while Antoinette becomes less "white" through her affiliation with black characters, including Christophine and Tia. As we have also seen, the construction of a character's sexuality also functions to racialize her: Bertha, Antoinette, Catherine and Cathy all have sexual appetites that exceed the acceptable limits of female sexuality as prescribed by traditional, patriarchal models of romance. Their "lasciviousness" closes down their claims to ladyhood and whiteness in these formulas. Santos-Febres's important contribution to the configuration of romance in Caribbean texts is to situate black female characters as protagonists in romance while at the same time revealing how the notion of the *dama*, or lady, depends on the construction of black female sexuality. Santos-Febres radically deconstructs the marriage plot of Puerto Rican family romances by writing the story of Puerto Rico through the life of an infamous madam, Isabel Luberza. By positioning a black female sex worker as the foundational figure for a type

of transnational romance, Santos-Febres rejects the exoticization and eroticization of the black woman in Puerto Rican national discourse and reveals the extent to which women as wives and women as sex workers function in similar ways in Puerto Rican national discourse.

The construction of sexuality has had strong ties to both the representation of Puerto Rico in colonial discourse and the representation of Puerto Rican nationality. As Laura Briggs argues in *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*, the pathologization of the Puerto Rican family has been an important aspect of colonial control and a justification for U.S. rule. Puerto Rican families were represented as "either too close or too fragmented, too big and cohesive or too limited and fractured" and women produced too many children while men refused to claim responsibility as fathers (6). This construction of the Puerto Rican family in relation to a model that championed the Protestant, Anglo nuclear family as the ideal allowed U.S. colonial agents to justify U.S. control of the island through discourses of modernization, public health, and feminism. In these formulations, the U.S. was "saving" Puerto Rican women from themselves and from their men (13). Imperial discourse about the island also constructed images of Puerto Rican womanhood in relation to prostitution: working class women were painted as the "exotic, tropical prostitute (seductive but brimming with disease)" (4). U.S. public health officials and institutions like the Women's Christian Temperance Union sought to "clean" Puerto Rican women of these sexual vices, often violently and coercively. Women were imprisoned on mere suspicion of prostitution, while the men that paid for their services often went unpunished. Medical discourses

about the diseased body and Protestant Christian proclamations of morality were imposed on Puerto Rican women and used to paint the U.S. as the colonial agent that would help "civilize" the natives. For the Puerto Rican elite, the female body was used as a means to respond to these assertions of colonial power, so that, as Briggs argues, the female body became a battleground for struggles of national identity and resistance to U.S. power:

> in the symbolic economy of nationhood, woman has been the mother of the nation; women's sexual deviance has been about the failure of nationhood. For U.S. colonialists, Puerto Rican nationalists, and reformers both on and off the island, these ways of thinking about the island as a nation or a failed nation (or as part of the United States or a failure as part of the United States) has been terribly productive. (6)

U.S. policies controlling sex work on the island became a particularly charged arena for debate, in which the rapid redefinition of the island as a commonwealth territory was contested by those in Puerto Rico who rejected the imposition of U.S. control (47). While objections to the U.S. conferral of citizenship were not hotly debated, U.S. policy regarding sex work "was a tremendously important arena for debate over the nature of colonial modernity, and the struggle over the meaning of Puerto Rican citizenship took place significantly with reference to prostitution" (46). Puerto Rican criollos objected to U.S. policies of incarceration and forced medical treatment, fighting for the working-class woman as someone victimized by colonial practices. Debates about sex work policies thus were a site of struggle over who had the right to control women, and by allegorical extension, the nation: the white, elite class understood themselves as in an

"argument with the American newcomers about who was going to manage the sexuality of working-class women, under what authority, and with what rules. North American colonizers, in contrast, largely saw themselves as managing a society of black or brown people incapable of self-rule" (53).

The family, and specifically the female body, has an important place in the symbolic register of Puerto Rican letters. The two novels and short story that I examine in this chapter explore questions of race, statehood, independence, U.S. colonialism, and the rights of women through their representations of the family and family structures. A central crisis in both novels is the appearance of a mixed race son who disrupts the lines of white inheritance. In their depictions of family, Ferré and Santos-Febres are both responding to a long metaphorical tradition in Puerto Rico of narrating national discourse through the figure of the family. As Frances Aparicio notes, writers like Antonio Pedreira, Tomás Blanco, and René Marqués relied on the image of the *gran familia puertorriqueña* in order to homogenize and idealize the Puerto Rican plantation society that predated the U.S. invasion. Aparicio argues that this structure of the *gran familia puertorriqueña*, articulated to support nationalism and argue for independence, did not represent an inclusive nationalism and ultimately sought to protect the interests of the white bourgeoisie. She writes that contemporary Puerto Rican writers, among them Rosario Ferré (and I would argue, Santos-Febres) challenge this idea of the harmonious *gran familia* in order to reassert the narratives of those excluded from this discourse, specifically women and people of color. These writers "reexamine, contest and ultimately deconstruct the hegemonic articulations of Puerto Rican culture" and write against the

conceptualization of "the unified, homogenous, and harmonic society devoid of racial and social conflict, emblematized by the image of the *gran familia puertorriqueña*, a central political, cultural , and social rhetoric on the island since the early part of the century" (Aparicio 5). The image of the *gran familia puertorriqueña* idealized the structure of the plantation economy, casting the *padrinos* as patriarchs who cared for their workers in an era defined by the spirit of *convivencia* and social harmony. Aparicio argues that this image was created in order to distract Puerto Ricans from the "social conflict, racial emergence of the black proletariat, women's participation in labor, migration to the cities, and a more visibly heterogeneous society" (6) of the twentieth century.

Zilkia Janer reads these types of family romances as impossible romances. Although Puerto Rican nation-building fictions do follow the model for national romances as outlined by Doris Sommer in her work *Foundational Fictions*, there are nonetheless significant differences. Janer argues that no one novel emerged as a clear "national novel" in the style of works like *Amalia* (Argentina) or *Sab* (Cuba). Instead, Puerto Rico has "a number of failed romances in which heterosexual passion is used to dramatize the difficulties rather than the possibility of national unity" (7). Janer argues that nationalism in Puerto Rico can be understood as a type of "colonial nationalism," a nationalism that does not seek political independence. More than a type of cultural nationalism, Puerto Rican nationalism "validates colonialism and makes it stronger" (2). National independence did not gain the same purchase in Puerto Rico as it did in other Latin American nations, largely due to distinct social and economic conditions on the

island. More dependent on Spain for production, Puerto Rico's elite class developed a different type of relationship to the metropole. Janer does recognize that Creoles in Puerto Rico did seek to legitimize themselves as a ruling class, but this strategy did not demand national independence. Rather, the Creole class viewed independence as impractical and developed different strategies to remain in power in collusion with Spanish, and later U.S., colonial interests. This distinct relationship of the elite class to nationalism resulted in a type of impossible national romance in Puerto Rican literary texts in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries:

> 'Impossible romance' is the dominant allegory, articulating the incapacity to satisfactorily define the relationship between different sectors of Puerto Rican society and the colonizers as lovers who cannot agree on the terms of their love relationship in spite of mutual attraction. Seduction, rape, and humiliated manhood—instead of romantic love—are used to articulate the relationship between different groups in the nation. (7)

The tensions between national allegiances and colonization thus create a romantic discord in Puerto Rican literature when a narrative sets out to represent the community using the tropes of romantic love and desire.

These literary legacies inform the work of both Ferré and Santos-Febres, writing in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries. Ferré situates herself and her work in relation to a tradition of both Latin American and North American writing, a position she compares to being adrift: "As a woman writer who has lived both in Anglo America and Latin America… I have had to be able to let go of all shores, to be both left-handed

and right-handed, masculine and feminine, because my destiny was to live by the word" (*The Youngest Doll* 164). Writing in both English and Spanish, she positions herself as a translator, not only of language, but also of experience. She encounters language as "a form of creation, or recreation" of her world (165). Ferré's world is that of the Puerto Rican elite: she was born in Ponce in 1938 to one of Puerto Rico's wealthiest families. Her father, Luis Alberto Ferré, served as governor of Puerto Rico from 1969-1973 and was an advocate for statehood. Ferré advocated for independence early in her career as a writer and intellectual, but then changed her position to pro-statehood in a 1998 opinion piece in *The New York Times* (Machado Sáez 23). In 1995, she published *The House on the Lagoon* in English, rather than in Spanish. Ferré has translated a number of her own works from Spanish to English, but 1995 marked the first time she released a major work in English, presumably targeted to an English-speaking U.S. audience rather than an island one. Ferré's work is characterized by a type of North American and Latin American feminism that writes back to patriarchal conceptions of women and employs magical realism to question empirical assumptions about the nature of a society's narratives. Largely concerned with the plight of upper-class women, her work has been compared to that of writers like Isabel Allende.

Mayra Santos-Febres is a member of a new generation of Puerto Rican writers and sees herself as a part of a larger tradition of Caribbean women writers engaged in discourses of global feminism. Born in 1966 in Carolinas, near San Juan, she was raised in a middle-class family. Her identity as a black woman informs her relationship to national and regional literary heritages. As she described in a lecture at the University of

the West Indies, Barbados in 2006, her interest in Anglophone Caribbean women writers (the majority of whom are black) comes from her own position as a black woman:

> I cannot deny that my race has heightened my interest in such a body of work. The Hispanophilia that still shapes the consumption and discussion of Caribbean culture and literatures has often shaded Cuban, Dominican, and Puerto Rican intellectuals in their knowledge and interest in the other Caribbean. Such is not my case and I am grateful of that. Nourished by my racially based definition of the Caribbean, I have focused my intellectual formation in an understanding of the crosslinguistic, crosscultural nature of the field.

While this formulation of the field of Caribbean literature does not deny that literature from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean has affinities with that of Latin America (or even with literature from the U.S.), it does reveal that Santos-Febres is interested in reading Spanish-language Caribbean literature in a comparative project along with other Afro-Caribbean nations in the region. Unlike Ferré, Santos-Febres identifies with regional, African diaspora literatures in the Americas and positions her work in relation to other Caribbean women writers.

These distinct subject positions inform the approaches these two writers take to the romance in their works. This chapter will trace the appearance in their work of four characters named Isabel. The first two Isabels appear as doubles in Ferré's 1976 short story "Cuando las mujeres quieren a los hombres": there is Isabel La Negra, a sex worker and the mistress of the recently deceased Ambrosio, and her double, Isabel Luberza, Ambrosio's wife and a white *dama de sociedad*. The next Isabel, in Ferré's *The House on*

the Lagoon, is Isabel Monfort, a white woman who marries into a wealthy family in San Juan and who, in her character development, very much resembles and continues Ferré's previous Isabels. The fourth Isabel comes from Santos-Febres's *Nuestra señora de la noche*. This Isabel, Isabel "La Negra" Luberza Oppenheimer, is a fictional representation of a black woman who lived in Ponce and who became a famous madam. This Isabel is the offspring of the three Isabels who come before her. But, as we shall see, she is a rebellious daughter with an uneasy relationship to her literary inheritance. So, four Isabels: two white, two black. Two wives, two sex workers. Isabel: a name with a legacy—Queen Isabel the colonizer, Isabel the madam of Ponce, both women powerful, both embroiled in the structures of patriarchy they inhabit. In all three texts, black female characters disrupt the limits of the family romance and its ability to represent the nation. The idealization of women as wives and mothers of a community is broken apart as Ferré and Santos-Febres trace the economics of desire and reveal the close affinities between women as sex workers and women as wives. Both authors return to the site of the black female body, the discursive site of much national and colonial debate, and reengage the question of what sexual labor signifies. Although Ferré does seek to "translate" black women's experience in the national arena into her short stories and novels, I argue that she ultimately reproduces black female characters as objects, rather than subjects, in her work. Santos-Febres, on the other hand, writes the story of Isabel Luberza as a national, and transnational, subject and narrates a position for her in an impossible romance with the wealthy Fernando Fornarís. Although Isabel dies in the end and she never finds happiness with Fernando, the son she has with him eventually finds his half-brother, born

to Fernando and his white wife, Cristina. In this way, the couple at the end of the novel are two brothers, rather than a heterosexual couple. Ending the novel in this way articulates a new type of family romance in a society defined by U.S. colonialism, militarization, and globalization.

Prostitutes and Ladies: "cada prostituta es una dama en potencia"

Santos-Febres is not the first to write the story of the famous madam from Ponce. In 1976, Rosario Ferré published *Papeles de Pandora*, a collection of short stories and poems that attacked the patriarchal bourgeois culture of Puerto Rico and its corresponding oppression of women and rigidly defined gender roles. Her short story "Cuando las mujeres quieren a los hombres" ["When Women Love Men"] appears towards the beginning of the collection and narrates the stories of two women, Isabel Luberza and Isabel La Negra, the wife and the mistress of Ambrosio. Though the story was published in *Papeles de Pandora* in 1976, it first appeared in 1974 in the influential literary magazine *Zona Carga y Descarga*. Its publication occurs just eight months after a woman, Isabel Luberza Oppenheimer, is shot to death in Ponce on January 24, 1974 (Ramos Rosado 236). Ferré knew of Oppenheimer as a child, and credits the mythology surrounding her with influencing her early conceptions of sexuality (*The Youngest Doll* 149). When the story begins, Ambrosio has already died, bequeathing half of his estate to his widow, Isabel Luberza, and half to his mistress, Isabel La Negra. Both women narrate the story using the collective first person "nosotras" instead of the singular first person "yo" and the address is to the dead Ambrosio, in the second person "tú." The crisis of the

story is the impending encounter between the two Isabels. Isabel La Negra, biding her time for quite awhile after the inheritance, decides to go speak to Isabel Luberza about buying out her half of the house. She believes this will benefit them both: she will provide the now-impoverished widow enough money for her retirement and, in turn, Isabel La Negra will be able to open the high-class brothel that will secure her status as a woman of means in Ponce society. There is little action in the story: Isabel La Negra has her chauffeur drive her to the house, she knocks on the door, and Isabel Luberza opens it, and Isabel La Negra goes inside the house, the women tour the house together, and at the end, Isabel Luberza either kills Isabel La Negra or imagines killing her. The death of Isabel La Negra, however, is preceded by Isabel La Negra imagining Isabel Luberza's funeral. In the end, it is unclear which Isabel dies, if either of them dies, and the issue of the inheritance is never resolved.

More important than the plot of the story, however, is the characterization of the two Isabels. A number of critics have commented on how Ferré establishes the prostitute and the lady as doubles of each other. The narration is such that the voices of the two women often bleed into each other so that the reader is confused as to where one woman's story stops and the other's story begins. This doubling is apparent in the name they have in common, the fact that they wear the same shade of nail polish, Cherries Jubilee, their love for the same man, Ambrosio, and the house they share through the inheritance. But they are also opposites, as Rosario Méndez Panedas notes: "La relación entre ambas mujeres se desarrolla alrededor de un conjunto de oposiciones: de clase, de raza, de deseo sexual e incluso una oposición espacial" (540) ["The relationship between

both women develops around a set of oppositions: of class, of race, of sexual desire and even a spatial opposition."].[1] Isabel Luberza, to be the white wife and respectable member of the elite class, must also be sexually frigid and detached from her own sexual desires while Isabel La Negra, born into a life of poverty, uses her blackness and sexuality to acquire wealth and property. Ambrosio's house, where he lived his "respectable" life with his white wife in an upscale neighborhood in Ponce, contrasts sharply with Isabel La Negra's shack with a zinc roof where she receives not only Ambrosio, but other clients as well. In addition to their differences in race, class, sexuality, they occupy distinct gender roles that rely on religious and popular discourse. Augustus C. Puleo argues that juxtaposition of the two epigraphs that precede the story, one from a plena: "La puta que conozco/ no es de la china ni del japón,/ porque la puta viene de ponce/ viene del barrio de san antón." (22) ["The whore that I know/ isn't from China or Japan,/ because the whore comes from Ponce/ comes from the barrio of San Antón."] and the other from St. Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, "creates a tension between the secular and the sacred" and "incorporates within this contrast the different concepts of carnal love ('la puta') and divine love (marriage)" (228). The black woman becomes the object of carnal desire while the white woman is sanctioned by the church as the appropriate object for marriage.

Despite these oppositions, both Méndez Panedas and Puleo agree that Isabel La Negra and Isabel Luberza are combined to create a being that transcends difference. Puleo argues that

> [in the story] the apparent opposites—in race and class—become one. In this fusion of the two women, the acceptance and affirmation of the black body helps to affirm the African presence in the Puerto Rican family, culture and history. Obviously, the prostitute and the middle class wife are doubles whose voices are woven together to create a new historical reconstruction. This reconfiguring erases the racial and class differences of these two women, but then allows a collective narrative voice that is capable of recapturing the suppressed and/or silenced history. (232)

From the fusion of the two characters, Puleo argues, emerges a figure that is capable of telling a new historical narrative. In the melding of the characters, he also sees an affirmation of the black body. Méndez Panedas reads the story as one that destroys the unitary and unique "I" and offers a plural "I" from which emerges a heterogeneous figure (311). She reads the subtext of the story, that every lady has a hidden prostitute within her, as one that produces a dialogic relationship in the doubling of the prostitute and the lady.[2] Like Puleo, she argues that the doubles produce a new space, a new entity or figure, that disrupts the binaries between *puta* and *dama*, whore and lady. The story surpasses its own dualisms in such a way that something new is produced. The opening of opposition and ambivalence disrupts patriarchal dualisms.

While I agree with both Puleo and Méndez Panedas that the opposition of these two characters as doubles does produce a new area of meaning, I am more skeptical about its liberatory possibilities, especially in relation to Isabel La Negra. The possibilities that emerge have the potential to benefit Isabel Luberza, the white wife, more than they would

Isabel La Negra. Assuming La Negra's identity frees Luberza from the strict confines of acceptable wifely virtue, while Isabel La Negra assumes very little from Luberza. What is missing from the story, I contend, is a treatment of the ways blackness is immutable for Isabel La Negra. It is because of her blackness that she trades sex for money. Her blackness in some sense determines her sexuality in the story, and it is because of her blackness that she lives in the shack with a zinc roof, instead of the house with a snow-white façade. While Ferré exposes the effects of patriarchy for both women (and demonstrates the consequences of their love for Ambrosio), I argue that her story does not develop a full account of Isabel La Negra as a subject. Rather, Isabel La Negra functions as a contrast, the dark part of a negative, through which Isabel Luberza understands herself and establishes her whiteness, her social position, and her sexuality. In Ferré's formulation, it may be true that prostitutes and ladies each contain within themselves a desire to be the other, but in the racial hierarchy of Ponce, it would be almost impossible for a black prostitute to ever become a lady or *dama*, much less a wife. It is unlikely, although slightly more possible, for a wife to become a prostitute. Indeed, all women under patriarchy have the potential to lose their tenuous hold on virtue and slide into the category of *la puta* or whore. In the story, however, these categories of lady and whore remain fixed because of the presumed absolute of race within this economic system of exchange. Ferré's solution to the problem of a national discord that emerges from race and class divisions is to collapse the mistress/whore subject with the wife so that by the end of the story the reader loses a sense of who is who. The problem with this

solution is that the economic relationships of whore and wife are predicated on racial difference—the black woman is excluded from assuming the position of wife.

These differences are clear at the outset of the story, as the collective "nosotras" narrator attempts to show how the prostitute and the *dama* are contained one within the other. The language used to describe each formulation reveals the intransitive nature of the prostitute. The *dama*'s relationship to her inner prostitute is a secret one, as the collective narrator describes: "Nosotras, tu querida y tu mujer, siempre hemos sabido que debajo de cada dama de sociedad se oculta una prostituta" (23) ["We, your lover and your wife, have always known that hidden underneath every lady of society is a prostitute."]. This offers an absolute formulation that each and every one of the *damas de sociedad* has a prostitute hidden within them. The use of the passive voice here, "se oculta," removes the subject from the hiding so that the *damas* seem to lose responsibility for their inner prostitutes. It is an element of their selves that they seem to have nothing to do with, a suspicious secret inherited from Eve, a knowledge of carnal desire that threatens to unravel their claim to positions of power and privilege. The prostitute, on the other hand, does not have a lady "hidden" within her.[3] Instead: "Porque nosotras siempre hemos sabido que cada prostituta es una dama en potencia" (23) ["Because we have always known that every prostitute is a potential lady."]. The prostitute is not a lady, nor is a lady "hidden" within her, but rather she has the potential to become one but is not one yet. This potential is predicated on a nostalgia for the white house she will never have and for the sound of silverware as the table is set by invisible hands (23). What is named in the story as nostalgia is really longing, because the prostitutes have never possessed these

markers of elite class identity. They have the potential to become *damas*, they know the signs required to play the part, but they will never become ladies because they will never become wives. The inseparability of their sexuality and blackness prevents the assumption of the virginal role required of a woman who marries in the church.

After the formulation of the *dama*'s hidden prostitute and the prostitute's potential to be a lady, the collective narrator asserts "Porque nosotras, Isabel Luberza e Isabel La Negra, en nuestra pasión por ti, Ambrosio, desde el comienzo de los siglos, nos habíamos estado acercando, nos habíamos estado santificando la una a la otra sin darnos cuenta, purificándonos de todo aquello que nos definía" (23) ["Because we, Isabel Luberza and Isabel La Negra, in our passion for you, Ambrosio, from the beginning of centuries, had been approaching each other, we had been sanctifying each other without realizing it, purifying ourselves of all that defined us."] This formulation implies that both women are doing the action of purifying and sanctifying, but in fact throughout the story it is only Isabel Luberza who does this. This equation also hints at some kind of mutual respect and adoration, but it is only Isabel La Negra who respects Isabel Luberza and not the other way around. Isabel La Negra, upon seeing Isabel Luberza up close, describes her as being "tan hermosa que era todavía tuvo que bajar la vista, casi no se atrevió mirarla. Sentí deseos de besarle los párpados, tiernos como tela de coco nuevo..." (31) ["so beautiful that she had to lower her gaze, she almost didn't dare to look at her. I wanted to kiss her eyelids, tender as new coconut flesh..."]. Contrast this tender adoration with Isabel Luberza's reaction to the sight of Isabel La Negra. At first, like Isabel La Negra, she wants to kiss "sus párpados gruesos, semicaídos sobre las pupilas blandas y sin brillo"

(40) ["her heavy eyelids, half-closed over soft, lusterless pupils"] but then her mood turns when Isabel La Negra walks into the house: "Pero entonces empezó a tongoneárseme en la cara, balanceándose para atrás y para alante sobre sus tacones rojos, la mano sobre la cintura..." (40) ["But then she started to sway her hips in my face, rocking herself back and forth on her red heels, her hand on her waist..."]. Even in Isabel Luberza's initial tenderness there is disdain in her description of Isabel La Negra's "pupilas blandas y sin brillo." If the eyes are a window to the soul, then it seems La Negra's has no brilliance, no intelligence or worth, in Isabel Luberza's view. And when she enters the house, Isabel Luberza instantly reads her as a hypersexual being, swaying her body and spreading her scent. When Isabel La Negra sees Isabel Luberza, she lowers her eyes as if she were a servant. When Isabel Luberza sees Isabel La Negra, she condemns and judges her.

Throughout the story, Isabel Luberza is variously described as a saint, virgin, and mother. The story relies on the contrast to La Negra in order to establish these categories. If Luberza is a saint, La Negra is a sinner. If Luberza is virginal, La Negra is a whore. If Luberza has sex with one man and can guarantee him the reproductive space of her womb as mother, La Negra has sex with many men, and produces no children. When La Negra imagines Luberza's funeral, for example, she imagines the site of her sacred body ("el cuerpo sagrado") and thinks that no one until now has ever seen anything but "la menor astilla de sus nalgas blancas, la más tenue viruta de sus blancos pechos, arrancada ahora de ella esa piel de pudor que había protegido su carne, perdida al fin esa virginidad de madre respectable, de esposa respectable que jamás había sido impalada en público como lo fui yo tantas veces..." (28) ["the smallest sliver of her white buttocks, the

smallest shaving of her white breasts, stripped now of that skin of chastity that had protected her flesh, finally lost that virginity of respectable mother, of respectable wife who had never been impaled in public like I had so many times…"]. In death, and possibly through her encounter with La Negra (perhaps events that are one in the same), Luberza loses the virtue that had been inscribed on her body at the same time that the exposure and violence done to La Negra's body at the end of this passage reinforces the private, virginal state of the white woman's body. Unlike Luberza, who has never revealed more that the slightest glimpses of her body and skin, La Negra has been "impalada en público…tantas veces." This display of La Negra's body, and the sex work she performs to make a living, establish Luberza's virginal status by contrast.

La Negra's body is used to establish the boundaries of acceptable femininity and female sexuality among the women of the elite class as well as to confirm the masculinity and sexual dominance of the young men of this class. Ambrosio does not keep Isabel La Negra to himself. Rather, he brings her the sons of his friends, asking her to please do him the favor of sleeping with these boys. He persuades her to do it with flattery and pleading, telling her that she is the only one who can teach these boys to become men. Ambrosio has locked her up in a shack not only for his own pleasure but also to service all of the young sons of his friends (31). In this description, Ambrosio seems less like the benevolent lover who bequeaths his house to his mistress out of love and more like a pimp who profits in some way from her sexual labor. Indeed, at the end of this passage we learn that Ambrosio bequeaths half of his house to La Negra because, as he gets old, he begins to fear that the boys he brings Isabel will begin to pay her more and that

eventually she will abandon him. In addition, as he gets older, the only way he can feel any sexual pleasure is by watching Isabel sleep with the boys that he brings her (34).

In her shack, Isabel La Negra receives these boys so that they can prove their status as masculine sons of the rich elite. They come to her "para que sus papás pudieran por fin dormir tranquilos porque los hijos que ellos habían parido no les habían salido mariconitos, no les habían salido santolecitos con el culo astillado de porcelana..."(32) ["so that their daddies could finally sleep peacefully knowing that the sons they had sired hadn't turned out to be gay sissies, or little saints with porcelain-splintered butts"]. Isabel confers both heterosexuality and masculinity on the sons of the elite and seems to shield the "virtue" of the white girls these boys are destined to marry. Isabel absorbs the desire of the boys in order to ensure that the white girls they eventually marry are virgins.

Ultimately, the purpose of Isabel La Negra's body in this story exceeds its representation as a site of pleasure for the elite. It functions as the foundation for the creation of the racial and economic hierarchies of the Puerto Rican national space. The domination and control of a black woman, by both Ambrosio and the boys he brings her, secures their positions as masters within this depiction of the rigid class structures of Ponce society. Her body and her sexual labor determine the purity and virgin-like status of the white women and guarantee that the fathers of the nation know who their sons are. Isolating the wombs of white women ensures that property will be passed from white father to white son. Creating a system of desire with the black woman as its object ensures that black women, however much capital they may acquire, will never be able to

assume the virginal status required to marry into the white elite. No matter how much money Isabel La Negra accumulates, she remains "la puta de Ponce."

Although the story does not, in my opinion, accomplish what Santos-Febres's novel does in its articulation of black female subjectivity, it does engage to a large degree with constructions of the nation in relation to representations of women. Isabel La Negra is the basis upon which class and racial hierarchies are constructed and she is also the site of unification of a nation divided by immigration and the pull of the U.S. as the imperial center. In one of her formulations, she is Elizabeth the Black (titled so in English), the president of the Young Lords "afirmando desde su tribuna que ella era la prueba en cuerpo y sangre que no existía diferencía entre los de Puerto Rico y los de Nueva York puesto que en su carne todos se habían unido..."(24) ["affirming from her platform that she was proof in flesh and blood that there was no difference between Puerto Ricans from Puerto Rico and those from New York because all of them had come together inside her.."]. Ferré, like Condé, pushes the association of women and the nation to a biological extreme, uniting the Puerto Rican diaspora through the body of Isabel La Negra. Her body becomes a site to articulate a transnational identity, but the story still repeats the exploitation of black women's bodies as a site of sexual labor, rather than as agents in a national or transnational discourse. In the story, no children are produced, and the love that both Isabels proclaim for Ambrosio is overshadowed by the economic necessity of survival so that the "romance" is boiled down to little more than sexual labor. Although the story continues to objectify black women as the site for the production of white women's "ladyness," it does break apart assumptions about family and genealogies and

exposes the way race and sexuality are linked in the schema of the *gran familia puertorriqueña*. Isabel La Negra comes to claim her right to Ambrosio's property in a move that threatens to undo the hierarchy of the elite class. Positioning the two Isabels as doubles does suggest that both Isabels deserve compensation for their services, a suggestion that at least undoes the idealization of women as wives and mothers of the nation. Both women trade sexual services for material gain in an equation that deconstructs the lofty ideals of selfless women, martyred for the collective will of the people.

The House on the Lagoon

In her 1995 novel *The House on the Lagoon*, Ferré returns to these questions about the construction of romance by narrating her own version of a national romance. In a multi-generational saga, Ferré traces the major events of twentieth-century Puerto Rican history, from the signing of the Jones Act on July 4, 1917 to the violent 1982 plebiscite that decided Puerto Rico would remain a commonwealth of the U.S. rather than seek statehood (Barak 32). Narrating this span of history through the family, Ferré returns to the same anxieties surrounding race, gender, and nation expressed in "Cuando las mujeres quieren a los hombres." The central romance is between Isabel Monfort and Quintín Aviles. Isabel, like Isabel Luberza in "Cuando" (and like Ferré herself) is a white woman and member of the elite in Ponce. Quintín is the son of a Spaniard, Buenaventura Mendizabal, who immigrates to Puerto Rico in the early part of the twentieth century and trades on his national and racial identity to marry into the elite and begin a business. The

novel traces the lives of their parents and grandparents, as well as those of their two sons, Willie and Manuel. The novel also traces the life and family of Petra, a black woman who is the Mendizabal's housekeeper and Buenaventura's lover. At the beginning of the novel, the two clans' family trees are mapped out side by side, Petra's family tree trailing down the left side of Isabel and Quintín's before it finally intertwines with it. Quintín rapes her great-granddaughter Carmelina, and she gives birth to Willie, whom Isabel insists that she and Quintín adopt after Carmelina leaves him with Petra. By the end of the novel, Isabel has killed Quintín, their son Manuel has denounced their family and joined the *independentistas*, and Isabel and Willie move to Florida.

Through the saga of Quintín and Isabel's families, Ferré interweaves the personal and the political to stage a multigenerational inquiry into the family and national politics of Puerto Rico. Each character represents a particular political position. Quintín, for example, is adamant that Puerto Rico should seek statehood, while his father wavers between independence and retaining commonwealth status. Political positions divide the family and instigate violence. Rebecca, Quintín's mother, champions political freedom for the island, because she feels so controlled herself, by both her husband and her father, who also advocates for statehood. Each night before falling asleep she whispers: "'Every woman should be a republic unto herself!'" (97). In this formulation, woman and nation are conflated to argue for a woman's right to govern herself. Rebecca thinks that if "she couldn't be independent herself...at least her country should have control over its own destiny" (97). The man she marries, Buenaventura Mendizabal, is Spanish, and his ruthless takeover of the land where he eventually builds the house on the lagoon is

representative of Spanish colonization in miniature. When Rebecca performs a risqué dance on the patio for her artist friends, Buenaventura beats her and forces her to assume the role of an obedient wife. In an allegorical sense, their relationship is one of a struggle between Spanish and American colonizers. Although Rebecca advocates independence, her mother is American and her father is educated by the Americans during the first part of the twentieth century. Her grandfather owns an American shipping line, and it is through these connections that Buenaventura builds his own fortune. Thus the relationship between the Americans and the Spanish is represented as economically intertwined while politically contentious. Quintín inherits his father's business and his grandparents' sense of American patriotism: he "was for statehood and liked to think of the United States as his real country. He considered himself not a citizen of Puerto Rico but an American citizen—a citizen of the world" (149). Quintín blends the myths of U.S. imperialism and Spanish colonialism: he absorbs Buenaventura's legends that his family descends from conquistadores and the myths of American superiority from his grandparents.

Isabel's family, on the other hand, are fierce *independentistas* and feminists. Both sets of grandparents originate from Corsica. Her grandmother Gabriela is described as "a feminist to the point of fanaticism" while her grandmother Abby was "a bit of a political radical" (210), facts that serve to embarrass Isabel when she marries into Quintín's more conservative family. Isabel herself, after witnessing so much violence done to family members because of political disagreements, shies away from any definitive stance: "I hate violence—I'm not a violent person at all, and this kind of thing horrifies me. That's

why I like to think of myself as apolitical, and when election time comes around, I don't like to take a stand" (183). Of course, she is not apolitical but rather is divided about the direction for Puerto Rico. She chalks it up to looking at the Sears catalogue as a child, when she would wish for independence but also dream about the island becoming "part of the modern world" (184). Like Rebecca, she repeats the idea that Puerto Rico is like a woman, painting its political struggles in light of domesticity:

> The way I see it, our island is like a betrothed, always on the verge of marriage. If one day Puerto Rico becomes a state, it will have to accept English—the language of her future husband—as its official language, not just because it's the language of modernity and progress but also because it's the language of authority. If the island decides to remain single, on the other hand, it will probably mean backwardness and poverty. It won't mean greater freedom, because we'll probably fall prey to one of the local political *caciques* who are always waiting in the wings for a chance to become dictator. There's no question in anyone's mind that independence would set our island back at least a century, that it would mean sacrifice. (184)

Isabel's comparison of Puerto Rico to a woman engaged to be married would have no doubt disappointed her feminist grandmothers. If the woman chooses to remain single, she guarantees herself backwardness and poverty, while marriage grants status, wealth, and progress. It is also not portrayed as a marriage of equals, because Puerto Rico would have to "submit" to the will of the husband and adopt "his" language. Remaining single, or seeking political independence, does not guarantee freedom, because a different

authority will step in to fill the power vacuum left by the United States. This formulation also expresses an anxiety about Puerto Rico becoming like other nations in the Caribbean and seeks to distance Puerto Rico from the fate of its neighbors. Elena Machado Sáez argues this particular metaphor posits statehood as the next, "natural" step for Puerto Rico (27).

Reading Puerto Rican politics through the lens of marriage is an overarching theme of the novel, as Quintín and Isabel's unhappy relationship unfolds. Isabel is subject to Quintín's control, and he tries to police her language. She begins writing a novel entitled *The House on the Lagoon*, structuring the text we read as a metafictional one. Quintín reads the chapters as she writes them, and as the readers read them, creating a self-referential back and forth that positions Isabel as the actual author of the novel and plays with Ferré's own identity as one that closely mirrors Isabel's. Quintín is highly suspicious and critical of Isabel's novel, scandalized at her representations of their families as violent, greedy and corrupt. He writes notes to her in the margins, urging her to "tell the truth" about their families. He tries to steal the manuscript, and advises Isabel against publishing it, telling her: "Your novel has some good passages in it… But it's not a work of art. It's a feminist treatise, an Independentista manifesto; worst of all, it distorts history" (386). Quintín sees himself as the voice of reason and objectivity because he has a master's degree in history from Columbia, so is able to be more objective about family and national history. Towards the end of the narrative, however, he begins to suspect that the writing of the novel is not Isabel's doing but rather the magical effect of a spell cast by Petra, the housekeeper. Reading the manuscript and trying to discern what could

motivate Isabel to write all these "lies" about the family, Quintín thinks: "A mysterious force seemed to be driving her. Could Petra be behind all this?... Quintín began to suspect Petra was responsible for the web of lies Isabel was weaving around him. She wanted to show him his family was a disaster, so he would lose his self-respect" (249). Quintín reads Petra as the destructive force that threatens to dismantle the image of his harmonious, ideal family.

Why Petra would want to destroy Quintín, the boy she raises and seems to love, remains a mystery to the reader until we are told what happens between Quintín and Carmelina, Petra's great-granddaughter. Unlike Petra, who maintains a position of servitude despite her power over the Mendizabal family, Carmelina is "quick-tempered and high-strung" and talks back to Isabel and Quintín. She criticizes "the ways of whites" and celebrates "the ways of blacks" (307). She is proud of her hair, and wears it in "an unruly halo around her head" (306). Her character thus gestures symbolically to black nationalist movements, both in Puerto Rico and around the world. When Carmelina is a teenager, the family goes to Lucumí beach for a picnic. While Isabel is napping, Quintín rapes Carmelina in the water as they are swimming. Carmelina leaves the house on the lagoon and returns nine months later to give birth to a son, Willie. She leaves the son with Petra, telling her she does not want him because he is too light-skinned (319). Petra tells Isabel that Quintín is the father, and she insists that Quintín recognize the child as his son. She tells Isabel that Carmelina was raped (321). Isabel is devastated, but less by Quintín's betrayal and sexual violence than by her agreement, at Quintín's insistence, to have herself sterilized after the birth of their son Manuel.[4] She sees the birth of Quintín

and Carmelina's child as a second chance and decides that she will raise the child as her own son (321). The son, Willie, becomes a member of the Mendizabal clan, joining Petra's family, the Avilés, with a family of the white Puerto Rican elite.

One of the crises at the end of the novel is Quintín's decision to disinherit both of his sons. Petra cannot bear to see Willie disinherited, and this becomes a driving force for the creation of the novel. Quintín wants to turn the house on the lagoon into an art museum and leave his fortune to its foundation.[5] He realizes that the novel is an attempt to discredit the family name and, through the ensuing scandal, prevent the establishment of the museum. These decisions, as well as Quintín's alienation of his first son Manuel for his *independentista* political activities, lead to a series of events in which the house on the lagoon, with all of its wealth, goes up in flames. Isabel kills Quintín to protect both her manuscript and their son Willie. In this novel, the presence of the mixed race son precipitates a series of events that bring down the white family and destroy its property.

Isabel and Quintín's son Manuel joins a radical *independentista* cell after his father forbids his marriage to Coral Ustariz. Coral's mother, Esmeralda Márquez, was shunned by Quintín's family when his brother, Ignacio, fell in love with her and wanted to marry her. Their parents forbade the marriage because Esmeralda was mixed race. Heartbroken, Ignacio eventually kills himself over the loss of Esmeralda. The Mendizibals' refusal to allow their son to marry Esmeralda follows the racist tradition that Isabel describes as the keeping of the "Bloodline Books" (22). A Spanish tradition, the books were instituted to "keep the blood free of Jewish or Islamic ancestry, and separate records of all white and nonwhite marriages were kept in them" (22). In Puerto

Rico, this tradition of the Spanish Inquisition was used to keep the families "free" of African ancestry, and whiteness became a commodity to be traded, as Isabel explains: "Since colonial times, a clean lineage was worth a family's weight in gold" (22). Quintín's father himself takes advantage of this perception, marrying into a wealthy family despite his own lack of means. When history repeats itself and Quintín's son Manuel falls in love with Esmeralda's daughter Coral, Quintín repeats his father's edict, forbidding them to marry. He graphically explains to Manuel why he cannot marry Coral:

> 'I'll show you why,' said Quintín. And, taking his pocketknife, he made a small incision on the tip of his finger, so that a spurt of blood appeared on it. 'You see this blood, Manuel?' Quintín said. 'It doesn't have a drop of Arab, Jewish, or black blood in it. Thousands of people have died for it to stay that way. We fought the Moors, and in 1492 we expelled them from Spain, together with the Jews. When our ancestors came to this island, special books were set up to keep track of white marriages. They were called the Bloodline Books and were jealously guarded by the Church. Esmeralda's marriage to Ernesto Ustariz doesn't appear in any of them, because she's part black… And that's why you can't marry Coral.' (346)

Quintín subscribes to the worst of both colonial worlds: he repeats the Spanish colonial ideas of racial purity while also insisting that Puerto Rico will be lost if it does not join the U.S. He is unapologetic about his stance on interracial relationships, claiming that thousands of people had died to preserve his family's whiteness. Quintín, ever a

champion of U.S. ideals and values, fails to see his adherence to this racist ideology as contradictory and decidedly undemocratic.

Manuel's response to his father's racism is to take down the entire family and destroy its wealth. He organizes a strike against his father's company, and pickets the house on the lagoon in a demonstration. When Quintín discovers the demonstrators, he releases his two Doberman pinschers on the crowd, despite recognizing his own son among the protestors. Manuel escapes the crowd unharmed, but his brother Willie is mistaken for a protestor and severely beaten by the police. As a result, he is partially blinded, an act made especially tragic because he is a painter. Isabel's response to all the violence between her husband and her sons is to finally resolve to leave him. The night she decides to flee is the same night Manuel breaks in to rob the house. Quintín surprises them all by coming home early from a wine convention in New York. Manuel sets fire to the house, and initially refuses to let Quintín escape with Isabel and Willie. Isabel insists that Quintín be allowed to leave, but once on the boat leaving the house he begins to beat her after discovering her plan to leave him. Isabel fights back, pushing the boat full-throttle so that a low beam knocks Quintín out and into the water. Although his death is not certain, we are left with the image of him floating motionless "facedown in the water, half lying on the mangrove roots" as an army of crabs begins to advance towards his body. The final image of the novel is of Manuel standing on the terrace of the house "machine gun at his hip, watching the house on the lagoon burn to the ground" (407).

These unpleasant, if just, endings certainly indicate Ferré is tearing down the family romance and not leaving much in its place. Some pairs remain, however: Manual

and Coral are left together, their union guaranteed after Quintín is eliminated. Isabel and her adopted son Willie move to Florida. So we are left with at least some traces of the family. Ferré's novel, like her short story, stages the destruction of the elite through the threat of black characters. Like Isabel La Negra, Carmelina and Petra are destructive female forces that undo the family's claims to whiteness and to power. Although the mixed race son, Willie, is not an active political agent himself, his inclusion in the family, and his promised inheritance, put events in motion that lead to Quintín's death and the destruction of the house on the lagoon. In light of his brother Manuel's desire for Coral, Willie poses too much of a threat to the elite for him to be fully included in the family. Although Quintín knows Willie is his son, he often denies it. In this way, Ferré's rewriting of the Puerto Rican family romance recognizes black characters as important actors while still seeming to perpetuate the fear of racial mixing. Her reading of Puerto Rican history in the context of a family romance does introduce a gendered critique of Puerto Rican politics, both domestic and public, but her rendering ultimately repeats the same strategies of representation that have objectified black characters. Petra is a mystical, silent figure, a faithful servant to the Mendizabal family. None of the black characters narrate his or her own stories, and although Ferré uses them to disrupt the family structures in the novel, they remain little more than devices or foils for the white characters. Elena Machado Sáez reads the novel as promoting a "statehood aesthetic," one that seeks to "shift or relocate Puerto Rico's status from being exclusively (culturally, politically, geographically) Caribbean to being U.S. Latino" (24). Machado Sáez further notes that *The House on the Lagoon* is a rewriting of William Faulkner's *Absalom,*

Absalom, and as such, is attempting to align itself with a U.S. literary canon (26). She reads Isabel and Willie's decision to move to Florida as further evidence that the novel positions itself in relation to a Latino/a literary canon (29). It is clear that Ferré's rewriting of the Puerto Rican family romance is one that seeks to establish a literary genealogy in relation to the U.S. and not the Caribbean, a project fundamentally different from the task Mayra Santos-Febres undertakes in her work.

Nuestra señora de la noche

In Santos-Febres's novel *Nuestra señora de la noche* there are many clues that she is responding to and rewriting elements of Ferré's work. The novel, like Ferré's short story, is a fictionalized account of a famous madam in Ponce. In the novel, there are two sons who share the same father, in this case the wealthy white lawyer Fernando Fornarís. Isabel "La Negra" Luberza Oppenheimer, the black madam, has a son with Fornarís, Roberto Fernando Fornarís. Fornarís marries a white woman, Cristina, and they have a son, Luis Arsenio Fornarís. As in *The House on the Lagoon*, the patriarch fathers two sons, one with a white woman to whom he is married, and one with a black woman. Isabel is not raped by Fornarís, as Carmelina is by Quintín. They have a relationship, and she falls in love with him. She works as his housekeeper, a position that serves as pretext for their sexual relationship. He pays her for her services, and also leaves her a title to a piece of land his family owns. She is devastated by the discovery, while she is pregnant with their son, that he is engaged to be married. The marriage occurs at the precise moment that she almost dies giving birth.

Isabel in *Nuestra señora de la noche*, like Carmelina in *The House on the Lagoon*, refuses to mother the child she has with a white man. She refuses to see the infant after he is born, leaving Fornarís to make arrangements for his care. Fornarís gives Roberto to Doña Mòntse, a black woman who not only serves the Fornarís family but who also maintains a shrine to the Black Madonna.[6] Fornarís's wife Cristina learns of this other son, and Fornarís's relationship with, and continued love for, Isabel, drives Cristina to madness and eventual incarceration in a mental hospital. Although Fornarís conforms to the expectation that he marry a white woman, his longing for Isabel destroys his marriage and alienates him from his son Luis Arsenio.

This longing is apparent in the opening scene of the novel when he encounters Isabel on the arm of a wealthy lawyer during a social event at the casino. Everyone is scandalized to see Isabel, a black woman and a madam, enter the "respectable" space reserved only for the white elite. Santos-Febres's novel, unlike Ferré's work, emphasizes the power of this black woman from the beginning of the narrative, demonstrating her success and material wealth as a woman of means. Fornarís's gift of land allows her to establish a brothel, Elizabeth's Dancing Place, that not only becomes a center for political activity but also disrupts the sexual economies of white bourgeois society. Fornarís's son with Cristina, Luis Arsenio, goes there, as do many of the town's young men, to have sex for the first time. Unlike Isabel La Negra in "Cuando las mujeres quieren a los hombres," however, the Isabel in this novel does not trade her own sexual services but rather directs the sexual labor of the women who work for her. She reigns like a queen within the

brothel, seated on a throne-like chair where she receives all of the men who know they must first pay her their respects before partaking of the services her establishment offers.

This Isabel, unlike the black women in Ferré's work, remains separate from and outside of the white family structures. She becomes a madam so that she will never have to work for whites again, whether as seamstress or maid or housekeeper. She does not keep or raise Roberto, refusing the son that would connect her to Fornarís. She establishes a family of her own, adopting the child of a woman who works for her, a son she names Manuel. Isabel establishes herself as a matriarch who is so threatening to the white elite that she is gunned down at the end of the novel, presumably because she refuses to sell the land Elizabeth's is built on to the developers who want to industrialize the area.

The novel begins in media res. Before we learn the details of Isabel's life, we see her as an adult, entering the luxurious space of the casino in Ponce, emerging from a Cadillac on the arm of a wealthy lawyer. The doorman is shocked to see that the gloved hand that emerges from the car does not belong to a white arm but instead is "un brazo duro, negro" ["a firm, black arm"] (9). He is even more surprised to see that the arm belongs to "Isabel Luberza Oppenheimer. La Negra Luberza. La Madama del Portugués" (9). We can infer from the doorman's reaction that Isabel is a well-known and notorious figure whose presence at this social event is unexpected and even unwelcome. As her partner, the lawyer Canggiano, guides her through the ballroom, she encounters a cast of characters: politicians, the bishop, businessmen, and the wives of these men. They watch her move through the room, horrified at her presence, at the same time that Isabel

recognizes among them many of the men who frequent her brothel. The most painful sight for Isabel, however, is not the disapproval of these members of the white elite but the sight of the last man she ever loved: Fernando Fornarís. He is drinking and smoking at the bar with his wife. Isabel thinks of her as "su esposa legítima" ["his legitimate spouse"] (11). To think of this woman, Cristina, as Fornarís's legitimate wife implies that someone else could be his illegitimate wife, or lover. From her reaction, we come to understand that Isabel thinks of herself as that person. Their eyes meet, and they both feel a force drawing them together. They do not move, however, as Cristina, the wife, sees them looking at each other, and Isabel's partner guides her away.

This initial scene, entitled "Revelación," lays the foundation for the themes and structure of the rest of the novel. The casino, full of functionaries of both the church and state, represents the national space and Isabel, even though she is dressed elegantly in all the trappings of wealth, is an unwelcome intruder. By appearing at the casino, she transgresses the social code that reserves certain privileged spaces for the members of the white elite. The white men can move into any space, including Isabel's brothel (a space that has its own social codes), with no consequence but Isabel, as a black woman and as a woman whose business is sex work, is forbidden from entering the domain of the white elite. Isabel walks into the casino as a powerful woman, but this power is dependant on the very conditions that deny her entrance to the elite class: her blackness and her business of trading sex for money. In addition to establishing Isabel's story as one of the nation, the first scene also shows Isabel's vulnerability. She is less affected by the scrutiny of the men and women than by her encounter with Fernando, whose gaze moves

Isabel so strongly that she has to grasp Canggiano's arm and pray to the Virgin Mary for protection and assistance. Her relationship to this character, unlike the other men in the room, is not one of business or even sexual desire. It seems Isabel loves Fernando. The novel, then, is a story about Isabel and her desires: for love, for money, for power, and for a space within the nation. The satisfaction of these desires seems to depend on the sacrifice of love and an unrealized romance with Fernando. In this way, the novel demonstrates how the traditional notion of family romance locks women into relationships of dependency. Cristina, as a white woman, can marry Fornarís, but he never loves her. Isabel, as a black woman, can be loved by Fornarís but never marry him.

One of the ways Santos-Febres creates Isabel as a subject is to show the reader her life, from beginning to end. The events in her life are intertwined with Puerto Rican history. For example, she is born during the hurricane of San Ciriaco which struck the island August 8, 1899. Historian Stuart B. Schwartz describes the storm as "undoubtedly the worst natural catastrophe the island had experienced up to that time" (304). More than three thousand lives were lost, more than three times the number of lives lost in any previous hurricane. The damage was extensive, financially totaling more than thirty-six million pesos. Urban areas suffered extensive damage, farmers lost their crops, and the rural poor were left without housing or food. The storm itself measured more than sixty miles in diameter and the eye took over six hours to traverse the island. The capital San Juan suffered less damage than places like Humacao, Mayagüez, and Ponce where winds reached up to one hundred miles an hour and over twenty inches of rainfall caused rivers like the Portugués to reach previously unknown flood levels. Schwartz argues in his

article that although the disastrous damage produced by hurricanes has often been understood to be inevitable or an act of god, in fact disasters are human productions. Hurricanes "only become disasters because of the vulnerability of specific social and economic structures and because of political decisions and a variety of human actions before and after their impact" (303). Disasters are socially produced, and, "like revolutions or wars, they are moments of extreme stress that can reveal the underlying structures of social and political life" (303). In the novel, the account of Isabel's birth during this storm also reveals underlying structures of social and political life.

Isabel hears the story of her birth from Teté Casiana, a woman who cares for her, along with her Madrina Maruca, in a small shack in the barrio of San Antón. Casiana weaves into her description of the storm the fact of the recent American invasion of the island. She tells her that the storm was so powerful that even the Americans had to take cover. Telling the story in this way has the effect of dismantling the power of the Americans to some extent: even they were less powerful than the storm. Casiana tells Isabel that she has power because she was born during the storm: "Tú naciste el mismísimo día de la tormenta. Por eso, negrita, es que a ti hay que tener respeto. Cuando naciste, se desbordó el Portugués. Tumbó cosechas y casas" (49) ["You were born the exact same day as the storm. Because of this, negrita, you must command respect. When you were born, the river Portugués overflowed its banks. Crops and houses were toppled"]. Tying Isabel's birth to the storm both imbues her with power and implies a connection between her birth and the destruction wrought by the storm. The structure of Casiana's story suggests this, perhaps magical, cause and effect: when Isabel is born, the

Portugués river overflows and houses fall. Isabel commands respect because her birth is so powerful that it causes destruction.

Casiana also tells Isabel how they came to receive her from her mother. Her mother was María Oppenheimer, born in San Antón to a woman and man from one of the English-speaking islands who had come to Puerto Rico to cut sugarcane. María Oppenheimer must leave Isabel with Casiana and Madrina Maruca because she works as a bracera, traveling from plantation to plantation for the sugarcane harvest, and has no one to care for the child. Isabel's full name in the novel is Isabel Luberza Oppenheimer. Unlike Ferré, who gives the wife the name Luberza in her short story and leaves the prostitute's name as simply Isabel La Negra, Santos-Febres gives Isabel a full and proper name that gestures to the political and historical context into which the character is born. Her name connects her to a family that she never knows but that nonetheless links her to a history of interregional Caribbean migration. Considering the date of her birth, 1899, and reading backwards through the nineteenth century, one may conjecture that Isabel's grandparents could have been freed slaves, immigrating to Puerto Rico after slavery was abolished in the British colonies in 1838. This ties the character of Isabel to the African diaspora in the region. The fact that her mother must leave her with strangers testifies to the harsh working conditions and minimal labor options for black women during this time in Puerto Rican history. Isabel learns as she grows up that black women are relegated to the lowest rungs of society: they cut cane, clean houses, cook food, become seamstresses, wash clothes, care for white children, or become sex workers. Santos-

Febres is careful to depict this entire field of black women's labor in the novel, labor that serves the desires and needs of the white elite in Ponce.

Isabel's decision to become a madam and a sex worker is one that emerges after she works as a servant, seamstress, and maker of illegal rum during Prohibition. When she is a little girl, her Madrina takes her to the Tous household to work. Doña Georgina promises to pay for Isabel's school in return for her labor. After seven years living and working in the house, Isabel is raped by the husband and thrown out onto the streets. She finds work as a seamstress, meets a young soldier from the Virgin Islands, moves in with him until he leaves her to serve in Panama. She decides then that she will become a woman of means who works only for herself. She begins to make rum, takes in sewing and laundry, and is convinced by a young Fernando Fornarís to clean his apartment. Hiring her is a pretext for his desire for her. Isabel knows this, and flirts with him, eventually sleeping with him and becoming pregnant with their son. Throughout their liaison, he leaves money for her after each meeting and eventually bequeaths her the title for a plot of land that borders the river Portugués. After he marries Cristina, at the same time that Isabel is giving birth to their son, she cuts all ties with him and refuses to see him, promising herself, after the caesarian section she barely survives, that no one will ever be allowed so close to her again: "Ella logró pensar en medio del desastre «Nadie me volverá a tocar». No se refería al cuerpo, sino a esa otra cosa densa que era Isabel por dentro. Nadie le volvería a poner el dedo encima a esa Isabel. Eso fue lo que quiso decir" (249) ["She managed to think in the middle of the disaster 'Nobody will ever touch me again'. She wasn't referring to her body, but rather to that thick thing that was Isabel

inside. Nobody would ever place a finger on that Isabel ever again. This was what she wanted to say"]. She gives up her son, knowing that she cannot raise him while pursuing her plan to open a brothel on the land Fernando has given her. Like her mother, she must sacrifice her child in order to work.

In this version of Isabel's story, Santos-Febres explains why Isabel becomes a sex worker, carefully describing the living conditions and limited options for black women in Puerto Rico. Isabel decides to become a madam and sex worker because it is one of the few ways she can accumulate any capital within this rigidly structured society. Unlike in Ferré's story, Isabel becomes an active subject, choosing this life so that she will never have to work for anyone else. She instead exploits the desires of the elite to serve her own purposes and needs, rising to such a position of power that she poses a significant threat to that elite. In the end she is gunned down by an assassin for her refusal to capitulate to the demands of the businessmen who want her land for development projects. In the novel, Santos-Febres creates a character who shapes her own destiny and challenges white power.

The legacies of forbidden love carry over into the next generation in *Nuestra señora de la noche*, as they do in *The House on the Lagoon*. Fernando's son Luis Arsenio has sex for the first time at Isabel's brothel with a mixed-race woman named Minerva. He falls in love with her, but it is a desire confused by what is expected of him as a member of the elite, i.e., to marry a white woman. At a university in Pennsylvania, he meets an American woman, Maggie Carlisle, who breaks his heart, refusing him because he is from "the islands" and does not have the pedigree to make him an acceptable mate in the

eyes of her wealthy, East Coast family. He describes her as "la chica por la cual esperar" ["the girl to wait for"] and as the prize (207). On a trip home, he is overwhelmed with desire for Minerva but he is determined to "save" himself for Maggie. But when they meet again in Philadelphia, after he returns home, she spells out why they cannot be together: "¿cómo iba yo presentarte a mi familia? Hola, éste es Louie Fornaress from some island. No conozco sus padres. No sé si tiene medios para sostenerme. Nos queremos casar y vivir en la selva, en un árbol junto a los monos...«Me, Jane; tú, Tarzán»" (247) ["and how would I present you to my family? Hi, this one is Louie Fornaress from some island. I don't know who his parents are. I don't know if he has the means to support me. We want to get married and live in the jungle, in a tree with monkeys.. 'Me, Jane; you, Tarzan'"]. She repeats the racist discourse circulated in the U.S. about Puerto Rico, and refuses Luís because his family has no standing in the class structure of the U.S. She even refuses to recognize the geographic specificity of the island, referring to it in English in the text as "some island." Puerto Rico's political status and place as a colony of the U.S. empire is ignored.

By the end of the novel, Luis has no one, although he still dreams of Minerva. He serves as an officer in the U.S. military during World War II. Stationed in the Philippines, he meets Isabel and Fernando's son, his brother Roberto Fernando Fornarís, who serves as an enlisted private, a far cry from Luis's position as an officer. They both return to Puerto Rico after their military service, where they meet again. While Roberto ends up having a family and a wife, Luis remains alone. His family dies off around him, and gradually loses its wealth. Roberto, it seems, is the only family Luis has left. Luis

describes Roberto as his other half (333). Roberto describes Luis as his double, but white (334). Like the two Isabels in Ferré's short story, these two men describe how seeing each other is like looking in a mirror (334). They are happy to have found each other, and at the end of the novel start an official business together. The novel ends with Isabel's funeral, where all three "sons," Luis, Roberto, and Manuel, attend the service.

Both Rosario Ferré and Mayra Santos-Febres offer a gendered critique of the literary tradition of the *gran familia puertorriqueña* and deconstruct the racialized formulas of romance. Introducing black characters into the family romance reveals the economic structures of sexual labor and reveals the extent to which notions of "ladyhood" in Puerto Rico depend on casting the black woman as the hypersexualized other. While Ferré narrates these concerns from within the universe of the white elite, and by so doing often repeats the objectification of black characters, Santos-Febres narrates Puerto Rican national history from outside of this elite economic structure, and in so doing, constitutes Isabel Luberza Oppenheimer as a historical subject. In both novels, the concerns of the nation are narrated through revised stories of women, and the traditional model of representing national belonging in familial metaphors is disturbed by the murder of the patriarch at the hands of his wife, and by the less traditional coupling of two brothers at the end of *Nuestra señora de la noche*. In each text, romance and sexual desire are used to question the limit of the nation and its relationship to the U.S. and the Caribbean. In the next chapter, we will see how Dionne Brand radically alters the conflation of the family and the nation in a transnational context in her depiction of desire between two women in her novel *In Another Place, Not Here*.

Notes

[1] All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

[2] I use the term "prostitute," with its accompanying derogatory connotations when describing the characters in Ferré's work because they are represented as such, while I use the term "sex worker" to mark the more respectful descriptions of characters who trade sex for money in Santos-Febres's novel.

[3] Although Ferré's own English translation of the story formulates it in this way: "A prostitute, on the other hand, will go to similar extremes to hide the lady under her skin" (134).

[4] Isabel's sterilization echoes eugenicist policies championed by U.S. public heath officials and other groups that sought to control the "problem of overpopulation" in Puerto Rico in the twentieth century. As Briggs notes, overpopulation was identified as the source of Puerto Rico's "backwardness": "...North American and Creole officials alike blamed overpopulation for a multitude of ills—poverty, delinquency, homelessness, prostitution, disease" (84).

[5] Quintín's wish to immortalize himself by making his house into a museum mirrors the same desire that Isabel Luberza has in "Cuando las mujeres quieren a los hombres" to memorialize her husband, the white patriarch Ambrosio, by preserving their house as if it were a museum to his memory.

[6] Doña Montse's narration is woven throughout the novel in separate chapters and varies between a direct address to a santería Virgin and third-person limited point of view. Her position as a guardian of the Virgin's grotto situates the romance, and specifically the child of the romance between Isabel and Fornarís, as one that occupies a space between the world of humans and the world of the divine, as in Frye's formulation of romance. The Virgin she tends is a Black Madonna, seated with a white Christ child on her lap. As the narrative progresses, Doña Montse increasingly reads herself as the Virgin, caring for the child of a white man.

CHAPTER V

REVOLUTIONARY ROMANCE: DIONNE BRAND AND TRANSNATIONAL DESIRE

women and water
my grandmother's river
my distant aunt's falls
no one else was allowed in
children that didn't feel right
revolutionaries are made, not born.
—Michelle Cliff "And What Would It Be Like?"

Novels of revolution occupy an important position in the Caribbean literary canon. Whether narrating the struggles for independence from colonial powers or the resistance to neoimperial rule in an era of globalized capital, Caribbean novels assume a historical importance in their representation of political resistance. Because much revolutionary history was erased in colonial records of the region, oral stories and myths became the repository of collective memories of resistance. Belinda Edmondson argues that this particular history of erasure positions Caribbean fiction as a site of recovery: "fiction takes over where history leaves off: fiction and fact become part of the same project of reclamation—the recovery of the almost-revolutions of Caribbean history" (*Making Men* 105). Examples of this tradition in the Anglophone Caribbean include novels such as V.S. Naipaul's *Guerrillas* (1975), Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1975), and Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987). Like C.L.R. James' account of the Haitian revolution in *The Black Jacobins* (1938), these fictional accounts

seek to correct the historical register by narrating stories of resistance to colonial oppression.

Dionne Brand's novel *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996) both engages with this tradition of male-authored narratives of revolution and seeks to rewrite it. Like Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*, Brand's novel narrates revolution through the eyes of female protagonists. As Edmondson writes, "Cliff's concern with integrating the violent history of the Caribbean with issues of sexuality, race, and gender make this novel at once in the tradition of male-authored revolution narrative as well as a radical departure from—and critique of—it" (*Making Men* 126). Brand's novel does similar work, but unlike Cliff's narrative, in which revolutionaries attack a staged army on an American film set in Jamaica (thus articulating revolution metaphorically), Brand's work takes up actual historical events. It narrates two places of revolutionary struggle: Toronto during the Black Power movement of the 1970s and Grenada during the revolution of 1979-1983. Like many other novels of revolution, it relies on a romance between two characters to articulate the painful intimacies of struggle. Brand's novel, however, is one of the first in the Caribbean to narrate this revolutionary struggle in the context of desire between women. In this chapter, I argue that Brand must rewrite the heterosexist, nationalist conventions of the revolutionary romance in order to represent the transnational scope of women's resistance to both neocolonial power from abroad and patriarchal power at home. I begin my analysis by briefly revisiting the form of the male-authored national romance. I then consider how Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* questions some of the assumptions of male nationalist fiction. In the next section, I explore how we can

understand Brand's work as a transnational romance that responds to this tradition of national romances. In the final section, I examine why Brand chooses desire between women as a vehicle to represent revolution in an era of neocolonial globalization. In so doing, I hope to offer some contribution to our understanding of how Brand's innovation of literary form allows for the reflection of new political realities.

The Sexual Politics of Nationalist Romance

Romance, although notoriously difficult to pin down in literary study, does perform at least one similar function across most historical and national periods. It relies on a love story to represent the hope for a new society. Although its generic conventions may differ, from the most specific definition of romance as a medieval narrative poem to a broader conceptualization of romance as strategy, romance employs eros to tell a tale about social change. In the Caribbean, this function of romance has been used to articulate the process of decolonization. Relying by and large on heterosexual romance, novels of revolution stage the hope for liberation in the fecund promise of heterosexual sex (usually motivated by love). In Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance*, this trope is mediated through the character of Sylvia. She is initially seduced by Guy, an older man who owns property and is aligned closely with the national bourgeoisie. By the end of the novel, however, she realizes her true love for the protagonist Aldrick, who dances the dragon in Carnival and instigates an uprising that mirrors the 1970 Black Power uprising in Trinidad. Guy represents the old colonial order (he is away in England when Sylvia decides to leave him for Aldrick) and Aldrick the new national order. As in many

romances, Aldrick and Sylvia are not the only couple. Lovelace doubles the effect of romance in the subplot of Cleothilda and Philo. Cleothilda, a mulatto woman who is queen of Calvary Hill, consistently refuses Philo's advances because he is a black calypsonian with no economic standing in the community. By the end of the novel, however, Cleothilda's harsh stance on racial hierarchies is softened by Philo's economic success with his songs, and she invites him to her bedroom in the last lines of the novel: "'Come,' she said, stretching out a hand for him to hold. 'You doing like you don't know where my bedroom is. But with the way the world going, even that wouldn't surprise me,' she said in a voice as if *the world was truly coming to an end*" (240, emphasis mine). For a new world to begin, the old one must end, and this ending is mediated through the lens of heterosexual coupling.[1]

This legacy of the national romance in the Caribbean extends across the region. In *Foundational Fictions*, Doris Sommer traces a similar trend in the nineteenth-century novels of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. Novels such as *Sab* (Cuba, 1841) and *Enriquillo* (Dominican Republic, 1882) demonstrate an "erotics of politics" in which "national ideals are all ostensibly grounded in 'natural' heterosexual love" (Sommer 6). The previous social orders are trumped by national romances that depict the "stories of star-crossed lovers who represent particular regions, races, parties, economic interests, and the like" (5). Love becomes an apparently non-violent medium through which to resolve a multitude of differences (often in favor of the largely white, Creole elite) and to encourage the newly formed, national population to "be fruitful and multiply" (6). These novels participated in the project of nation-building by linking patriotism, the love of

one's country, with romantic passion in order to "win partisan minds along with hearts" (5). Similarly, in Haitian national discourse, as Kevin Meehan explains, romance tropes appear in the work of such writers as René Depestre, Jacques-Stephen Aléxis, Jacques Roumain, Emeric Bergeaud, and Toussaint L'Ouverture. In the Haitian national romance, "political agency typically is prefigured by erotic potency, and heterosexual romance often produces a revolutionary heir (important since the heroes are often martyred)" (292-3).[2]

The sexual politics of these romances, however, cannot be overlooked. As Edmondson argues, the quest to reclaim history in revolution narratives is also an attempt to articulate Caribbean masculinity. The desire to "'mark' history with conquest... is, in its turn, associated with the rites of manhood'" ("Race" 64). The conquest of history becomes a conquest of the female body, specifically the white female body. Edmondson argues that the resurrection of Shakespeare's Caliban as the "supreme symbol of Caribbeanness" figures the white female body (Miranda) as the visible sign of contestation between white imperial masculinity and black masculinity. In this reading, Caliban's desire to conquer Prospero is mediated through Miranda so that the threat of miscegenation (peopling the island with Calibans) represents the colonizer's ultimate undoing (64-65). The black woman's body, however, performs a different symbolic role in these texts. Often absent or invisible, the black woman is locked into the role of mother:

> Unlike the white female body, the black woman's body is often figured as the maternal body, like Sycorax, Caliban's absent mother in *The Tempest*, who, if we

> carry the metaphor of colonialism to its logical conclusion, represents the past might of 'mother' Africa. In these masculine narratives of Caribbean history, the silence of the raped (white) female body is not the same as the silence of the black maternal body, since rape is figured here as one kind of displaced desire for something through violence, whereas the black female body represents unrecoverable, nostalgic history. ("Race, Gender, and the Caribbean Narrative of Revolution" 65)

Female characters in these narratives thus become the site of struggle rather than agents participating in the struggle. The white female body becomes a battleground to test masculinity while black women embody the tragedy of a lost history.[3]

Considering Edmondson's argument can help reveal the ways in which race structures romance. As I have shown in previous chapters, colonial romance novels such as *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* rely on a romance formula established both by whiteness and by submission to patriarchy. As Jane Bryce notes, the heroine of a romance novel must be a lady, and in colonial discourse, in order to be a lady, the heroine must be white. This is the obstacle many characters face in the Caribbean rewritings of traditional romance: Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Cathy in *La migration des cœurs* [*Windward Heights*], and Isabel in *Nuestra señora de la noche* [*Our Lady of the Night*]. Although they secure the love of the hero, they are never white enough to succeed in the romance formula. They cannot escape the racial bind of the romance, which, as Bryce puts it, is that "the obverse of the white lady's chastity is the myth of the black woman's

lasciviousness, while the obverse of the familiar and the domesticated is the unknown and mysterious" (114).

When Caribbean women approach the romance, then, they face two traditions: the colonial romance on the one hand, and the masculinist national romance on the other. As Meehan points out, even a "cursory glance at female-authored narratives of Caribbean decolonization reveals a deep-seated ambivalence regarding romance stories as a suitable vehicle for conveying the drama of national liberation" (291). This suspicion of the very form of the romance leads Caribbean women to narrate revolution in new ways. Varying strategies emerge in three different texts in Meehan's analysis: in *Mon examen de blanc* (Guadeloupe, 1972) author Jacqueline Manicom places a woman, rather than a man, at the center of revolutionary action and uses maternal imagery in a more critical way; in Merle Collins's *Angel* (1987), the author moves the romance to the position of subplot in favor of a coming-of-age story for the female protagonist; and in Merle Hodge's short story "Inez" (1990) the sexual politics underlying revolution are laid bare. These women, Meehan concludes, document the exclusion of women from liberation struggles and "suggest that full decolonization depends on redressing this exclusion" (302). In their work, Meehan identifies a "discovery of new cultural forms" that is capable of representing the range of women's experiences and oppression (302). In this chapter, I argue that Dionne Brand engages in a similar project. *In Another Place, Not Here*, like the texts in Meehan's analysis, offers a new form. Rather than eschew romance entirely, the novel rewrites it so that it may represent what previous romances, national and colonial, could not: the love and desire between two black women. Narrating this love

explodes the conventions of romance, disrupting both the expectations of whiteness and women's submission to patriarchy.

Queering Resistance in *No Telephone to Heaven*

Like Merle Collins's novel *Angel*, *No Telephone to Heaven* was one of the first Anglophone Caribbean novels to narrate revolution from the perspective of a female protagonist. Continuing the story of a light-skinned Jamaican woman named Clare Savage from Cliff's first novel *Abeng* (1984), it moves chronologically back and forth between Clare's involvement with a revolutionary group of guerilla fighters who are planning to attack a film set in Jamaica and Clare's past as a child in Jamaica, the United States, and then as a graduate student in London. While some critics, including Maria Helena Lima, read the novel as a postcolonial *Bildungsroman* that parallels the development of a young protagonist with the development of the nation, I read the novel as more invested in Clare's adult, and sexual, self. In the novel, nation and revolution are narrated through her relationships with two characters: Bobby and Harry/Harriet. Through these relationships, Cliff questions the assumptions of nationalist romances that have relied on normative heterosexuality and interrogates the limits of essentialized black nationalism that employs certain conceptions of black women as metaphorical extensions of a Mother Africa.

In Cliff's work, as in the work of many Caribbean writers, the struggle to narrate independence from European colonizers becomes a complicated negotiation of forms and national ideologies. Jocelyn Fenton Stitt argues that Cliff's earlier work embraces

essentialist forms of black nationalism while her later work, including *No Telephone*, rejects it. Stitt also identifies a strain of what she terms Romantic nationalism in Cliff's writings. Stitt maintains that Caribbean writers have adopted some of the strategies used by European Romantic writers, like Walter Scott, to represent the nation, including "the identification between national subject and his nation's landscape, the valorization of the folk, and the importance of the mother figure to guarantee identity" (54). In *Abeng*, Cliff relies heavily on Clare's mother, Kitty, as the bearer of a black national identity, adopting strategies from both Romantic nationalism and black nationalism. In *No Telephone*, however, she rejects the conflation of mother-nation and articulates a form of national discourse that steps outside of the logic of the biological family and allows for representations of more complicated notions of racial, sexual, and gendered identities.

Clare's sexual relationships in the novel carry an important symbolic weight. She has sex with Paul H., a son of the wealthy elite, the night before he, and his family, are killed by Christopher, a man who worked as a servant for Paul's family. This act of revenge against the national bourgeoisie has been read by some critics as the most powerful representation of revolution in the novel: while Clare and the guerilla fighters attack a film set, Christopher enacts a bloody revenge on the Jamaican upper class. Clare's sexual involvement with Paul H. reflects her attempts to distance herself from that class. As she describes their encounter: she "could entrust her body to this boy she barely knew and watch herself as he fondled her and feel pleasure in her parts but still be apart from him. Feeling free, the word she put to it then. So apart, so free, she could walk away and be glad they were done with each other" (88). When she learns of his death the

next day, she is shocked but not sad and insists that she "did not think of his sperm congregating in her, so that his line might not have ended. In a few days she bled. She was free of him. Free as a freemartin" (89). Despite her father's insistence that she should be invested in continuing to "lighten" their family through her reproductive choices, Clare rejects Paul and his class, refusing to accept any role as the biological "savior" of Paul's family line. Her womb offers no solace to a class of people who continue to oppress the poor.

The man Clare does fall in love with is Bobby, a wounded Vietnam war veteran she meets at a pub in London. She finds solace in him, insisting that he is something familiar to her. As an African-American, he connects her to her past as a child growing up in New York and to her own struggles as a person of color in the United States and London. Clare reads their shared experience with racism as a wound, and even suggests that this shared wound is the only reason she loves him (154). Bobby also has a physical wound, a hole in his foot that has refused to heal in the ten years since he fought in the war. Clare devotes herself to attempting to heal the wound, a place "where brown skin split and yellowness dripped from a bright pink gap" (143), trying every possible remedy, including those she learned from her grandmother, to cure Bobby of his pain. Clare's attempts are unsuccessful, both in regards to his physical wound and his emotional suffering. When she tells him she thinks she might be pregnant, he is forced to "reopen the war," recounting his role in spraying Agent Orange on the terrain. He believes his exposure to the chemical is the reason his wound will not heal, and also the reason she should not have the baby unless she wants "a little Black baby with no eyes, no mouth,

no nose, half a brain, harelip, missing privates" (156). Unlike with Paul, Clare seems to want the child with Bobby. She admits she had felt a thrill about the possibility of the pregnancy. In the end, however, the pregnancy remains indeterminate. One night in bed with Bobby something "slid out of her suddenly—it could have been a late, heavy period for all she knew, or a baby with a half a brain" (157). Biological reproduction becomes imbued with specters of deformity and pain, wounds caused by American imperialism and racist colonial policies. The pain of telling Clare this information proves too much for Bobby, and he eventually leaves her.

After losing Bobby, Clare decides to return to Jamaica. On the journey home, she becomes ill and contracts an infection that leaves her sterile. Stitt reads this as a critique of Romantic nationalism because it rejects biological motherhood for Clare and "signifies another possibility for the formation of a national culture outside of the folk mother" (69). Clare's relationship with Harry/Harriet further disrupts the association of the national with the heterosexual, biological family. Clare and Harry/Harriet, while they do not have a typical romance, nonetheless are the central couple of the novel. They are together in the narrative present: Harry/Harriet guides Clare's transformation as she becomes a revolutionary, both in Jamaica and while she studied in England. She encourages Clare to read C.L.R. James and to return home. When Harry/Harriet learns she has left England, she writes: "I am so pleased you have left the motherland. I like to think of you in prettier places" (145). Cliff embeds the strongest criticisms of colonialism in Harry/Harriet's character and positions the relationship between Clare and Harry/Harriet as a model for a new way of thinking of national identity beyond

essentialist models. Clare's pain over her struggles with her mixed race identity, feeling neither "black enough" to identify with "the people" in an essentialist reading of Jamaican nationalism nor "white enough" in the United States or England are assuaged by Harry/Harriet's courage to embrace her multivalent gender identity. Harry/Harriet's "mixed" gender helps Clare accept her position as a mixed subject. Stitt argues that ultimately the novel "offers a paradigm of national identity based on shared experiences rather than on essentialist notions of race or landscape" and suggests that "all of us in the Americas are hybrid, creole subjects and that very hybridity can be the basis for a politics of nation which is neither racially exclusionary nor complicit in the maintenance of essentialist gendered identities" (72).

No Telephone to Heaven represents an important addition to narratives of revolution in the Caribbean because it formulates the possibilities of national identities that rest not on sameness but on the recognition of difference. Rather than repeat essentialist models for national belonging or suggest the ideal citizen is one embedded in the biological family, Cliff's novel opens up a national space of multiplicity that writes back to both patriarchal and colonial power. Clare's adult relationships with Bobby and Harry/Harriet transform her understanding of her identity and her conception of the nation while at the same time representing the intimate struggles of love and desire. The rejection of the biological family as the metaphorical site of national representation is also one of the central concerns of *In Another Place, Not Here*. Like Cliff, Brand rewrites the formulas of national romance that collapse women with nation. In Brand's novel,

women become the active agents of change and the revolutionary narrative is articulated through romance that occurs between women.

In Another Place, Not Here **as Transnational Romance**

Split into two nearly equal parts, *In Another Place, Not Here* narrates the love between two women, Elizete and Verlia. Elizete is an agricultural laborer, orphaned at an early age, raised by an unnamed woman, then passed off as a young woman to Isaiah, who abuses her. Verlia is a woman from an unnamed island in the Caribbean who moves to Canada. In Toronto, she finds a place for herself in the Black Power movement. Her struggles in Toronto inspire her to move to a thinly fictionalized Grenada, where she sets out to organize caneworkers and, in the process, falls in love with Elizete. Verlia dies during the 1983 American invasion, and Elizete flees to Toronto to find some echoes of Verlia's life there. On her search, she finds some refuge in Abena, Verlia's former lover.

The novel uses desire between women to frame a representation of the political struggles of decolonization. Verlia fights for the revolutionary government in Grenada and works for a radical political cell in Toronto, the Committee for Revolutionary Struggle, that champions armed resistance to colonialism and sends money and arms to Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and the Black Panthers in the U.S. Elizete's struggle, unlike Verlia's, is not overtly political. Rather, her daily survival in a patriarchal economy that exploits her physical and sexual labor serves as testimony to the effects of colonization on black women's bodies. *In Another Place, Not Here* has no traditional happy ending, but I want to suggest that we can read this novel as a romance. Although

we cannot label this novel a lesbian romance, as I will discuss below, we can refer to theorizations of lesbian desire to understand how this novel breaks with the tradition of the heterosexual romance. It exceeds the boundaries of the national romance while at the same time participating in the tradition of narrating revolution. I argue that we can best understand Brand's novel as a transnational romance that begins to articulate a new form, one that is capable of representing an experience that has gone unnamed in previous novels of revolution.

In Another Place, Not Here is a novel aware of the process of naming. The island where Elizete meets Verlia is unnamed, although the narrative offers various clues that it is Grenada.[4] Elizete, orphaned, is given to a woman who remains unnamed. The world around her is unnamed. She learns to identify plants, but she cannot give them names because "the woman they give me to don't know their names, and she don't know them because she ma before and she ma before that as far as she know didn't know neither" (17). The woman tells her the story of her ancestor Adela, a slave so stricken with grief that she refuses to name anything at all:

> She say when she great-great-great-ma come here she was grieving bad for where she come from. And when she done calculate the heart of this place, that it could not yield to her grief, she decide that this place was not nowhere and so she call it. Nowhere. She say nothing have here no name. She never name none of her children, nor the man she had was to sleep with and she never answer to the name that they give she which was Adela. (18)

As a child, Elizete learns that her inheritance is the absence of names. She worries about whether Adela ever made it to her home, the place she was taken from, and whether she found her true name. The inability to name is the historical legacy of slavery that leaves the woman uncertain about language: "And that [Adela's story] is how I don't know the names of things though I know their face. I know there is names for things but I can not be sure of the truth of them" (19). The woman is aware that a language exists to name these things, but her access to it has been disrupted, both by Adela's refusal to live in this new place by giving it names and by slavery's erasure of African languages.

The absence of names and the suspicion of language stretch back into the narrative past and appear in the narrative's present. The love between Elizete and Verlia also has no name. The word "lesbian" never appears in the text. Like the plants and the island, Elizete and Verlia have no names for their sexual identities. In part, this is because they never talk about their love to anyone else and so attempt to escape detection or labeling by the hostile communities around them. Their unnamed desire is also a legacy of slavery. Erased by history, no names remain to describe them that exist outside of the boundaries of colonial language. Coming from Europe, the term lesbian cannot capture the love between two women in the Caribbean.[5]

Their love is characterized by struggle. Verlia frets that her love for Elizete will interfere with her political action. Isaiah, the man Elizete lives with, finds Elizete and Verlia in bed together. Instead of violence, he leaves the house and goes crazy. They are frightened of his return, however, and Verlia writes in her diary:

Her man found us and I told her that she had to come to stay with me in town but

> she said no. I stayed with her the night in case he would come back to kill her. I don't know what I thought I'd do. Shit. How many times have I heard that this is what fucks up revolutions? How the fuck am I going to get out of it? She didn't talk to me all night, just touched my face. (218)

Verlia's concern is not for the love she has for Elizete, but rather how to fight: how to fight Isaiah, how to fight the revolution. She is worried that her relationship with Elizete will interfere. This same anxiety is echoed in a later entry. A comrade implies she is straying from the party line: "[he] said to me if the people go one way and the party another, the party is wrong no matter how correct the political line. Then he said, 'You should know what I mean comrade.' I had the feeling he was talking about Elizete and me. It startled me a little and I didn't know what to say. It's a small place" (223). Verlia cannot determine how to accommodate both her commitment to the revolution and her desire for Elizete.

Her commitment to political action seems to override her personal desire. Greg A. Mullins reads the novel as "an extended meditation on love's relation to revolution," citing the words of Che Guevara that Verlia repeats to herself: "'At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love'" (165). Verlia claims that she wants to "live in Che's line" (165). Her sexual identity and her political identity do not have an easy relationship, however. She does meet her first lover, Abena, in the movement, and has a long relationship with her, but Verlia never makes it public and never commits to it over and above her dedication to political change. She thinks that their love is "not enough." The description of their lovemaking evokes

pleasure, but also distance and grief, flooded with tears and the fluid of their desire: "The floor is wet with their sweat and oil and the slick of limbs and their shake and sudden, sudden sweet hastes. Her own mouth suddenly too, soft and greedy, in its own suck and circles. So much water" (187). These intimate moments seem pale when we contrast them with Verlia's feeling during a political rally:

> The crowd like sugar down her back, sisters and brothers to the left and right of her marching. So much goes through her when the chant pushes from her lips, she wants to cry and all of her feels like melting into it, sugar. 'Power to the People!' The crown and her voice sugaring. If it was time to die she would die here, in the middle of a crowd chanting 'Power to the People!'(167)

She is much more ecstatic here than in any scene in the novel making love to a woman. All descriptions of sex are tinged with grief, sadness, loneliness, and loss. In the march, however, she feels a part of something; she feels so much pleasure she could die. She uses her mouth to demand power instead of pleasure, although the pleasure in this act is overwhelming.

For Elizete, the love she has for Verlia saves her. From the moment Elizete sees her, in the opening lines of the novel, Verlia offers Elizete relief. In Elizete's words: "Grace. Is grace. Yes. And I take it, quiet, quiet, like thiefing sugar. From the word she speak to me and the sweat running down she in that sun, one afternoon as I look up saying to myself, how many more days these poor feet of mine can take this field, these blades of cane like razor, this sun like a coal pot" (3). Verlia is her grace, a presence that saves her from the only world she knows: work, abuse, no education, no way to escape.

Mullins reads this grace as akin to the divine: "As with divine grace, the love Elizete and Verlia offer each other carries no expectation that one deserves it or can compensate it...and in its glorious excess it remains stubbornly outside economies of exchange, consumption, debt or constraint" (1106). Elizete's act of falling in love with Verlia drives away Isaiah and allows her to break away from the plantation economy (although the economy she falls into in Toronto is not much better).

Mullins reads this as a love that exists outside of a neoliberal logics of economy, and I would add that it exists outside of a patriarchal economy as well. It is important to note here that it is their love, not Verlia, who saves Elizete. Verlia does not assume the place of a man in a traditional romance, acting as "savior" to her lady. Elizete realizes this after Verlia's death: "This was no rescue. Apart from that truth she [Verlia] had left her nothing. Nothing at least that people ever left lovers or wives or husbands. She had only left her the last place she had been before" (72). Verlia explains this to Elizete when they are together, proclaiming: "'I am not a man,' she had said. 'I cannot take care of you like that; a man can promise you things that will never happen not because he is lying but because they are within his possibilities in the world'" (72). Although Verlia does not detail the possibilities men might access in the world, they might include (among many others) rights to acquire capital, the claiming of children, the rights of inheritance, or the right to rule. A man's possibilities, though, do not extend to women, as Verlia implies that although he could promise these things, for a woman they "will never happen." Verlia explains all that she can give to Elizete: "'I can only promise to be truly naked with you. We'll be very scared walking down the street, hungry all the time, frightened of

our own breasts when they meet'"(73). Instead of protection, Verlia bequeaths Elizete the truth of vulnerability and the reality of what it will mean for two women to love each other in a homophobic society. Alienated from their own sexuality, their breasts touching will inspire fear instead of pleasure. The material consequences of their decision to love one another will be hunger and isolation.

In addition to proposing a new economy of desire, *In Another Place, Not Here* breaks with traditional romance in other ways. Mullins argues that the novel draws on certain literary techniques that "frustrate linear narrative conventions: stream of consciousness, intrusions of elliptical and oblique narrative fragments, and a plot that circles and spirals as it is told through the recollections of its two protagonists" (1106). Mullins situates these narratives strategies as resistance to the neoliberal logics of imperialism. We can also read these as strategies that resist both patriarchal ideology and heterosexual logic. In her book *Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Narratives*, Marilyn Farwell identifies elements of lesbian narrative that can be useful to consider in relation to Brand: the idea of "breaking the sequence" and the articulation of the female-to-female gaze. Brand incorporates both of these strategies into *In Another Place, Not Here.*

Farwell reads master plots and linear narratives as narrative patterns that present a series of events that are chronologically related to each other. These narrative patterns reflect political and ideological control because they inscribe an ordered world based on "a logic of consequences and a teleology" (47). The teleological nature of these types of traditional narratives relies on a closure that is understood as the final consequence of a series of events (48). Farwell argues that closure "is the ultimate place in which subjects

are positioned in relationship to one another and to power" and that "movement towards closure, like linearity, can be interpreted as authoritarian" (48). Feminist narrative theory takes this issue of closure as its central concern, because "in closure the female character is finally encased in the authoritarian social/sexual/narrative system, never again to escape" (48). Writers like Virginia Woolf, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Anne Sexton have all experimented with different ways of breaking this sequence. Kristeva proposes a circular "women's time" while Cixous pioneered the idea of an *écriture féminine*, a mode of writing that relies on female erotic energy rather than male. In each case, these writers suggest that "only breaking the sequence will disturb the power of the traditional narrative to exact death from its female inhabitants" (Farwell 46-47).

Verlia dies in Brand's novel, but her death is not closure. The event of her death does not appear at the end of the novel. In fact, the reader learns of her death gradually, as the story circulates first through Elizete's focalized narration and then, in the second half of the novel, through Verlia's. The first hint arrives early, when suddenly in the fourth chapter we discover that Elizete has moved to Toronto. There is no description of her journey, and it is only through the remainder of her narrative that we learn she has gone to Toronto because of Verlia:

> Months in some place just for the whiff of another human being she'd had a glimpse of. Well, who'd given her a glimpse just enough to haunt her. Haunt her into dropping here like a stone. Stone. She tried to mash her own face in with a stone when Verlia went. She'd held it in her hand and pounded and pounded, but

> Verlia was still gone. Over and over the stone in her hand moved to the pulp of her mouth, hoping. (50)

The narrative uncertainty in this passage and the ambiguity of "she" leave doubts as to why exactly Elizete has gone to Toronto and whether Verlia has died or simply left. The first half of this passage does not specify that the person that haunts her is Verlia. In fact, she uses no pronoun to give us a clue and leaves the person unnamed. This passage exemplifies how Brand escapes the cause-and-effect linearity of traditional narrative. Rather than placing each event as the cause of the other, Brand weaves this passage together through association and images, instead of through logic or teleology. Each sentence takes up a word and continues Elizete's thinking. The second sentence picks up "glimpse" from the first, the third sentence picks up "haunt," the fourth "stone," so that by the end of the passage, Elizete recalls that she used a stone to try to smash in her own face because Verlia has "left."

Although Verlia dies, the novel does leave us with two people together in Toronto. Elizete finds Abena, Verlia's former lover. With Abena, Elizete is finally able to begin naming things again. She recites the names of things from her island, but also names for her loneliness and sadness: "Close up and frighten vine, bitter bark water, one minute rain, gully wash away rain, ever everlasting rain, speckled throat fowl, I alone bird" (232). Unlike her ancestor Adela, Elizete is able to name her grief. She finds the language to express her exile in Toronto and finds some comfort in the company of Abena.

This pairing marks the chronological end of the narrative. At the same time, and in an echo of traditional romances, we learn Elizete is pregnant. It remains unclear in the narrative if she is biologically pregnant or instead "full" of the names she finds for things: "Pregnant all right. Call it that then. Full of all the things that happen to her… tremble tremble leaf, big head batchac, edge teeth fruit, falling down road, kitty corner tree…" (233). Although the narrative does not make this connection explicit, Elizete's pregnancy could be the result of rape. She is raped by at least two men and does not report either because she fears immigration will deport her. Pregnancy in this narrative, then, becomes not the symbol of hope for a new society or bright future but rather an indictment of a system that permits women the suffering of women like Elizete. Mullins reads this as the failure of the system to recognize Elizete's human rights:

> Without the papers that would designate her a landed immigrant, Elizete is legible to the Canadian state not as a victim of labor exploitation and vicious rape but rather as a perpetuator of crime: the crime of living in a nation that has not granted her permission to live there. Security of life, freedom from discrimination, and fair compensation for labor are not recognized as human rights in Elizete's case. (1105)

The status of being illegal and pregnant are linked for Elizete: "Pregnant and illegal. One thing followed the other. Trying to be legal you became pregnant and even more illegal. One way or the other, a woman was always pregnant. Drink castor oil, eat green guava, sit over a hot pot of water, mustard plaster… One way or the other, full of something" (233). Pregnancy becomes a complicated metaphor here for how women contain their

own experiences (are "pregnant" with their stories), how women are read by others as "always pregnant," for how these pregnancies are forbidden by the state, and for the ways women try to abort their pregnancies.

Revolution Without Mothers

Brand's work represents a break with the national romances common during an era of decolonization and independence movements in the Anglophone Caribbean. These novels can be situated in the historical context of post-WWII national liberation struggles that marked the end of the British empire. The end of direct colonialism, however, did not signal the end of imperial control, as evidenced by the rise of American power and the spread of a neoliberal logics of economic and military globalization. For literary study, this has meant a shift from the binary logic of colonizer/colonized, metropole/colony to a consideration of how diffuse modes of power impact communities in a world structured by the interconnectedness of multinational capital. We can see this clearly in Brand's novel, that takes as its moment of crisis the American invasion of Grenada but also clearly details how the Anglophone Caribbean functions as a source of exploited labor for, not the U.S., but Canada. Mullins reads this transnational impact thus:

> *In Another Place, Not Here* is a geopolitical novel that aligns desire and affect with political struggle against racism, imperialism, and patriarchy while mapping both love and politics onto the physical geography of the Americas. Between the novel's two primary coordinates, Grenada and Toronto, stretches the United

> States, whose political and economic interests cast a long shadow upon both. (1100)

The nation, in other words, is dramatically impacted by the direct actions of other nations. While this consideration of transnationalism might seem to describe the state of affairs of all nation-states since the conception of that political entity, the scope and scale of these multiple national forces on particular national communities is historically unprecedented. This involvement, however, is not to declare the death of the nation-state, as Shalini Puri argues:

> Transnationalism is devoted to studying aspects of human experience and societies that cannot be contained within the boundaries of a nation-state. As a lens of analysis, it includes in its purview transnational nationalisms, transnational antinationalisms, and strategic internationalisms. In contrast, post-nationalism, which I reject, declares the nation effectively dead as a political and analytic category. (6)

Elizete and Verlia's desire and their movement back and forth from the Caribbean to Canada represents both what Puri terms "transnational antinationalisms" and "strategic internationalisms." Rejecting national forms of heterosexual romance as a means to represent the struggle against neoimperial power, Brand's novel offers a critique of the patriarchal nation while at the same time positing a new way to narrate resistance to colonial power.

In addition to the transnational interventions of the U.S. and Canada, the novel details the type of "strategic internationalisms" that can counter these neoimperial forces.

The very impetus, after all, for Verlia to go to Grenada comes from her involvement with an international cell aligned with the Black Power movement. Fighting for rights both at home and abroad, the movement, like neoliberal imperialisms, is global in scale. Verlia's movement from an unnamed island in the Caribbean to Canada to Grenada, and then Elizete's repetition of that journey in reverse map out the transnational scope of the novel. Verlia's fight to help organize the caneworkers in Grenada and her participation in the armed resistance to the U.S. invasion detail the consequences of neocolonialism, just as Elizete's suffering in Toronto highlights the exploitation of labor and uneven power dynamics of the commonwealth relationships.

Brand employs desire between two women to represent these transnational concerns because women loving each other can escape the metaphorical configuration that associates women with the land or women as the "mothers of the nation." The love Elizete and Verlia share is transformative. It allows Elizete to escape the confines of her life as a caneworker and the force of it finally allows Verlia to acknowledge her love for women in a more public way. Unlike in heterosexual romance, however, there are no male "saviors" or marriages. The ending is not unequivocally optimistic, but the novel does advocate for change by articulating some of the goals shared by Third World feminism. According to Trinh T. Minh-ha, the future of liberation struggles depends on women:

> The pitting of anti-racist and anti-sexist struggles against one another allows some vocal fighters to dismiss blatantly the existence of either racism or sexism within their lines of action, as if oppression only comes in separate, monolithic forms.

> Thus, to understand how pervasively dominance operates via the concept of hegemony or of absent totality in plurality is to understand that the work of decolonization will have to continue within the women's movements. (104)

Brand's novel, uniting as it does a critique of patriarchy and a critique of the forces of neocolonialism, eloquently makes the case for women's full participation in revolutionary activity. Brand shifts the narration of communities from the inherited logic of a patriarchal nation-state that relies on a heterosexual formulation of national "mothers" and "fathers." Instead, the romance between two women allows for a consideration of the vulnerability of national communities that are subject to neoliberal North American imperialism while at the same time according a subjecthood and autonomy to the black female characters. Verlia and Elizete find pleasure in each other, and their desire remains free of the reproductive demands found in other novels of revolution that position the heterosexual couple as the metaphorical site of nation building. Their lovemaking calls the female body into being, presenting its physicality in sharp relief. In this novel, the female gaze focalizing the female body provides new formal possibilities for the representation of communities at a time when the nation-state assumes a new type of political reality vis-à-vis the power of multinational capitalism. While it is clear that Brand's novel continues a literary tradition of narrating revolution, *In Another Place, Not Here* joins the ranks of other novels by women in the Caribbean that redefine the nation. As Kathleen Renk argues, these authors reimagine a "political community without temporal or cartographic barriers" and redefine nationhood in such a way as to make connections between women across racial, ethnic, and national

boundaries in an attempt to create a new concept of nation-family (144). Understanding the romance between Verlia and Elizete in terms of kinship demonstrates the power of reading the personal as political and offers a new model for national allegory in a transnational context.

Notes

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[1] Kathleen Renk also reads *The Dragon Can't Dance* as national allegory: Aldrick is an essentialized male warrior who represents a liberated Trinidad and Sylvia is the "whore-slave girl" whom Aldrick needs to save. Renk explains how this national allegory is gendered in the novel: "Sylvia is an emblem of the nation that is about to be penetrated by the conqueror and the ascendant 'free' male subject" (6). Both characters represent the nation, but Aldrick functions as the dominant figure.

[2] The use of romance tropes also exceeds the form of the novel, as Meehan points out in the case of James's 1936 play *Toussaint L'Ouverture* (292). In other forms that advocate for revolutionary change, such as Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and Edward Brathwaite's *Contradictory Omens: Cultural Diversity and Integration in the Caribbean*, romance is also used polemically to argue for change. Fanon dedicates two chapters of *Black Skin, White Masks* to the psychology of interracial relationships, locating black men's desire for white women as a desire for legitimacy and black women's desire for white men as a wish to "whiten" the race (what Fanon terms "lactification") and win "admittance into the white world," effectively turning their backs on their own communities. In *Contradictory Omens*, Braithwaite suggests the struggle for a Creole identity involves choosing between two mothers: "But we are really involved with two mothers... and from time to time the influence of Africa, acting upon her particular centres in the creole context, creates another shifting of values (Garvey, Malcom, Black Power) in the same way that the Euro-American step-mother continues to create effects upon the total creole society through power, patronage and the offerings of 'modernity' and 'progress'"(6). In this line of thinking, Braithwaite's term "involved" must imply some sexual sense of the word, for if these two figures are mothers, there must be fathers and the resulting societies their children.

[3] Edmondson cites George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* and Aimé Cesaire as examples of rewriting of *The Tempest* that figures the white woman's body in this way. Many other novelists also use white women's bodies as the site of resistance to colonial power, V.S. Naipaul chief among them. See his novels *Guerrillas* or *A Bend in the River* as examples of his use of this trope in his oeuvre.

[4] I am grateful to Laura Selph for her observation that although the fictionalized events of the American invasion figure the unnamed island as Grenada, the place names correspond to Brand's native Trinidad. In this way, the island functions as a palimpsest of national space and creates a setting inflected with transnational markers of place.

[5] See Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley's forthcoming work *Thiefing Sugar: Reading Erotic Geographies of Caribbean Women Who Love Women* (Duke UP, 2009) for a discussion of the problem of naming desire between women in the Caribbean. See also Audre Lorde's autobiography *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, in which she claims the term "zami" (from Carriacou) to describe her identity, rather than lesbian or dyke.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: THE ROMANCE IN RUINS

> Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole.
> —Derek Walcott, *The Antilles: Fragments of an Epic Memory*

Antoinette, tumbling from a manor rooftop. Cathy, buried in her wedding gown. Isabel, gunned down in front of her brothel. Verlia, leaping from a cliff. These novels leave the romance in ruins, refusing the reader the pleasure of a happy ending. Traces of romance nonetheless circulate through these novels: the representations of love, sex, and desire are the driving force, and the accompanying narrative strategies persist, sometimes taking new forms, sometimes repeating old ones. The traditional heterosexual couple is replaced with other family dyads: a mother and son, or two brothers, or two women who mourn the loss of the same lover. Biological children are replaced with discursive pregnancies. The writers I examine in this project ultimately refuse the happy endings of traditional romance because the kinship structures expressed in those romances are incapable of supporting the weight of the type of societies they want to represent. The questioning of kinship, and the decoupling of woman-nation, make it impossible to adopt the romance formula that has been a legacy of both colonial and patriarchal discourse. If the recirculation of romance is most acute during what Jameson terms "times of trouble," then the shifting boundaries of the nation and nation-state in an era of global capitalism

place a certain transnational pressure on the re-presentation of romance by Caribbean women writers.

The insistence that the nation is not dependent on the nation-state as a sovereign entity complicates the representation of national romance in the Caribbean. As we have seen, romance formulas have dictated a certain sexual politics for its heroines that depended not only on gender and class but also on racial identity. Black women became figures that defined what a "lady" was not, and so were written out of romance except as sexual objects. In national discourse, women were required to assume certain gender roles in the national romance, becoming the wives and mothers of a nation. The writers I examine in this project take up the task of disordering these sexual and national politics. The absence of happy endings indicates that a new social order depends first on the recognition of the failures of the old order. To "reorder" the romance, to provide happy endings, would risk a too easy closure to the problems of national and familial affiliation for women in the Caribbean. The vestiges of romance in these texts gesture towards new conceptualizations of a social order: Antoinette and Sandi's love affair indicates a desire for the destruction of racial divisions in emergent postcolonial nations, the incestuous love affair between Cathy II and Razyé II pleads for a more accepting national community in Guadeloupe, one that recognizes family histories and honors African ancestry, the reunion of Luis and Roberto suggests the hope for a more harmonious national family, and Elizete and Abena find comfort in each other in the space of a Caribbean diaspora. Although these endings do not satisfy the generic requirements of

romance, they nonetheless carry an allegorical charge that continues the tradition of narrating society through the love affair.

A continuation of the study of romance in Caribbean literature could consider texts that present themselves as romances, such as Valerie Belgrave's romance novel *Ti-Marie*, touted as a "Caribbean *Gone with the Wind*." Building from Doris Sommer's work on the national romances of Latin America, we could uncover connections between popular Caribbean romance novels, national romances of the region, and colonial romances. Like the novels I examine in this project, popular romance novels like *Ti-Marie* seek to reject established racialized formulas of romance by creating black heroines who can access the symbolic register of romance. Although these texts can run the risk of mimicking previous ideological assumptions, including those of heteropatriarchy, they nonetheless engage in a tradition of resistance to certain types of power, especially in the interrogation of colonial fears of miscegenation. Positioning black heroines as successful actors in romances thus engages in a history of representation of black women often informed by slavery. Black women were written out of the romance to deny them access to marriage and thus to inheritance of property and wealth for themselves and their children. Rewriting this script is one means for women to write back to power.

Additionally, further study of romance in the Caribbean could consider the romanticization of the region and the representation of tourism as a discourse of global capitalism. Texts like Oonya Kempadoo's *Tide Running*, Angie Cruz's *Soledad*, Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, and Mayra Montero's *La última noche que pasé contigo* [*The*

Last Night I Spent with You] write back to hegemonic discourses of tourism. Kamala Kempadoo explains in *Sexing the Caribbean* that the region is constructed internationally as a "playground for the richer areas of the world to explore their fantasies of the exotic" while the "labor, sexuality, and bodies of Caribbean women and men constitute primary resources that local governments and the global tourism industry exploit and commodify, to cater to, among other things, tourist desires and needs" (139). Texts like *Tide Running* and *Soledad* imagine the consequences of these desires for Caribbean men and women and expose the falsely constructed assumptions of the tourism industry by positing resistant subjects who have their own desires that global discourses of tourism refuse to recognize. Tourism discourse represents the Caribbean as both an object of desire that can be consumed by the global north and as the location of romance itself, a configuration conflated in the sex tourism industry, especially in relation to male sex work, where services are often couched in terms of romance when marketed to women from North America and Europe. Both *Tide Running* and *La última noche que pasé contigo* cut through this veil of romance, revealing the economic and social implications of these desires. Responding to the transnational force of tourism, these novels continue earlier projects of national resistance to colonial power by investigating the symbolic possibilities of romance when it is articulated in opposition to the neocolonial romance of the sexualized "Other."

A consideration of love stories and the representation of desire in novels by Caribbean women reveals the extent to which national and transnational political structures rely on the categories of gender and sexuality to articulate the boundaries of

communities. Combining tenets of postcolonial and feminist literary theory, I have argued that the rewriting of the romance has been a central preoccupation in Caribbean literature by women. The increased attention to an expression of sexual identity in literary texts indicates an engagement not only with personal politics but also national and transnational questions of social formation. Narrating desire remains charged with an allegorical force that challenges political formulations of colonialism and nationalism that have often subjugated women. Presenting new forms of kinship, and leaving the romance in ruins, allows for the space to question these formulations and suggest new ones.

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