ATLANTIC MOMENTS: MOTHER/CHILD RELATIONS AND HEMISPHERIC MIGRATION IN LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY NARRATIVES BY NEW WORLD WOMEN WRITERS

By

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ABSTRACT

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My dissertation investigates and examines representations of mothers and mothering in contemporary writings by New World women writers. The New World is a "contact zone" (citing Mary Louise Pratt); the social forces that feed into the perception of what motherhood is—or *should* be—and how it is practiced is heavily influenced by the dynamics of power in colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial contexts (Pratt *IE* 25). This project develops analyses of mother/child relations in African-American and Caribbean women's writings in order to highlight cultural connections between African diaspora communities of the Anglophone Caribbean and the North American mainland. My project investigates how New World women writers explore mother-child relationships that serve as a site of resistance to Eurocentric conventions of motherhood in late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century writings by such authors as Paule Marshall, Michelle Cliff, Julia Alvarez, and Dionne Brand. I argue in favor of a hemispheric subjectivity that challenges constructions of the metropolitan center and the colonial periphery through narratives of modern migration in lieu of cultural "exile" that is first and foremost enacted within family units and can create conflict in larger kinship networks.

I identify prevailing tropes within the scope postcolonial and feminist literary theory in order to better contextualize the cross-fertilization between Caribbean and African-American women's writings rather than codifying a strict set of theoretical parameters. Caribbean women's writings can be examined and investigated as postcolonial writings in the Americas rather than in a transatlantic postcolonial framework. By combining contemporary African-American women's

writings and Caribbean women's narratives, this hemispheric approach allows for these literatures to be included within the wider scope of "global/world" literature.

Using the shared history of colonialism and plantation slavery in each region, my dissertation is grounded in the concept that the motherhood and mothering is a key practice that allows women to form collectives that resist oppressive forces that subordinate them in a social context. The representations of the mother/child relationship in these literatures address—either implicitly or explicitly—the transition from a postcolonial consciousness to an expansive consciousness of globalization. With this transition in mind, I examine how these women writers use the tropes of motherhood and mothering in order to make sense of how this transition is contextualized historically and socially. I expand on Patricia Hill Collins' assertion that "ongoing tensions characterize efforts to mold the institution of Black motherhood to benefit intersecting oppressions of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation and efforts by African-American women to define and value . . . experiences with motherhood" (Collins 195) I explore how the added aspect of hemispheric migration between these two regions accentuate the significance of the intersection of race, gender, and class. Novels by Marshall, Cliff, Alvarez, and Brand envision and unpack this relationship in a variety of ways in order to highlight how motherhood and mothering singularly social practices rather than biological imperatives.

For my sister, Lisa Casper; *there are not enough words*.

"And it's hard to dance with the Devil on your back. Given half a chance would I take any of it back (?) It's a fine romance but it's left me so undone. It's always darkest before the dawn." ~ Florence + the Machine

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CHAPTER 1

> **What is the Caribbean in fact? A multiple series of relationships. We all feel it, we express it in all kinds of hidden or twisted ways, or we fiercely deny it. But we sense that this sea exists within us with its weight of now revealed islands. The Caribbean Sea is not an American lake, it is the estuary of the Americas. (Glissant *Caribbean Discourse* 139)**

1.1: Project Overview: Critical Perspectives

This dissertation examines how New World women writers envision motherhood, mothering, and mothers in a hemispheric migrant context. The narratives examined in the following chapters are arranged chronologically from the late 1960's to the early years of the twenty-first century in order to highlight the legitimacy of Glissant's above quote. The hemispheric natures of the migration(s) in these narratives challenge the heretofore transatlantic lens through which New World postcolonial literatures are commonly classified. . I argue that these literatures display the transition from literatures of postcolonialism/ neocolonialism to literatures of "globalization."

Speaking specifically of the political and cultural decolonization in the Caribbean in the 1960s that occurred concurrently with the Civil Rights movement in the United States, I claim that the hemispheric nature of these writers and their works reflect upon what J. Michael Dash has described as a zonal identity.[1] The underlying philosophy of a New World zonal identity

[1] Dash contextualizes his concept of a zonal identity through his analysis of Jacques Stephen Alexis' interpretation of the writings of Alejo Carpentier: "[A] zonal confluence of cultures is not peculiar to Central and Latin America, all the nations of Western Europe seem to have embarked on a process of interpenetration of diverse . . . cultures and in all the major regions of the globe, you notice the same phenomenon . . . One must wonder . . . if we are not witnessing in

incorporates a "globalized cultural interpretation" of contemporary literature that views culture as an ongoing process that cannot be reversed or recycled (Dash 95). The notion of a continuum of culture directly relates to the effect the transition from postcolonialism to globalization has on the institution of motherhood. The dual focus on the specificity of the New World in particular and an expanding (and hard to define) global consciousness presents a unique challenge for this project; how to balance the specific and the abstract. Furthermore, the same can be said for my focus on the institution of motherhood and the practice of mothering; at once both are specific and abstract and include inherent claims of universality. I respond this intellectual pull of universality by examining the relationship between the colonial enterprises—socially and culturally—and contemporary manifestations of globalization. Reading contemporary novels by New World women writers in a way that highlights the similarities in the effects the cultural and social effects of globalization and the social and cultural is not unprecedented. Indeed, contemporary scholars of globalization make a point to formulate their theories of globalization around the foundational theories of postcolonial theory such as cultural and racial hybridity, and, particularly, how gender is conceived and practiced in a postcolonial and global context.[2] I take liberties with my theoretical readings of these novels in this way, but my reason for doing so is simple: while the theoretical analysis of postcolonial literature and culture have been well documented in regards to the social construction of gender and gender roles in particular are lacking. My project seeks to counter this absence and add another element to the current conversations of how postcolonial literatures are transitioning away from a colonial/postcolonial consciousness to a more abstract (perhaps more inclusive) consciousness of globalization.

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today's world the beginning of the creation of zonal cultures which, at a higher level, would dominate national cultures" (95).

[2] See Dussel, Trouillot, Dirlik, and Young "Ethnicity of Otherness."

I have chosen to examine this transition through the literary representation(s) of mothers, motherhood, and mothering because of the inclusive and accessible nature of relationship itself. Put more simply, the commonality of the relationship offers great opportunity to incorporate the abstract and political nature of the social changes of the postcolonial/global transition as an always already ongoing process. Furthermore, the mother/child relationship is equally unique despite its commonality and thus is a constant source of inspiration to New World women writers to use as the site of their larger social critiques.

The literary interpretations by New World women writers at the end of the twentieth century use the mother/child relationship in order to contextualize this tradition, and in so doing, challenge the patriarchal (colonial) control of the institution of motherhood by developing postcolonial and global traditions of mothering. These mothering practices are the basis through with New World women writers create and foster a collective identity outside of the purview of patriarchy and colonial control.

My reasons for examining mothers, mothering, and motherhood in these novels t are varied. My readings question and challenge the "institution" of motherhood which has been fictionally presented as a sacrosanct and static social practice. The practice of mothering has, at times, been discussed (implicitly or explicitly) as a transcultural universal. How could something as commonplace as motherhood be a critical site of investigation? How can the political, cultural, and social upheavals of the twentieth century produce narratives that allow for the cultural specificity of both the Caribbean and the North American mainland? A postcolonial/global perspective allows for a cross/transcultural literary analysis of motherhood and mothering because women's role of mothering can be observed in every nation, every family, everywhere. To begin unpacking these questions it is important to examine how the colonial history of the

New World continues to be relevant to these writers and how contemporary New World women writers are seeking to subvert the remaining social structures from the colonial era. These women writers not only display the social shortcomings of decolonization, but also offer up ambiguous alternatives to conceptualizing motherhood and mothering in an increasingly globalized world. The literary representations these women writers offer address both the anxieties and the aspirations of this transition. Just as the mothering practices explored herein are defined as a series of contrasting emotions of love and ambivalence, so too the social nature of the postcolonial/global consciousness transition is explored through often contrasting fears and aspirations.

The critical distinctions between motherhood (as a social institution), mothering (the practice(s) of caring for children), and mothers (the women who practice mothering) need to be critically distinguished and investigated in order to highlight the significance of mother/child fictions by these women writers. The writers who will be discussed in the following chapters use the separation between the social institution of motherhood and the practice of mothering in order to foster a sense of collective identification between women in the New World. Mothers are not exclusively defined by their biological/blood relation to the children in their care. Mothering is, first and foremost, a social function; as such in order for this function to be performed it is necessary for collective action to influence mothers and, at times, challenge the structures that shape and affect its practice. This collectivity that is formed within the practice of mothering allows for non-traditional (read: non-Eurocentric) mothers to emerge. In other words, the new and continually evolving representations of mothers and mothering practices display active resistance patriarchal control of the institution. This collective identification and collective resistance through mothering against social structures and institutions that marginalize women

and mothers is indelibly linked with the notion of a New World zonal identity.[3] The analysis of New World motherhood/mothering/mothers in contemporary women's fictions is a suitable framework in which to discuss the effects of globalization on hemispheric zonal identities and identification. In this sense, Glissant's opening quote to this project—that the Americas are always already contextualized in relation to the social and historical conditions of the Caribbean—makes the corresponding analyses of the motherhood/ mothering/ mothers in this project extremely relevant.

This project breaks down, roughly, into two halves. The texts and writers I have chosen for this study range from established authors of the Caribbean canon such as Paule Marshall and Michelle Cliff to marginalized or lesser-known contemporary writers like Julia Alvarez and Dionne Brand. In the first two chapters I explore how both Marshall and Cliff use the historical transition between a consciousness of decolonization and to a global consciousness to a global consciousness. This historical transition is the reason why the texts and writers discussed in the following chapters are organized chronologically. Furthermore, by making a rough separation into two halves also serves the function of distinguishing between the women writers of the New World literary canon and the emerging influence of lesser-known women writers whose writings are no less prolific than their predecessors. Marshall and Cliff's narratives are considered established and prolific texts within the scope of New World women's fictions. Alvarez and

[3] Spivak notes that collectivity and collective action is predicated through the culture where the collective resides; indeed, collective action is first displayed in *Death of a Discipline* within the scope of a family analogy. "In order to assume culture we must assume collectivity . . . [T]he collectivity that is presumed to be the condition and effect of humanism is the human family itself . . . [C]ollectives are undeterminable; decisions are always taken too soon and in the dark; including women as women would lead to unpredictable consequences" (27). Spivak's connection between culture, "family" (even abstractly and metaphorically), and the slippery slope these factors have when defining women's place in social structures is directly related to the arguments made in this project.

Brand are emerging voices of the uncertainties of the globalized era. The historical scope of the texts discussed displays how the collective identification between women writers (as women writers) of the New World is a progressive evolution in the conceptualizing of motherhood and mothering. The further distanced these writers are from Caribbean/New World colonial decolonization, the more creative and ambiguous their interpretations of the mother/child relationship are conceived. For example, Marshall and Cliff's texts examine modern manifestations of mothering that date back to mothering practices that were first developed in the New World in response to the oppressions instituted during slavery. The past continues to effect and influence the present for these writers and their respective narratives harkens back to the historical and social trauma of the colonial past in may creative and complex ways.

Alvarez and Brand's texts are more specific in regards to the actual relations between a mother and her child(ren); with these intimate investigations about the emotional impact the relationship entails is also always already contextualized through the colonial historical past. But rather than the past intruding on the present, these women writers use the past in order to envision the future changes of female collectivity brought about with the increasing uncertainties of globalization. The first two chapters investigate the culturally specific ways motherhood (the institution) and mothering (the practice) is conceived by writers of the New World/postcolonial canon: Paule Marshall and Michelle Cliff. In addition to being considered two of the most influential in the postcolonial era, but bother authors' works examine how the transition from colonial to postcolonial to global consciousness effects the construction and development of both motherhood as an institution and culturally specific mothering practices. Marshall and Cliff critically investigate the significance of race in both the colonial past and the postcolonial present as contributing factors of how mothering is practiced; the anxieties of the continuation of

colonial racist consciousnesses and identification methods are omnipresent within the mother/child relationship. Marshall and Cliff examine how these forms of mothering and motherhood affect the mother and her children. Both writers examine how hemispheric migration(s) influence the delicate nature of this intimate relationship and also highlights the cultural anxieties that have resulted from the transition from postcolonial to global consciousnesses.

The last two chapters of my project examine novels by two marginal, yet influential, New World women writers. Julia Alvarez, because she herself is a migrant from the Hispanic Caribbean, is only tangentially included in studies of Caribbean women writers. Indeed, much of the criticism and theory that examines hemispheric literature by New World women writers is almost exclusively focused on the cultural commonalities and common history between African-America and the Caribbean. Even though the 2000 novel *In the Name of Salomé* can technically be described as historical fiction, the portrait of the postcolonial consciousness of Alvarez's characters exhibit contemporary anxieties of globalization rather than colonial resistance. Dionne Brand's migration to Canada, rather than the United States, challenges the cultural strength of the United States in the context of hemispheric migration. Decolonization in the mid-twentieth century shifted the cultural influence over the Caribbean from the former colonial powers in Europe to the United States. Brand's hemispheric migration to Canada 1) supports the claim of a zonal identity through the process of migration and 2) challenges the cultural hegemonic power of the United States in the Western Hemisphere.Julia Alvarez and Dionne Brand are presented, chronologically at least, as writers who continue the tradition of using the metaphorical possibilities of the mother/child relationship as a means to examine and critique contemporary anxieties of globalization.

Despite attempts to marginalizing these writers within the field, I include them here because of their marginalized status. This connection is relevant to this project because it expands heretofore gaps existent in contemporary critical analyses of New World women's writings. The texts by Alvarez and Brand that I have chosen also present mothering and mothers in a similar light; the narratives investigate the mother/child relationship but in non-traditional fashions. Alvarez's 2006 novel *In the Name of Salomé* charts the relationship of a mother and daughter who, in the scope of the novel, never meet. Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon* is a multigenerational novel; the intricate family tree at the beginning of the text stem from a single source. I argue that the figure of the "mother of a multitude" offers a singular foundation in an ever-changing global world. Just as the characters span the range from colonial period to postcolonial period, the only unchanging aspect in their individual quests for self-definition is this common link between all of them.

1.2: The Global Postcolonial

The title of this dissertation, "Atlantic Moments: Mother-Child Relations and Hemispheric Migration in Late-Twentieth-Century Novels by New World Women Writers" comes from Michel-Rolf Trouillot's essay "Globalization: Then and Now." The term *globalization* has only been in academic circulation since the 1970s,[4] yet the formulating elements of globalization can be traced back to the spread of colonization.[5] History has shown us

[4] "In synthetic form, the cultural globalization thesis goes as follows: economic and technological transformation since the 1970s have led to an unprescedented flow of capital, goods, ideas, and people across state and continental borders. These flows, in turn, have contributed to the demise of institutions of power, notable the state. Our times are thus marked by the incapacity of state-built or state-sponsored boundaries (borders, citizenship, ethnicity) to regiment populations and affect cultural practices and identities. In short, the world is fast turning into a single cultural unit" (Trouillot 4).

[5] "The world became global five centuries ago. The rise of the West, the conquest of the Americas, New World slavery, and the Industrial Revolution can be summarized as . . . *an*

the debilitating effects of Atlantic colonization and the transatlantic slave trade has been linked to contemporary formations of family structures in the Caribbean and in the North American mainland. As such, it is imperative to conceive contemporary globalization as zonal as well because Atlantic globalization is the test-case for the expansion of what some critics call a "global culture."

A zonal New World identity, in Trouillot's essay, is the key to unpacking the ambiguous nature of cultural globalization. This essay claims that the colonial endeavor in the New World is the first historical example of mass globalization. In short, contemporary globalization can be viewed as the modern inheritor of colonialism: "Narratives of globalization say something about the history of the world, but they often assume naively as their premises the state of affairs of the Wall Street Journal. If globalization is about world history, scholars of globalization need to ask: which world? whose history?" (Trouillot 7).

If global culture is borne in the Atlantic and hemispheric migration between the Caribbean and the North American mainland is the first expression of large-scale regional identity formation, then it stands to reason that how the migration process effects family units will also be endemic of the changes to come in the twenty-first century.

> Because the Caribbean consciousness was broken up by sterile barriers, the writer must be able to give expression to all those occasions when these barriers were partially broken. Because the Caribbean notion of time was fixed in the void of an imposed nonhistory, the writer must contribute

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Atlantic moment, culminating in U.S. hegemony after World War II. Europe became Europe in part through severing itself from what lay south of the Mediterranean, but also in part through a westward move that made *the Atlantic the center of the first truly global empires* . . . This Atlantic moment of globality entailed at the onset massive flows of money, capital, goods, ideas, motifs, and people not only across states but across continents" (Trouillot 8-9, my emphasis)

> to reconstituting its tormented chronology; that is, to reveal the creative energy of dialectic reestablished between nature and culture in the Caribbean. As far as we are concerned, history is a consciousness at work and history as lived experience are therefore not the business of historians exclusively . . .The implosion of Caribbean history (of the converging histories of our peoples) relieves us of the linear, hierarchical vision of a single History that would run its unique course. It is not History that has roared around the edge of the Caribbean, but actually a question of the subterranean convergence of our histories. The depths are not only the abyss of neurosis but primarily the site of multiple converging paths. (Glissant *Discourse* 65-6)

Glissant's quote directly above, as well as his quote that opens this chapter, frame my link between discussions of social and cultural practices as well as these particular writers' representations in their narratives of their respective cultures. Furthermore, Glissant's implosive rather than explosive reflects how my investigation of globalization can be made using the New World as an example. If the personal is political, then it stands to reason that the local can also be viewed as global in this context.[6] Using this essay as my starting point I pose the questions: how does the transition between colonial/postcolonial consciousness to a global consciousness effect motherhood, mothering, and mothers? How does this transition alter the way New World women writers view mothering as a means of subversion to the various forms patriarchal control in a contemporary global context?

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[6] "But the 'us' keeps changing, and the 'them' is open-ended, for this is also a sense that what we say about "them" says something about 'us.' To that extent, the Atlantic moment of globality was handled, at least by some of the most prominent European thinkers, as a truly, global—that is, open if not open-ended—phenomenon" (Trouillot 10).

The New World was (and in many ways still is) the first experiment of global expansion. The transition from "discovery" to colonization to decolonization to postcolonialism is commonly regarded as a cultural and socio-economic progression throughout the centuries. Critical discussions of globalization—take liberties with the boundaries of its usage and its meaning. Commonly, the terms denote a historical frame of reference (from the early 1970s to the present), as well as a frame of mind. According to Trouillot, the predicating factors that form this frame of mind are similar in practice and motivation as the colonial enterprise. The transition from viewing motherhood as a Western colonial construction to viewing mothering as a means to which social change can be accomplished through collective identification and action involves the same kind of critical lens. This is achieved because (as Bhabha rightly points out) the history of the New World is what predicates the formation of a collectivity through a zonal identity.[7] Antonio Benítez-Rojo describes the Caribbean island chain as a "geographical" accident, and in the context of synthesizing postcolonialism and globalization, this accident of geography also feeds into the accident of its colonial history.[8] Nothing, in fact, was

[7] "The language of culture and community is poised on the fissures of the present becoming the rhetorical figures of the national past. Historians transfixed on the event of origins of . . . never ask, and political theorists possessed of the 'modern' totalities of the nation—'homogeneity, literacy and anonymity are the key traits—never pose, the essential question of the representation of the nation as a temporal process . . . To write the story of the [New World] demands that we articulate that archaic ambivalence that informs the *time* of modernity. We may begin by questioning that progressive metaphor of modern social cohesion—*the many as one*—shared by organic theories of the holism of culture and community, and by theorists who treat gender, class or race as social totalities that are expressive of unitary collective experiences" (Bhabha 203-4).

[8] "Let's be realistic: the Atlantic is the Atlantic (with all its port cities) because it was once engendered by the copulation of Europe—that insatiable solar bull—with the Caribbean archipelago; the Atlantic is today the Atlantic (the navel of capitalism) because Europe, in its mercantilist laboratory, conceived the project of inseminating the *Caribbean womb* with the *blood of Africa*; the Atlantic is today the Atlantic . . . because it was the painfully delivered child of the Caribbean, whose vagina . . . stretched between continental clamps . . . all *Europe pulling on the forceps* to help the birth of the Altantic" (5, my emphasis).

discovered—the trade route to India proved false—yet the economic and cultural ramifications were astronomical. This "discovery" made possible the idea that categorization and classification within the New World is always already latent; there can be no New World without an Old, there can be no cultural or racial hybridity unless there is a corresponding "pure" model to draw from, and so on (Dash 22). This accidental discovery eventually led to the construction of the colonial binary separation between colonizers and colonized, between black and white, between Old World and New. New World colonialism was predicated on a complex system of social boundaries in order to categorize and organize how identity was formulated. In addition to this, European colonizers also viewed the New World as inherently "natural"; a tabula rasa absent of culture that was available for domination in the name of "civilization" (Dash 29).[9] These boundaries were meant to clearly define and distinguish who was considered European (White) and who was not, but the reality of colonialism proved that these boundaries were permeable and fluid.[10]

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[9] "Columbus thought he had sailed to India, and hence the island he discovered became the "West Indies," their inhabitants, Indians. Regardless of his later understanding of his mistake, the misnomers remained and fixed the Caribbean in discourse as a permanent mistake. The place did not concretely exist—indeed, *could not* exist—on its own terms: literally as well as figuratively. The West Indies, as the region was (and is still) called, was "somewhere else": not Europe, not Africa, not India. This 'somewhere elseness' has become a central trope of West Indian discourse, with its attendant notion that the *space* of the West Indies is more metaphorical than it is material, and indeed, what exactly constitutes the West Indies—the Caribbean, as many prefer to call it—has always been hazy" (Edmondson 20).

[10] From *Colonial Desire*: "Racial theory cannot be separated from its own historical moment: it was developed at a particular era of British and European colonial expansion in the nineteenth century which ended in the Western occupation of nine-tenths of the surface territory of the globe. There is an obvious connection between racial theories of white superiority and the justification for that expansion . . . 'The same but different' was the trope of humanist universalism, of humankind as a universal egalitarian category made up of individuals, and in fact, despite today's customary gestures of derision, we still hang on to this humanist, universalizing equation: the whole ethic of sexual and racial equality rests upon it: difference which must be acknowledged, but also sameness which must be conceded. . . . This was

Colonial expansion in the New World played a significant role in the formation of the institution of motherhood; as the European powers transported their culture to the New World, the corresponding social structures of these cultures were instituted in the New World.[11] This occurred on two separate levels that were, not surprisingly separated by race and class in the colonial period. Colonial women—European women living in the colonies—were marginalized to periphery of social power; they possessed "borrowed" social status and power by the very nature of their Whiteness and their identity as European colonial women.[12] Colonized women—Native Amerindians and transplanted African slave women—were forced into a binary social structure that pitted their identities as mothers against the unattainable ideal of their colonial female counterparts. It is not sufficient to examine how New World colonialism reproduced the social hierarchies of European culture in regards to the institution of motherhood, but how the corresponding social structures of colonialism such as race and socio-economic class

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doubtless in part the product of economic self-interest: no one bothered too much about the differences between the races until it was in the West's economic advantage to profit from slavery. . . The deliberately popular appeal of racial theory enabled it to develop strongly at a cultural level" (Young 91-2).

[11] "Whether the prevalent trope is savage wilderness or pristine innocence, the New World is overwhelmingly the realm of the natural. To even the most benign commentators, there is no culture or civilization worthy of mention. Europe, on the other hand, is the domain of culture even if that culture is seen as decadent or repressive . . . Also, since the realm of nature within which the New World is inscribed is itself the product of representation, constituted in terms of Old World narrative, the natural will become a significant and problematic terrain within the counterdiscursive practice will be situated" (Dash 28-9).

[12] "[W]hite women were not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting . . . [I]mperialism cannot be fully understood without a theory of gender power. Gender power was not the superficial patina of empire, an ephemeral gloss over the more decisive mechanics of class or race. Rather, gender dynamics were, from the outset, fundamental; to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise" (McClintock 6-7).

designations were incorporated into the fabric of these institutions.[13] While these colonial institutions will be referenced, this project is concerned with their contemporary manifestations. A century after the end of slavery and a generation after the successes of decolonization in the New World, women writers continue to grapple with the lasting effects of colonial hierarchal structures. These structures did not disappear with the death of imperialism in the New World; instead, contemporary globalization alters how colonial forms of patriarchy, racism, and classism are manifested.

The power of the binary separation between the sexes, between the races etc. was equally unstable. The binary separation between Black and White did not just seek to separate the races, but also to distinguish between what is "civilized" and what is not; for this reason the promotion of European forms of patriarchal family structure (nuclear families) and kinship networks (patrilineality/patrifocality) were contrasted with the various forms of kinship structures of the colonized. These Manichean binary structures are common in postcolonial theory, their effect on how family units and kinship networks remained on the margin of current postcolonial analyses. Furthermore, what also goes largely unstated is the continued promotion force of European forms of family structures and the pathologizing of alternate modes of family formation.
The definition of what is considered a normalized/mainstream family unit directly translates to outside control of how motherhood and mothers identify themselves. These definitions are ever changing because mothers themselves are not in control of how the institution is defined and structured. One reason to justify the fluid nature of this evolution could be because, as I shall explain in the following chapters, women (as mothers) engage in constant and subversive

[13] "Just as the white male rules at home, so he also lords it abroad. The orthodox hierarchy of gender is confirmed and reaffirmed at the level of race, which then in turn feminizes males and females alike in the black and yellow races. All hierarchies, together with their cultural values, can, it seems, be assimilated, so long as the white male remains at the top" (Young 111).

resistance to this social control. This resistance is relevant to the corresponding investigation about the literary representation of New World postcolonial identity because of the shared legacy of how the Manichean binary separation of the races directly impacted not only the definition of motherhood (as an institution) but also New World mothering practices. For the moment it is sufficient to claim that just as the lasting effects of the racial separations are continuing in social and civic life in the New World, so too are the lasting effects of how this separation distinguishes perceptions of motherhood and mothers. In the globalized present, these boundaries still exist, but the fluid nature of their practice is multiplied exponentially. It is important to note that social definitions and structuring of women's role as mothers developed along the same social lines and at the same pace as the development of racialization and racial separation in the New World. Also, these evolving definitions are undeniably linked with the shifting economic interests over during the transition from colonial to postcolonial to global eras.

1.3: Mothers, Motherhood, Mothering

Historically, motherhood as an institution has been held aloft in political and social contexts to promote the marginalization of women. This is true both during the colonial and postcolonial periods. The control over how motherhood, mothering, family units and kinship structures are heavily predicated upon the political, cultural, and social contexts of their time. The traditions of mothering that were fostered in the New World as a result of colonization did not disappear with the end of the plantation economies, nor were they ended with the advent of decolonization in the middle of the twentieth century. The colonial era defined motherhood in Eurocentric patriarchal terms; colonialism incorporated racists and sexist social structures that continue to this day in various modern manifestations. The question that contemporary New World women writers pose in their fictions are: how has the institution changed after decolonization?

Viewing mothers solely in terms of their blood-relationship to the children in their care does not properly take into account the social motives that define motherhood in such terms. Nancy Chodorow begins her seminal psychoanalytic analysis of motherhood and mothering with the simple phrase "Women mother" (3); immediately the separation between biological reproduction and social motherhood is established. Chodorow's study, while abstract at times, makes the claim that motherhood—and, at times, mothering—is not a universal condition, part of a complex social structure that all women, explicitly or implicitly, exist within. My dissertation will be examining only a sampling of aspects of this system—traditions of motherhood and mothering and how the institution of motherhood effects the day-to-day relations performed within this structure. Ultimately, my project seeks to unpack how these women writers present elements of this complex system within the larger scope of the transition in the New World from postcolonialism to globalization. With this in mind, distinguishing between seemingly similar analytical lenses is necessary. Once the biological and social aspects of motherhood and mothering are made (though not necessarily essentialized) New World mother/child relations become easier to unpack and understand in the context of hemispheric migration.

One of the reasons for this is the lasting impact of colonialism; pseudo-scientific studies were used as justification to separate the races, and, likewise, biological conceptions of motherhood and mothers separate the subjects themselves from the nature of their mothering practices. An example of this during the colonial era would be the social conflation of race with civilization and, by extension, civility (Young *Colonial Desire* 93). My analysis of the texts in this project relies on the gendered social functions of motherhood and mothering rather than contextualizing motherhood within biological parameters because this definition is framed within the separation between "public" and "private" separation between the genders. Instead, by

conceiving of motherhood and mothering as always already a social practice, I also dispel the notion that there is even a social separation between the public and private. In short, the private sphere of the family is as public as the political realm outside the family unit. In order to unpack how these distinctions are made and boundaries imposed and broken in the novels that I examine, it is analytically necessary to first establish working definitions of key terms that will be used in the following chapters.

The distinction between motherhood and the practice of mothering is equally important in a cultural analysis of mother-child relationships. Mother*ING* is defined as the female-centered experiences of women who are charged with the care and rearing of children, whether the woman performing these tasks is a biological mother to her own biological children or not. Mother*HOOD* is a term used to describe the patriarchal institution of mothers; this patriarchal control is how the traditional ideal of the nuclear family that is headed by a male was formulated and cemented into the colonial consciousness (and postcolonial consciousness, by association) (O'Rielly *Mothers and Dughters* 7).[14] This distinction is imperative because it denotes the social role that mothers play in the wider community; if a woman is considered a mother based on her actions then it speaks to a wider social understanding of the importance of children in the survival of the community as a whole. This social tenet is what allowed for collectivity between women *as mothers* to actively resist outside control over their own self-definition. On the other hand, if Eurocentric patriarchal structures define motherhood in purely biological parameters,

[14] I consider this patriarchal institution as colonial in nature because of the rhetorical connection between a metaphorical family and the process of colonization in the New World. From *Imperial Leather*: "The merging of tree and family into the family Tree of Man provided scientific racism with a *gendered* image for popularizing and disseminating the idea of *racial* progress. There is a problem here, however, for the Family Tree represents evolutionary time as *a time without women*. The family image is an image of disavowal, for it contains only men . . . From the outset, the idea of racial progress was gendered but in such a way as to render women invisible as historical agents" (38, original emphasis).

then it is easier for patriarchy to influence the way mothers interact with their children. This collective identity is also established through the very literary exposure of this control: "There is also an expectation of privacy in the patriarchal family . . . What happens in the nuclear patriarchal family *stays there*, excluding even the extended family from knowledge of what is occurring" (O'Rielly 33). The novels I have chosen all display the creative and subversive possibilities of how mothering practices can often seek to resist the institution of motherhood. Because this project focuses on how the practice of mothering challenges the institution of motherhood within New World female narratives, it is equally important to examine the historical contexts of how these definitions are specific to the New World Chodorow's study remains informative and insightful, but is flawed in regards to the scope of its analysis. Her text that examines the institution of motherhood is grounded within the frame of a heteronormative nuclear family: the traditional ideal that was normalized and promoted throughout the nineteenth century.[15] The reliance on this normative model of family units and kinship structures is that it does not take into account larger social factors that may/may not prohibit this ideal from being attained. For example, Chodorow's study makes the early connection between the rises of industrialization in the West with the normalization of the nuclear family, but does not address how rapid capitalist expansion in Europe coincided with the rapid expansion of colonialism the world over. Therefore the patriarchal definitions of the institution of motherhood and is directly linked with the wider political context of the time. The nineteenth century, specifically regarding

[15] "The Western family has been largely 'nuclear' for centuries, in that households rarely contained more than one married couple with children . . . Capitalist industrialization removed grown children, grandparents, and nonfamily members from the household and sharply curtailed men's participation in family life . . . The household with children has become an exclusively parent and child realm; infant and child care has become the exclusive domain of biological mothers, who are increasingly isolated from other kin, with fewer social contacts and little routine assistance during their parenting time" (Chodorow 5).

British colonial expansion, was the height of colonial endeavors the world over. Again, this strengthens the binary separation between conceptions of how mothers are perceived within the context of motherhood: this normalized ideal does not allow for deviations. In this sense non bloodmothers and mothers who practice mothering in a multi-generational extended family kinship networks are considered deviant and pathological.

Chodorow's text, despite its claims to the contrary,[16] remains static in nature. The nuclear family is presented and examined as an entity that is almost entirely displaced from the cultural, social, and political influences. While cultural differences and disparities are conceded at the beginning of the text, they are not examined or expanded upon and, thus, are left to be classified as pathological. The nuclear family is a capitalist ideal; the need intra-familial support for the rearing of children (economically and socially) is not a predicating factor in Chodorow's reading of mother/child relations. In addition, the racial implications—regarding the connection between nuclear family normalization and the spread of colonialism—are ignored.[17] The

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[16] Chodorow attempts to ward off this criticism of her text and states that it would be impossible to claim any kind of universal conception of motherhood or mothering: "Women's mothering is not an unchanging transcultural universal. Although women, and not men, have primary responsibility for children, child care and child-rearing practices, and the relations between women's child care and other responsibilities change in response particularly to changes in the organization of production. Women's role as we know it is an historical product. The development of industrial capitalism in the West entailed that women's role in the family become increasingly concerned with personal relations and psychological stability" (32). On this surface this statement would concede cultural specificity, but this is the only mention of cultural differences in the entire text; her step-by-step study of mother-child relations remains grounded in a nuclear family context that is European in nature.

[17] "This dialectic of oppression and activism, the tension between the suppression of African-American women's ideas and out intellectual activism in the face of that suppression, constitutes the politics of U.S. Black feminist thought. More important, understanding this dialectical relationship is critical in assessing how U.S. Black feminist thought—its core themes, epistemological significance, and women as a group upon close examination appear greatly limited by the White middle-class, and Western origins of their proponents . . . Suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because

pathologizing of racialized/Black families in the New World has a long and sordid history beginning with the destruction of kinship structures through the transatlantic slave trade and continuing through the centuries to the Moynihan report in the mid-twentieth century makes the marginalization of race as a significant factor in the study of family structures and the institution of motherhood a major concern of my project.

Chodorow's text is emblematic of the time it was written—the 1970s—and also highlights one of the key disparities that continues in the field of motherhood research: the connection between motherhood and socio-economic class. What goes unsaid in this study is the linkage between how institutionalized racism in the New World has been woven into the socio-economic disparity between the races. Many Black feminists a generation writing after Chodorow allude to the social separations within the feminist movement; specifically White women who viewed mothering as an inhibitor to their own identities and lives, and Black women who commonly view mothering as a space where they have total agency. This disparity within the feminist community frames the texts I discuss and also permeates my approach to the study of literary mothering and motherhood in the New World in the nascent stages of globalization. Globalization in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries effects the institution of motherhood and the practices of mothering in the same way that rapid industrialization and colonial expansion normalized the conception of motherhood in the nineteenth century. What remains to be seen is to what extent Eurocentric/Western patriarchal control over these definitions will survive as globalization continues to effect hemispheric migrant literature in the New World.

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the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization . . . Maintaining the invisibility of Black women and our ideas not only in the United States, but in Africa, the Caribbean, South America, Europe, and other places where Black women now live, has been critical in maintaining social inequalities" (Collins 3-4).

The disjunction between studies of motherhood, ,mothering mother literary studies continues to exist. . Critics such as Chodorow and more contemporary "mainstream" (read "White") who focus their attention on motherhood and mothering downplay the significant role the conjunction between race and socio-economic class. The reasons for this are varied; many contemporary critics of motherhood and mothering[18] make claims, like Chodorow, of the cultural variables that preclude any kind of universal construction or conception of motherhood and mothering studies. These claims are, in reality, brief acknowledgements. In practice many of these works take their cues from Chodorow's methodology that does, indeed, discuss motherhood and mothering in universals.These studies contrast starkly against corresponding contemporary analyses by Black feminists such as bell hooks, Carole Boyce Davies, and Patricia Hill Collins. Neither camp seeks to essentialize the significance of race in and of itself.[19] Instead, Black feminist critics insist on focusing on the always already direct connection between institutionalized racism in the New World and how racism permeates the economic disparity between the races. Their collective insistence that race and socio-economic class are two significant—if not two of the most important—factors that influence the day-to-day mothering practices and shape how motherhood is defined culturally and socially. This internal debate in the field of mother-studies is essential in the study of contemporary migration and mothering in

[18] See DiQuinzio, Hewitt, Hirsch, Johnson, Lawler, McManhon, Rich and O'Rielly.

[19] "There is no essential or archetypal Black woman whose experiences stand as normal, normative, and thereby authentic. An essentialist understanding of a Black woman's standpoint suppresses differences among Black women in search of an elusive group unity. Instead, it may be more accurate to say that a Black women's collective standpoint does exist, one characterized by the tensions that accrue to different responses to common challenges. Because it both recognizes and aims to incorporate heterogeneity in crafting Black *women's* oppositional knowledge, this Black women's standpoint eschews essentialism in favor of democracy. Since Black feminist thought both arises within and aims to articulate Black *women's* group standpoint regarding experiences associated with intersecting oppressions, stressing this groups standpoint's heterogeneous composition is significant" (Collins 28, original emphasis).

literature because it is the patriarchal dictates of motherhood that influence how women and mothers perceive their place within the hierarchy of this institution in these texts. The writers examined in the following chapters recognize the disjunction between the ideals of patriarchal motherhood and the reality of New World mothering practices.

Because, as Chodorow rightly points out, women mother, there is an immediate assumption that motherhood is experienced by all women in the same way, and that mothering practices—though varied at times—are manifested in relatively the same manner. In this context motherhood and mothering establishes a collective identity for all women and mothers that, in essence, is false.[20] It is my assertion that motherhood (as an institution) in a global context is not as rigidly subject to the patriarchal hegemonic patterns of the past. The conception of race and the significance of race are breaking free of their colonial essentializations that delineate and highlight the significance of the differences between "mainstream" ("White") feminism and radical Black feminist theory. Put another way; mainstream feminism is beginning to concede more and more the differences between social mothering practices that exist between White and racialized social contexts and radical Black feminism makes concessions to the significance of socio-economic class effecting low-class White mothers.[21] Mothering practices are becoming

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[20] "A central tenet of modern feminist thought has been the assertion that 'all women are oppressed.' This assertion implies that women share a common lot, that factors like class, race, religion, sexual preference, etc. do not create a diversity of experience that determines the extent to which sexism will be an oppressive force in the lives of individual women. Sexism as a system of domination is institutionalized, but it has never determined in an absolute way the fate of all women in this society. Being oppressed means the *absence of choice*. It is the primary point of contact between the oppressed and the oppressor" (hooks *Feminist Theory* 5).

[21] "While it is evident that many women suffer from sexist tyranny, there is little indication that this forges a 'common bond among all women.' There is much evidence substantiating the reality that race and class identity creates differences in quality of life, social status, and lifestyle that take precedence over the common experience women share—differences that are rarely transcended" (hooks *Feminist Theory* 4).

more fluid; migration allows for mothers to experience (either by necessity or by choice) alternate forms of mothering that enhance their ability to resist the patriarchal institution of motherhood. The racial disparity between Black feminism and mainstream feminist analyses of motherhood and mothering play an essential role in how this resistance is manifested.

This project focuses more on *the implications* of how motherhood and mothering resist patriarchy as such, but how mothers are represented in literature that criticizes the social status quo. This criticism is first and foremost evident with the promotion and formation of female collective identification specifically grounded within the context of mothering practices and actively seeking to alter patriarchal definitions of the institution of motherhood. Put another way, I use my readings of the current debates in the academy concerning globalization and the internal debates in the sub-field of mother-studies in Black feminist studies to shape my argument about how hemispheric migration effects the institution of motherhood and determines how mothering practices are formed and fostered in the New World. My readings of the novels themselves highlight the institution of motherhood in the New World has been used as both a method of marginalization for women, and a site of their collective empowerment. In addition, the mother-child relationship in the literary works below is revealed as always already a mode of resistance against social and cultural oppression on the part of the mother and (also, sometimes) the child.

Within each social structure there is an imposed system of domination and subordination; individuals and groups of people act accordingly to these socially prescribed roles.[22] The family unit is thus a social unit and is the primary place where these power relations are enacted and

[22] See *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* by James C. Scott (1991).

reinforced.[23] Within the family a child learns of the wider social formations of domination and subordination and how gender influences (and is influenced by) these structures (*Domination* 12n19).[24] Traditionally, analyses of mother-child relationships have focused on the experiences of either the mother **or** the child.[25] It is rare that the relationship is examined in its wider social function or the ramifications of this relationship in the wider world. Likewise, studies tend to focus on either the mother or the child in the scope of this relationship rather than their interactions within the context of their relations.[26] In this sense the mother-child relations must first be understood in terms of family units and kinship structures in order to highlight the wider social meaning of the relationship. Joan Scott claims that gender is constructed through kinship (though not exclusively) and stresses the significance of the *interdependency* between gender and the power dynamics gender differentiation creates in society. The analysis of gender and power in a social setting are the focus here, yet it must be stated there continues to exist an explicit connection between kinship structures and gender identity.

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[23] An example of this would be Gayle Rubin's essay "The Traffic in Women," which focuses exclusively on the construction of gender and kinship systems without specifically positing either of these concepts within the framework of the family. Kinship is thus spoken of in rather abstract and reductive terms.

[24] Scott's wider argument claims that even subordinated people and/or groups of people, without ever knowing any other kind of social structure, still recognize their subordination and, more specifically, the injustice of it.

[25] A more extensive analysis of this assertion will be made in Chapter 3, where the notion of mother-daughter social symbiosis is challenged using Julia Alvarez's novel *In the Name of Salomé*. For the time being it should be sufficient to assert that there remains the assumption that narratives of the mother-child relationship are commonly told from the point of view of the child and rarely the mother. See Hirsch's *The Mother-Daughter Plot*.

[26] "As the private sphere was isolated from the public under industrialized capitalism and as women became identified with and enclosed within the private sphere, motherhood elevated middle-class and upper-class women into a position of increased personal status, if decreased social power. In a largely technological and impersonal public world, motherhood . . . became the force of conservation of traditional values. The focus of this ideology of the maternal, however, was not the *mother* but the *child"* (Hirsch 14, original emphasis).

The feminist doctrine "the personal is political" has been used to the extent that it has become an axiom; at the same time, it is this very belief that justifies the relevance of this project. My investigations into the personal/inter-personal relationships between mother and child in the last two chapters can only be understood after the traditions of motherhood in these narratives have been established. It is not for me to say whether or not the personal is political but it is my assertion that these narratives embed very obvious political critiques of the postcolonial condition and project fears of the spread of globalization.

During the colonial period social structures were predicated on the boundaries institutionalized by the dominating colonial power: the separate "spheres" between men and women were extensions of this boundary system. Though the "private" sphere of the home/family was considered the realm of women and ancillary to the public sphere dominated by White male public interests, this distinction and the corresponding value attached to each sphere remains in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the New World. Globalization and migration are chipping away at the separation between the spheres, but the primary way this disparity is being challenged is through the collective action of women as women and mothers. This promotion of collective action and identification through mothering also breaks down the barriers between the races and the classes. Unlike hooks' assertion above about the lack of transcendence between the classes and the races, it is my contention that the increase of hemispheric migration and the rapid expansion of globalization as a dominant economic force in the twenty-first century is attempting this transcendence within the scope of motherhood and mothering in the novels discussed below.

1.4: Gender and Collective Identity

Distinguishing between motherhood and mothering denotes the inherent political nature of both the institution and the practice; while *reproduction* is a natural occurrence, mother*hood* is definitely cultural and thus, must contain the politics of the culture where mothers work and live. In addition, critical analyses of motherhood and mothering have remained on the fringes of feminist and postcolonial studies. An investigation of how the mother/child relationship is navigated in contemporary New World women's literature is imperative in order to analyze how the increasing influence of globalization and global consciousness also works to entangle methods of inquiry regarding this relationship. Caroline Rody claims that women writers in the New World writing a generation after the end of the Age of Empire use their unique generational perspective to creatively re-imagine the history of the region. Rody, like Trouillot, agrees that contemporary globalization produces social dynamics on a cultural level that closely resemble the institutions that dominated much of the New World. She argues that, despite the cultural similarities between these two eras, literature in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century is the lens through which women writers are able to quickly forge collective identities through the creative promotion of a distinctly female experience.

The cultural cross-fertilization between the North American mainland and the Caribbean the creative feminist challenge of the colonial/global status quo in how motherhood is defined and mothering is practiced is evident in the works discussed below. My analysis of the gender dynamics follows along the lines of Joan Scott's conception of gender; in *Gender and Politics* she conceptualizes gender as a means through which the differences between the sexes and their relationships are understood (xi). Also, Scott—along with Conway and Bourque—state in the Introduction to *Learning about Gender* that, while gender boundaries are deliberately drawn to serve specific political, economic, and social functions, these boundaries—and their

corresponding functions—are not static.[27] Sally L. Kitch's *The Specter of Sex* makes the claim that gender and gender relations are the medium through which the cultural homogenization of postcolonial peoples and literatures are broken down and transformed into heterogeneous entities.[28] This can be true in the scope of colonial/postcolonial theory as well as used as a guide for colonial/postcolonial creative works. The development of definitions of gender and racial ideologies in the New World progressed into their current social structures at the same pace with each other and, furthermore, they progressed in direct relation to each other during the colonial era.[29] Anne McClintock discusses gender not as a sole ideological paradigm, but as a relational mode of analysis when discussing colonial and post-colonial history and literatures: what the central focus of post-colonial gender analysis ought to be "is not simply . . . relations between

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[27] "These boundaries are often moveable and negotiable. They operate not only in the material base of a culture but also in the imagined world of the creative artist. Norms of gender are not always explicitly stated; they are often implicitly conveyed through uses of language and other symbols. Just as gender-specific language influences the way things are thought or said, the archetypal narrative forms of the West that assume a male protagonist influences the way stories are told about women" (xxiii).

[28] "Race was defined through the criterion of civilization, with the cultivated white Western European male at the top, and everyone else on a hierarchical scale either in a chain of being, from mollusc to God, or, in the later model, on an evolutionary scale of development from a feminized state of childhood (savagery) up to full (European) manly adulthood. In other words, race was defined in terms of cultural, particularly gender, difference—carefully gradated and ranked. A racial hierarchy was established on the basis of a cultural pecking order, with those who had most civilization at the top, and those who were considered to have none—'primitives'—at the bottom. Civilization and culture were thus the names for the standard of measurement in the hierarchy of values through which European culture defined itself by placing itself at the top of a scale against which all other societies, or groups within society, were judged. The principle opposition, between civilization and barbarism or savagery, was nothing less than the ordering principle of civilization as such" (Young 94-5).

[29] "[D]eeply entrenched gender ideology was well established when various economic, political, scientific, and religious forces gradually and unevenly converged around the idea of race as a permanent, fixed, biological condition that determines human value. Gender provided organizing principles that fueled processes of racialization, including concepts of gender binarism and the 'natural' inferiority of women to men" (4).

black and white people, men and women, but about how the *categories* of blackness and whiteness, masculinity and femininity . . . came historically into being in the first place" (16, my emphasis).

The need to homogenize the colonial experience and the experience of the postcolonial aftermath does not make appropriate accommodations for the particularities and cultural differences contained in global postcolonial contexts. Considerations regarding social elements—racial, economic, regional, political, etc.—must be added to these analyses in order to examine how collectivity is established through motherhood and mothering in the New World. Ultimately this marginalization highlights the paradoxical position of gender analyses that must be addressed in postcolonial creative works and that theories of globalization also struggle to resolve. The balance is precarious at best; migration studies in general—and hemispheric migrant studies in particular—is concerned primarily with the opposing, yet equal forces that comprise contemporary theories of globalization.[30] The opposing, yet equal, forces of domination and resistance in the colonial era is what allowed for the binary structural separation between the wealthy and the poor, the Black and the White, and women who bore children and women who raised children. Postcolonial theory and literature in the era after the end of Empire in the New World offered the alternative to the Manichean binary analyses of postcolonial literature that sought out the permeations of either/or constructions of culture. The marginalization of this complexity is where notions of "in-betweenness" and the Third Space open themselves up to the construction of alternatives to their theories of colonial and postcolonial thought.

[30] "[S]tructual push-factors like (relative) poverty, political instability and social disintegration in the country of origin in combination with pull-factors like labour shortage and good economic conditions in the country of destiny, lead to migration movements from under-developed to highly industrialized societies" (Lutz 95).

> Private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social develop an interstitial intimacy. It is an intimacy that questions binary divisions through which such spheres of social experience are often spatially opposed. These spheres of life are linked through an 'in-between' temporality that takes the measure of dwelling at home, while producing an image of the world of history. (Bhabha 19)

Bhabha does not acknowledge the complications this creates when analyzing the social significance the separation of the genders and the cultural function of motherhood as an institution. What is significant about Bhabha's statement above is that, while he downplays the significance of gender in this in-between anti-colonial framework of reading is that he simultaneously promotes the homespace as a viable site for critical enquiry. I will be exploring the *complexity* of this balance in the context of motherhood, mothering, and how gender is an essential component of kinship systems both in the colonial period and in its lasting impact in postcolonial literature by New World women. In this sense an anti-essentialist approach to any one factor within the intersections of these multiple aspects of identity is the best possible approach.[31] In other words, my approach to the texts in the following chapters is to resist any kind of over-valuing of a particular element of identification. In this sense Bhabha's advocacy for a hybridized form of postcolonial identity does not, cannot, address the complexity of the

[31] "[A]n antiessentialist approach defines . . . identities as social *formations constituted or constructed through particular institutions, social relations, and histories that serve to establish available options for identity*. Social identities are not pregiven pieces of matter but rather the results of history and power. *They are constituted through the power of conquest and discrimination, for example, and through the workings of various institutions, including . . . religion, systems of justice, as well as through practices such as child rearing and work.* They require a context . . . of terms within which they make sense, and they vary over time and cultural distance so that what is available as a possible identity at one time in history or in one culture is not always possible at another time or in another culture" (Warnke 96-7, my emphasis).

motherhood/mothering debate discussed in the previous section. Furthermore, this complexity is only made accessible once the confluence of socio-economic, racial and gender oppression are revealed to be indelible elements of the global era. The overlapping and inter-weaving of these two aspects of identity are displayed in full force in the narratives that will be examined in this dissertation. For example; the mothers examined in this project will not be examined as racialized mothers per se, but that their racial identity will be examined as part and parcel to their socio-economic position, their migrant status, and their manner of mothering all together.

Motherhood and mothering are ideal contexts in which to plot the transition between colonialism, postcolonialism, and theories of globalization because throughout the centuries the practices have been varied, yet some of the core foundations of this ideal have become standardized to the point where they have become self-evident. The traditionally ideal family unit is comprised of a man and woman joined in some officially recognized (legal, religious) union. The heteronormative dynamic of this union ensures (in theory) that the children of this union are (socially, legally) legitimate. The practice of this ideal yields a social structure where women have been relegated to the margins of critical inquiry and are not, and have never been, given the same kind of critical attendance as their male counterparts.[32] What goes unacknowledged is the myriad of ways that mothering is practiced outside of the institution of motherhood, and, likewise, how mothers themselves try to break free of the institution that seeks to define how mothering practice is/should be performed. Patriarchal male figures reside in a more highly regarded position of authority in the context of family units and kinship structures by the very nature of the larger institutional patriarchal social structures to which all family members are subject. The narratives examined in this dissertation all struggle with these

[32] See Edmondson *Making Men* "Introduction"

questions and seek to include—explicitly or implicitly—how this marginalization of the significance of gender within a post-colonial framework is transforming within a wider globalized scope. The postcolonial structure of relationality between and among such factors of identification such as race, socio-economic class, migrant status and gender is the distinguishing factor of this transitional process.

Describing the writers in this project as "New World" side-steps some of the ancillary factors of classification[33] and instead synthesizes with the theories of postcolonialism of the mid and late twentieth century. This adds another level of collective identification between mothers and between geographic regions. My use of the term "New World"—as with my use of the term "gender"—is not meant to supplant such ambiguous phrases as "women of color." These designations are formulated by (Anglo) American critics who also use sweeping terms such as "Third World" to describe the experiences of particular groups of women.[34]

The "potential commonality" that Mohanty speaks of is difficult to imagine and also difficulty to apply when reading New World women's writings. On the one hand Mohanty's references to the Third World (a term now considered passé) are clearly a reference to the

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[33] "Geographically, the nation-states of Latin America, the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia, China, South Africa, and Oceania constitute the parameters of the non-European Third World. In addition, black, Latino, Asian, and indigenous peoples in the United States, Europe, and Australia, some of whom have historic links with the geographically defined Third World, also refer to themselves as Third World peoples. With such a broad canvas, racial, sexual, national, economic, and cultural borders are difficult to demarcate, shaped politically as they are in individual and collective practice" (Mohanty 47).

[34] "What seems to constitute 'women of color' or 'Third World women' as a viable oppositional alliance is a *common context of struggle* . . . [I]t is Third World women's oppositional political relation to sexist, racist, and imperialist structures that constitutes our potential commonality . . . Third World women's writings on feminism have consistently focused on the idea of the *simultaneity of oppressions as fundamental to the experience of social and political marginality and the grounding of feminist politics in the histories of racism and imperialism*" (Mohanty 49, 52, my emphasis).

postcolonial world of which the Caribbean can be counted both politically and culturally. On the other hand, the geographical and cultural proximity to the United State ("postcolonial" technically speaking, but not at all included in the umbrella term "Third World"). It is because of this quandary that I intentionally use the term *New World* rather liberally. I use New World as a cultural designation based entirely on the lasting impact of "discovery" and the legacy of colonialism in the New World. In this sense, the collective identity that Glissant claims is essential to a New World identity: "The question we need to ask . . . will not be for instance: 'Who am I?'—a question that from the outset is meaningless—but rather: 'Who are we?'" (Glissant *Discourse* 86).

My focus on the importance of a global lens through which to interpret the relationship between a mother and her child(ren) is also rooted in how global patterns of migration, the experience of migration offer opportunities where the intersecting oppressions of racism and sexism are compounded within these experiences and narrated in creative ways. This focus is part of Dash's definition of a zonal identity and historically a major component of the New World migrant experience because the establishment of a zonal identity allows for an organizational approach to analyze the complexities of a globalized consciousness. My goal is not simply to display how these intersecting oppressions are manifested in a social context from one region to the next through the process of migration. Rather, what I wish to argue is that 1) gender is an often overlooked element within the migration process and 2) the mother child relationship is the site where these intersecting oppressions are first challenged. These claims are the foundation of my analysis in the following chapters. Understanding and accepting these theories and acknowledging these internal debates makes it clear why the study of the literary representation of mothers, motherhood, and mothering in these texts is important. Not only does

the study incorporate how globalization is manifested in this literature, the effects of globalization permeate the interpersonal relationships of the homespace—the mother and her child(ren)—and renders them viable political subjects.

1.5: Patterns of Migrations From and Within the New World

The working description/definition of globalization for this project comes from the same Trouillot essay as the title:

> [T]he cultural globalization thesis goes as follows: economic and technological transformation since the 1970s have led to an unprecedented *flow* of capital, goods, ideas, and people across state and continental borders. These *flows*, in turn, have contributed to the demise of institutions of power, notably the state. Our times are thus marked by the incapacity of state-built or state-sponsored boundaries (borders, citizenship, and ethnicity) to regiment populations and affect cultural practices and identities. (4)

Trouillot's focus on the flow of capital and goods is integral to understanding the transition between a postcolonial to global consciousness. What remains unsaid—either intentionally or not—is how this expanding world economy is also transitioning from a good-based economy into a service-based economy. Beginning in the 1970's women's migration from the Caribbean to North America increased as the global economy expanded the middle and upper-classes in the United States and Canada. With wealth expanding in North America women's hemispheric

migration between the Caribbean and the United States increased because of the increase in demand for "domestic" labor.[35]

What is interesting about this definition of globalization is that the time-frame that Trouillot uses to formulate this definition is directly related to shifting patterns of migration away from and within the New World beginning in the mid-twentieth century.[36] Trouillot's article does not touch on how this shift in global markets has a direct correlation to shifting gender implications in transatlantic and hemispheric migration away from the Caribbean in the twentieth century. However, because his central argument balances a distinctly global perspective using the distinct and unique colonial and postcolonial cultural conditions in the New World, his essay is critical to my readings of women writers of this generation at the end of the twentieth century. Put more simply, Trouillot's arguments about the cultural anxieties inherent in the shift between postcolonialism and globalization are evident in a distinctly female context in the novels I will be analyzing.

Caribbean (im)migration in the twentieth century was almost negligible until the end of the Second World War. Europe needed to be rebuilt, and quickly. Colonials from every corner of the periphery were called "home" to the "mother country" where the promise of work was guaranteed and social acceptance was taken for granted because—as citizens of the empire—these colonials shared the same nationality as their cultural "brothers and sisters." While work

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[35] "Many social scientists have noted that the large influx of Caribbean women who have migrated to metropolitan centers such as New York since the 1970s have been attracted by the chance of employment in a range of domestic services, especially with the huge expansion of the service sector in the 1970s" (Edmondson *Making Men* 156).

[36] "It was precisely the movement of peoples, from the old world to the new, that vast . . . migration that forged our modern world of empires and nation-states. But ideas of allegiance and loyalties, of patrimony and patrilocality, of kith and kin, of commanding membership of protection, dues due and dues given die hard. Global and local migration destabilized the . . . social order" (Chamberlain 3).

was plentiful, cultural backlashes—rooted in traditions that combined nationalism with race—often erupted in violence and made life for these immigrants very difficult.[37] However, the important thing to remember is that, by and large, the majority of these migrants were unskilled laborers who collided with Europe's lower-classes in clashes involving housing, wages, etc. These clashes, for all of their nationalist rhetoric,[38] were included within the socio-cultural frameworks that foster and preserve a strong national identity. According to contemporary cultural critics of post WWII transatlantic Caribbean migration (i.e. Caryl Phillips and Paul Gilroy) the ensuing civil preoccupation in the "mother country" of conflating national/cultural pride with institutionalized racism. That the cultural strains were rooted in economic motivations resulted in the knowledge that colonial rhetoric promoting equality within the empire was a lie: "They felt that their wartime loyalty had been unacknowledged and that they were treated as an unwelcome problem rather than as valued citizens of the Empire coming to help the motherland" (Cohen 24).

The social and cultural changes occurring in the colonial center as a result of this immigration was not, by any means, *contained* within the colonial center. Immediately following WWII, the Caribbean was creating a new class of intellectual: *the scholarship boy*.[39] The

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[37] Regarding Caribbean migration to England immediately after WWII, see "The Pioneers" by Caryl Phillips in *New World Order* (2002).

[38] Enoch Powell, an extremely right-wing nationalist Politian, was elected to the British Parliament in 1950, immediately following the first migrantation "wave" from the Caribbean colonies and sponsored a series of laws limiting immigration from the colonies.

[39] I am not claiming that the post WWII years created economic and political conditions where the colonial periphery produced only intellectually inspired transatlantic migration away from the Caribbean. Indeed, many of these migrants were laborers; men literally imported from the colonies to Europe to repair and rebuild the damage of the War. Many of these (im)migrants were single men or men who left their families in the Caribbean and sent money back across the Atlantic in support.

scholarship boys, as such, were not (are not) a homogenous group. For example, both George Lamming and V.S. Naipaul were scholarship boys of the same era, yet their respective writings offer opposing views of the colonial relationship with the metropolitan center.[40] These writers, despite their opposing opinions of colonial consciousness, both described their experiences of transatlantic migration in terms of exile; a permanent condition away from the Caribbean.[41] Perhaps it is because of the nature of this exile that designates it as a permanent condition; the distance away from the Caribbean is much greater across the Atlantic than to North America, and the colonial condition also made the cultural transition between the two regions more diverse.[42]

By creatively imagining the transatlantic migration process from the colonial periphery to the metropolitan center, many colonial/postcolonial intellectuals and creative writers used their migrant process as a way to rethink and re-imagine the very nature of colonialism and imperial social structures. The flow of capital and goods between countries as globalization expands includes a flow of creative cultural from the center to the periphery (and from the periphery to

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[40] Lamming's *Pleasures of Exile* claims that the Caribbean is the site of the first instances of colonial resistance with the Haitian revolution. V.S. Naipaul, conversely, has been famously quoted in his text *The Middle Passage*: "History is built around achievement and creation; and *nothing was created in the West Indies*" (20, my emphasis).

[41] "'[E]xile' is a loaded term with certain gendered connotations in the Caribbean literary tradition. Exile writing in the Caribbean carries with it . . . feature[s] of alienation of the intellectuals from the 'homeland' . . . The narrative is articulated as a way to reconcile (or reintegrate) the intellectual to 'home.' . . .The English migration of 'scholarship boys'—West Indian men who went to England on scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge— . . . produced a very different relationship to home for the West Indian male migrant subject than did the largely economic, heavily female migration to the United States, which produced female writers" (Edmondson 12-3).

[42] While the experiences of the scholarship boys cannot be viewed as homogenous and similar simply because of their status as migrants, it is also important to mention that scholarship boys were not the only group of (im)migrants who journeyed to the colonial center after the end of WWII: many (im)migrants from the colonial periphery traveled to Europe as manual labor to rebuild and repair from the infrastructural damage caused by the war. For more on this experience see Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and *Moses Ascending* (1975).

the center) became one of the key ways that anti-colonial critiques were disseminated throughout the world. One of the primary ways colonialism was re-imagined by these intellectuals was the use of literature—distribution of colonial "writing back" to the Empire was a key component in the organization of the various decolonization movements in the colonial world in the mid-twentieth century.[43] A generation after the successful decolonization of much of the imperial world, colonial consciousnesses could no longer be sustained or justified using heretofore strictly separated binary structures. This is most true in the case of postcolonial New World writers and literature; transatlantic and hemispheric migration created an opportunity for colonials to witness the hypocrisy of a common imperial identity and revealed how colonialism was rooted in institutionalized racist, classist, and nativist ideology. One of the reasons for the re-thinking of, and challenge to, colonial binary structures was the act of transatlantic migration itself in these literatures. Because the colonial enterprise did not (politically, in theory) distinguish between citizens of the empire, many scholarship boys who left to study in Europe rarely returned to their native lands.[44]

These writers, changed forever by their transatlantic experience, used their unique position within the mother land to criticize colonialism from within. They became known as

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[43] One of the most common examples of this will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion where I unpack how Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was a key text in re-imagining the colonizer/colonized social dynamic. For the moment, though, it is enough to say that the blatant self-serving nature of colonial literature provided fertile ground for these intellectuals to state their anti-imperial arguments. Colonial literatures "rankled badly with Caribbean . . . intellectuals who . . . for the first time sensed the imminence of large-scale decolonization in their regions. In such circumstances, the insinuation that Caliban was incapable of surviving on his own and did not even aspire to such independence in the first place caused considerable affront and helped spur Third Worlders to mount adversarial interpretations of the play which rehabilitated Caliban into a heroic figure, inspired by noble rage to oust the interloping Prospero from his island" (Nixon 564)

[44] Exceptions, of course, exist. Aimé Césaire is one of the most famous examples. See *Notebook on a Return to My Native Land*.

exiles because their migration away from the New World was a permanent condition. Following this distinction between exile and migrant literature in an anti-colonial context it becomes apparent that colonial criticism of imperial practices can only be produced from within the center, not necessarily from the periphery.[45]

> There are scores of books on West Indian narrative which feature the term "exile" prominently, and one can scarcely find a text on Caribbean literature that does not refer to the canonical figures as "writing in exile." The exile referred to is conceived of a kind of double exile. On the one hand, there is the internal exile of the intellectual from society as an alienated or inauthentic West Indian subject . . . On the other, there is the exile of self-imposed physical displacement from the Caribbean from which the author can now "objectively" view his society and his relation to it. (Edmondson *Making Men* 140)

It is because of their writing from their colonial vantage point within the heart of the colonial center that the political and intellectual opposition to colonialism after WWII began. However, after the end of colonialism, the distinctions between "home" and "away" no longer carried with them the cemented assumption of permanence in the consciousnesses of former colonial subjects and writers. Likewise, the need for an objective investigation into the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer became less imperative after decolonization. It is only a generation, or two, after the end of colonialism when the anxieties of the increasing power of globalization

[45] There are debates within the field of postcolonial studies and postcolonial literary studies. Gikandi's *Maps of Englishness*, for example, states that anti-colonial sentiment flowed *back and forth* between the center and the periphery and that the differences between migrant and exilic writing were, indeed, not as strict or acutely differentiated.

are manifesting themselves that academic study of how the transition from a postcolonial consciousness to a global consciousness becomes imperative.

In the later years of the twentieth-century, a generation after the successful decolonization of the Caribbean, there was a shift in migration away from Europe and, instead, was directed toward the North American mainland. The rising cultural influence of the United States in an increasingly globalized world created opportunities that did not exist in Europe. At the same time, in the consciousness of newly independent former colonial Caribbean migrants, the United States carry the same kind of cultural capital as former "mother" countries.[46] In addition, The United States has its own distinct history of colonialism and a tradition of racial relations for which the countries of the metropolitan center had no comparison.[47] What is also significant about the second wave of Caribbean (hemispheric) migration to the North American mainland are the gender differences that distinguish it from the previous transatlantic wave of Caribbean migration. With this difference in mind, the separation between exile and migrant status takes on added meaning:

> [T]his emigration out of the Caribbean, particularly in the last twenty-five years, has been of a heavily female nature, owing particularly to the burgeoning market in domestic work. Many social scientists have noted that the large influx of Caribbean women who have migrated to

[46] "[T]he United States did not mean the same thing as England did in the West Indian imagination. With the authority of Cambridge and Oxford in the background, West Indian male writers, writing from England in self-imposed exile, gained a certain kind of literary authority by their particular negotiation of the space between home and exile" (Edmondson 13).

[47] "Whereas West Indians in London were constantly in the public eye as a social problem or threat to the English way of life, in New York they are, as black, largely invisible as immigrants in a white population. Large-scale immigration is nothing new to New York and there is a long tradition of ethnic diversity" (Foner 50).

> metropolitan centers such as New York since the 1970s have been attracted by the chance of employment in a range of domestic services, especially with the huge expansion of the service sector in the 1970s. . . . Accordingly, their negotiation of the West Indian literary subject is filtered through their relationship to North America and their status as American subjects. The critical nexus of Caribbean and American engenders a different notion of nation and readership from that implicit in the writings of the male authors. Specifically, the women writers do not construct themselves as writers in *exile* from the Caribbean; nor are they interpreted as such by literary critics. Their *immigrant* status in the United States immediately refigures their status as authorial subjects and the interpretation of the subject in their texts. (Edmondson 156-7)

The geographic location and the motive for migration are very significant to this study because it contextualizes and highlights the significance of the gender and migration. The woman writer who writes and publishes from the United States, who is able to engage in regular migration back and forth from the Caribbean does not possess the same kind of cultural capital through this experience as transatlantic (read: male, intellectual, exilic)[48] migration a generation earlier. While the wider academic and literary field frames New World's women's writings of hemispheric migration as such, the writings produced by women during this second wave of

[48]"'[E]xile' is a loaded term with certain gendered connotations in the Caribbean literary tradition. Exile writing in the Caribbean carries with it . . . feature[s] of alienation of the intellectuals from the 'homeland' . . . The narrative is articulated as a way to reconcile (or reintegrate) the intellectual to 'home.' . . .The English migration of 'scholarship boys'—West Indian men who went to England on scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge— . . . produced a very different relationship to home for the West Indian male migrant subject than did the largely economic, heavily female migration to the United States, which produced female writers" (Edmondson 12-3).

migration consciously focus on the "domestic" and "personal" aspects of this experience in order to challenge this devaluation.[49]

This study accepts the disparity between the "intellectual" labor of the mid-century transatlantic Caribbean writers-in-exile and their late century female counterparts; indeed the very fact of that this distinction is made at all denotes an ever-always underlying anxiety about the significant role that socio-economic class has in the context of postcolonial/global migration. Transatlantic exile by male Caribbean writers marks the first instance where Caribbean writers and colonials first experienced their "cultural schizophrenia"[50] that produces sense of cultural fragmentation. At the same time, a social consequence of this exile was a sense of nationalism that either was directed toward the mother country (in response to the decolonization movements of the 1950s and 1960s)[51] or directed toward the newly independent nations of the former

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[49] "[T]he United States did not mean the same thing as England did in the West Indian imagination. With the authority of Cambridge and Oxford in the background, West Indian male writers, writing from England in self-imposed exile, gained a certain kind of literary authority by their particular negotiation of the space between home and exile" (Edmondson 13).

[50] "I am well aware of a certain uneasiness among many other Caribbean writers and intellectuals as to my any foregrounding of fragmentation and exile in Caribbean discourse, but my assumption here is that any meaningful account of Caribbean literature cannot ignore the angst that has generated some of the most powerful texts on the colonial situation . . . Rather than denying the historicity of the Caribbean experience, a concern with displacement and exile becomes the first major attempt by Caribbean writers to engage the colonial condition on their own terms. Furthermore, as a historical condition and literaty code, exile is not a subjective quest by the Caribbean avant-garde to escape their fixed and fetishized places in colonial culture . . . Furthermore, there is a vital epistemological consequence to the condition of exile: it forces an earlier generation of Caribbean writers (especially those in the 1940s and 1950s) to an irreversible cognizance of their cultural schizophrenia; in turn, this awareness of division comes with what Walcott has aptly called 'a gradual sense of loss of innocence about history'" (Gikandi *Limbo* 25-6).

[51] Dussel notes that the decentralizing of Eurocentric models of global hegemony is one of the hallmarks of the new era of globalization: "[T]he exhaustion of a 'civilizing' system that has come to its end. The overcoming of cynical managerial reason (planetary administrative), of capitalism (as economic system), of liberalism (as political system), of Eurocentrism (as

colonial world. This ""[n]ational consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people . . . will be in any case and empty shell" (Fanon 148). The women writers in this dissertation fall outside of both paradigms and, because of this, their focus on the mother/child relationship does not frame their narratives in ahistorical or apolitical postcolonial context, but rather gives them their own space to advocate for attention within the field of postcolonial and feminist studies particular to the intimate effects of globalization.[52]

The very fact that hemispheric migration is predicated primarily through economic need downplays the significance of the exilic condition, and migrant identity is marked by much more local concerns and, for lack of a better phrase, more domestic ramifications of migration. Throughout the colonial era Western Europe situated itself as the cultural center of the world, in a modern global context the centralized power once contained in the consciousness of the former colonial world has since been dispersed to multiple sites of control. The United States, especially after the end of WWII emerged as a dominating world power both economically and culturally. The combination of this shift in migration coupled with the collective identity forged through mother/child relations, women writers challenge postcolonial and globalized oppressions that

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ideology) . . . of the reign of the white race (in racism), of the destruction of nature (in ecology), and so on presupposes the liberation of diverse types of the oppressed and/or excluded. It is in this sense that the ethics of liberation defines itself as transmodern" (19).

[52] This back and forth, for women, between the Caribbean and North America that creates their own New World female migrant experience along the same lines as Bhabha's Third Space. Take, for example, the opening pages of Carole Boyce Davies' analysis of Black women's writings in the New World at the end of the twentieth century: "My mother's journey's redefine space. Her *annual migrations*, between the Caribbean and the United States, are ones of *persistent re-membering and re-connection*. She lives in the Caribbean, she lives in the United States; *she lives in America*. She also lives . . . in the communities where her children, grandchildren, family and friends reside" (Davies *BWWI* 1, my emphasis). Through her mother's journey's not only is the zonal identity proclaimed and supported, but at the same time, there is a larger understanding that, because the mother had this experience, the child conceptualizes her place in the New (global) World first through the mother/child relationship.

inevitably have a trickle-down effect for the formation of identity for both mother and child in these fictions. The women writers examined in the following chapters create new political lines of inquiry for contemporary New World women's writings by focusing on the intersections of race and class, economic and family relations, historicity and globalization. These narratives display how these multiple aspects of the New World postcolonial/global experience are all at work together and engage in the vortex of the mother/child relationship and hemispheric migration.

1.6: Chapter Summary

The first chapter examines Paule Marshall's 1969 novel The *Chosen Place, The Timeless People* and the social function of Othermothers in postcolonial and globalized communities in the New World. I have chosen this novel out of the large body of Marshall's work for a variety of reasons. Marshall spent much of the 1960s writing and researching her second novel—a time very obviously politically significant for both the decolonization efforts in the colonial Caribbean and the efforts of political and economic rights within African America. I do not believe that Marshall intended her second novel to be viewed as reflective of the unique historical circumstances of when it was produced. Indeed, the narrative goes to great pains to look backwards in time rather than forwards; many times the twentieth century conditions on Bourne Island are compared to its long colonial past. At the same time, the main action of the plot of the novel—the setting, the characters' interactions with each other—reflect the shift from postcolonialism to globalization. This is most evident through Marshall's portrait of the hemispheric migrations of her characters between the fictional Bourne Island and the United States. Much of the novel is concerned with the cultural vacuum that occurs immediately after

decolonization as the powers-that-be that rules the fictional Bourne Island, through both legitimate and corrupted methods.

Marshall does not go to great lengths to make the accompanying display of the connection between race and socio-economic class on Bourne Island subtle: the rural agricultural workers are dark-skinned un/under-educated blacks while the city-dwellers range in skin tone and runs the gamut brown/colored/yellow/light that are the lasting effects of inter-racial relations common in the New World.[53] If the physical/visual effects of how race relations are encompassed through the lasting (colonial) plantation economy are blatant, then the emotional and internal effects of this connection are extremely ambiguous. This ambiguity that permeates Marshall's novel is evidenced by her connection between two seemingly contrasting characters: Merle Kinbona and Harriet Amron.

Critics of Marshall's novel have commonly viewed Merle and Harriet as oppositional characters or marginalized/ignored the importance of Harriet's character within the wider scope of the novel. Merle is obviously the protagonist and therefore the racial and economic class divide that are painfully obvious in the narrative marginalizes the critical focus due to Harriet. For the moment it is enough to state that the practice of Othermothering is a way in which these two women characters can be compared and analyzed on equal footing. A critical investigation into the social function of othermothering and the othermother allows for me to read their relationship with each other and their distinct relationship(s) with members of the wider community as separate sides of the same coin. Both women are the children of Othermothers, and thus their own Othermothering practices are presented as part and parcel to this unspoken continuum. Merle's Othermothering is displayed as a method through which she is consciously

[53] See Chapter 4, "Sex and Inequality: The Cultural Construction of Race" in Young's *Colonial Desire*.

trying to lift up the Bournehills community so that they will no longer be victims of the larger corruptive interests and forces of a quickly globalizing world economy (which Marshall does little to distinguish from colonialism).

Othermothering is a social (i.e.: non-biological) form of mothering practices that are informal in nature. This formality has been traditionally intentional because, I believe, othermothering is one of the primary ways that women in the New World are able to challenge patriarchal social standards for their conduct and social functions they serve in the community. Othermothering as a practice contains certain hallmark characteristics that allows it to be classified as separate and distinct from non-maternal forms of mothering. While it is common for othermothers to be members of a child's family—aunts, cousins, grandmothers etc—I have chosen to focus on Merle and Harriet and their experiences with othermothering because the biological links between othermothers and children do not, in my opinion, highlight how othermothers are a service to the community as a whole as a result of the intersecting oppressions of race and class. This form of non-biological motherhood is also communal; the community as a whole informally agrees to challenge outside definitions of motherhood (i.e.: colonial biological motherhood) and also ensuring the care-for and education of the community children. In this sense, the othermother is a servant/mother to the community as a whole because of the generational promise the children represent.

Chapter 2 is my reading of the function of matrifocality in Michelle Cliff's first two novels *Abeng* and its sequel *No Telephone to Heaven* . *Abeng* tells the story of a year in the life of the Savage family at the very beginning of the anti-colonial movement in Jamaica in the early 1960s. *No Telephone to Heaven* follows the experiences of Clare Savage as the family moves to the United States at the beginning of the Civil Rights era and charts her journey (emotional and

geographical) throughout the Atlantic world as she tries to come to an understanding of her racial and cultural identity. In the second novel these confusions are made more complex and more complicated through Clare's relationship with her mother, Kitty. I argue that matrifocality is an inherently colonial practice that was first formed within the New World and then disseminated throughout the entire colonial world. With this in mind, Cliff's presentation of matrifocality is multilayered; Clare is both a child-inheritor of the matrifocal tradition practiced by Kitty and Clare's grandmother Miss Mattie in *Abeng* and an uncertain matrifocal figure in *No Telephone*. In addition, Kitty's absence from Clare's life in the middle half of the novel also brings to the forefront of the narrative the traumatic power of this tradition and the sacrifices necessary for its continuation.

No Telephone also expands the scope of the tradition of matrifocality in the New World through Cliff's portrait of hemispheric migration. In this way, the cultural connection between North America and the Caribbean is investigated in critical ways within the framework of matrifocal traditions. I argue that New World matrifocality continues to exist as a cultural tradition in the twentieth century result of institutionalized racism that is supported by its corresponding economic oppression. Cliff's narrative shows that, despite the fact that the United States did not experience the same manner of decolonization as the Caribbean, American civic and cultural life closely resembles that of a former colonial power. Decolonization in the New World did not abolish the practice of matrifocality but rather is augmented within the globalized era; Cliff's novel offers an examination of how a colonial tradition must be reinvented if it is to survive the transition from postcolonialism to globalization. This chapter will focus on how matrifocality is predicated through socio-economic need and, thus, allows for a cultural

connection between African-American and the Caribbean and investigate how migration in this globalized era challenges heretofore conceptions of a "diaspora" identity.

Chapter 3 continues my investigation of the social traditions of motherhood and mothering, but from a different perspective than the previous two. My readings of Marshall and Cliff's novels examine how traditions of (the institution of) motherhood affect the relationship between a mother and child. Understanding the social and cultural relevance of these traditions is essential before examining how the practice of mothering can deviate from, or conforms to, cultural definitions of motherhood. Into this I offer a reading of the cultural practice of mother/daughter symbiosis. I have chosen Julia Alvarez's novel *In the Name of Salomé* because it deviates from many conventions of mother/daughter narrative fiction. These conventions will be discussed in detail in the chapter itself, but for the moment the two most significant elements of Alvarez's portrait of mother/daughter symbiosis are 1) both mother and daughter are given equal time and space in the scope of the novel so that neither the experience of motherhood or daughterhood is privileged, and 2) the mother and daughter do not *interact* with each other in the scope of the novel.

These two deviations alone set Alvarez's work apart from the others included in my project. In addition, Alvarez is the only non-Black, non-Anglo author I will be discussing. I have included this novel and Alvarez into the scope of my project because I will be testing the limits to the theories offered in Caroline Rody's *The Daughter's Return*. While Rody's work is rather narrow in scope, her insights leave room for me to expand her theories beyond the cultural, racial, and linguistic parameters. Furthermore, the convention of mother/daughter "historical fiction" (as Alvarez's novel can be classified) is perfectly suited to the Euro-centric literary tradition of the colonial era while simultaneously providing a space where the mother/daughter

symbiotic relationship deviates from the social expectations of mothering. Feminist critics of mother/child narratives such as Rody and Marianne Hirsch agree that these fictions promote the domestic/everyday experiences of motherhood and daughterhood as critical sites of inquiry. In addition to this, New World women writers of mother-daughter historical fictions appropriate a Eurocentric literary tradition (the family romance) in order resist its hegemonic pull and, also, to transform it by making clear the cultural connection between colonial and global eras.

> In an era obsessed with historicity, African-American and Caribbean women writers share a historiographic enterprise with a *distinctive political and psychological burden*: revising received narratives of their own peoples' *traumatic histories* . . . Writers of historical fiction always work, of course, in the consciousness of previously written histories; one inevitably writes "into" a "given" history, modifying or appending a historical map of the world felt to be inadequate. (Rody 5, my emphasis)

Rody's comparative analysis of these historical fictions is fascinating, but her work is limited in that, ultimately, the discussions of this literary tradition are framed within a particularized conception of how race and culture interact together and, in a sense, come to define each other.

My reading of Alvarez's novel takes Rody's observations about New World mother-daughter fictions to task by applying them to a novel that, technically speaking, does *not* belong to this tradition. Little has been discussed about to what extent "Latin-American" writings that simultaneously discuss subjects of colonialism and racial oppression as one of the primary elements of New World identity as a whole. On the one hand, reading a Hispanic-Caribbean novel contextualized by Rody's assertion would strengthen the argument calling for a cultural link between Caribbean and the mainland. However, the Hispanic Caribbean is culturally

distanced from Anglo North American culture and the African diasporic cultures in the Caribbean; for linguistic, religious, and other social reasons the Caribbean's inclusion into the "Latin" consciousness is tied more closely with the southern half of the New World. On the other hand, writers like Rody assume that the cultural connections encompassed within the scope of hemispheric migration from the Caribbean to North America can only be studied in terms that stress the importance of race. The common history of slavery in the two regions is contextualized through the lens of current race-relations in both the Caribbean and the United States and leaves no room for inclusion of Hispanic Caribbean writers who also interrogate race.[54]

I conclude this study with an abstract examination of the figure of the "mother of a multitude." I define the multitude as the wider colonial/postcolonial New World and the body of literature that is still being created with the zonal identity of colonialism's aftermath in mind. I discuss the continued relegation of the significance of the mother/child relationship in postcolonial studies and diaspora literatures with a literary examination of two fictional mothers who, in their respective texts, give birth to characters who then go on to (pro)create the New World. I will begin this discussion with a brief examination of how Sycorax—mother of Caliban—has been, and to a large extent still is, relegated to the periphery of postcolonial discussions of Shakespeare's original play. Moreover, the importance of Sycorax through her maternal relationship with Caliban remains almost entirely ignored in contemporary analyses of the many anti-colonial writings that appropriated *The Tempest* as one of the most powerful texts to Write Back to the Empire during the mid-twentieth century decolonization movements.

To this end my discussion of Dionne Brand's novel *At the Full and Change of the Moon* in order to highlight that the trope of the absent mother (beginning with Caliban) continues to

[54] See Marta Cruz-Janzen's "Latinegras" about contemporary resistance within Latin Studies' to suppress or deny the presence and significance of African-Latino/a culture in the Caribbean.

resonate in contemporary literature. This display is significant because it further supports Trouillot's argument that the current shift from a consciousness to globalization from a postcolonial consciousness. In addition, analyses of this text continue to marginalize the mother who, through her sacrifice, allows for her child to go on and birth and raise multiple generations of children who will create and shape the direction of the New World.

CHAPTER 2

> **But there was more to it than that, one sensed. She had donned this somewhat bizarre outfit, each item of which stood opposed to, at war even, with the other to *express the diversity and disunity within herself, and her attempt, unconscious probably, to reconcile these opposing parts, to make them a whole*. Moreover, in dressing in this manner, she appeared to be trying (and this was suggested by those unabashedly feminine shoes) to recover something in herself that had been lost; the sense and certainty of herself as a woman perhaps. *There was no telling*. (*CPTP* 5, my emphasis)**

> **[L]ove with Harriet was intimately bound up with the need to *do* for the beloved, to be more . . . [it] was part of an even larger need, present in her from a child—innocent enough then—to wield some small power. (*CPTP* 39)**

2.1: Introduction: Othermothering and Globalization in Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*

This chapter explores and analyses the significance of othermothering in Paule Marshall's second novel *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*. The novel takes place on the fictional Bourne Island that lay at the most eastern edge of the Caribbean sea.[55] The top quote

[55] "[I]t was simply another indifferently shaped green knoll at the will of a mindless sea, one more in the line of steppingstones that might have been placed there long ago by some giant race to span the distance between the Americas, North and South. Like the others, it was small, poignantly so, and vulnerable, defenseless . . . Unlike the other [islands] . . . which followed each other in an orderly procession down the watery track of the Caribbean, the island . . . had broken rank and stood off by itself to the right, almost out in the Atlantic. It might have been put there by the giants to mark the eastern *boundary* of the entire continent, to serve as its *bourn*. And ever

describes the look and manner of Merle Kinbona as she drives from the rural community of Bournehills to Spiretown (Bourne Island's capital city) in order to collect a team of American sociologists who intend to live in Bournehills to observe the community. She is wearing clothes patterned with West African designs and at the same time she is driving the same type of car the Queen of England rides in and wears earrings that are reproductions of saints "to be found on certain European cathedrals" (*CPTP* 4). The Americans arrive as the first stage in what is intended to be a local "development" plan to aid the rural townsfolk who are agricultural workers on a sugar plantation. The narrative makes mention early on that Bourne Island was recently granted its political independence from England and, now forced to compete in a world market without the financial protection of the mother country, the poor areas of the island are being "developed" with money from American industrial corporations.[56] With the end of colonial rule still fresh in the memories of Bournehills townspeople, the arrival of American (neo-colonial) developers creates a kind of identity-crisis that is experienced by all members of the community.

Notice the way that Merle Kinbona is described in the opening quote of this chapter; at once her visage conjures associations that are distinctly American, African, and European. Merle, and the other townsfolk, struggle with vexed feelings regarding the end of colonialism on the island throughout the novel. In this sense, Merle's manner of dress is her outward way of her attempts to make order out of African, American, and European cultural elements that combine together to make Bourne Island a part of the wider colonial history of the New World. On the

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mindful of the *responsibility* placed upon it in the beginning now that its turbulent history was past, facing east, the open sea, and across the sea, hidden beyond the horizon, the colossus of Africa" (*CPTP* 12-3, my emphasis).

[56] "The bulk of the funds came from several major business corporations in the state, for whom the new Center, with its emphasis on uplifiting the impoverished of the world, served as a fitting public expression of their quiet humanitarianism and concern, and as a means, although this was seldom mentioned, of saving substantially on government taxes by being intimately connected with a non-profit, tax-exempt foundation" (*CPTP* 36).

one hand the people are eager to move forward with their lives free of their political and cultural association with England. On the other hand, the narrative makes clear that the development scheme, while noble in its intentions, is a sort of second-coming of imperialism; this is made all the more complicated because of the New World zonal identity that exists between the Americans and the islanders. Because of Bourne Island's recent split with the "mother country"— yet still in the nascent stages of crafting its own identity—Marshall's is one of the first narratives that encompasses the cultural debates of what would later be classified as a "global" narrative, or novel of globalization. Following the theme of cultural ambiguity and the psychic confusion that can result from this, I believe that the foreshadowing of the psychic crises that appear in postcolonial literatures as a result of globalization can be examined in detail through an examination of othermothering in Marshall's text.

Othermothering can be loosely described as mothering practices performed by non-biological mothers; aunts, grandmothers, neighbors, cousins, friends, etc. On the surface this definition does not seem to hold any kind of significant value, nor any space for interpretation and does not make a distinction between biological mothers and othermothers. What is important, the logic goes, is that children are looked after, cared for, and protected and nurtured; whoever performs this function *for* the child is not as significant *as* the welfare of the child. Put more simply, the welfare of the child (emotional as well as physical) is more of a social concern to the community at large than the individual who ensures the welfare of the child. Marshall's novel explores in the intricate nature of othermothering and advocates for a closer inspection of the practice. Othermothers are commonly relatives in the larger kinship network—grandmothers, aunts, cousins, etc.—but the tradition itself is intentionally informal and vague so that women who are in no way related to the children in their charge can be othermothers. The welfare of the

child (emotional as well as physical) is a social concern for the entire community. Because othermothering is itself a communal practice, the social dictates of motherhood (the institution) that is defined biologically can be collectively ignored by the community. Marshall's protagonist is both the child of an othermother and herself, now an adult, is an othermother to the children of Bournehills. Presenting Merle as an othermother who is also struggling with this crisis of identity, Marshall weaves multiple meanings into the social stakes that othermothering can produce for a community as a whole.

Harriet Amron is given less space in the novel, yet her character offers another, often overlooked, insight into the practice of othermothering in the New World. Harriet and Merle could not be more different. Merle is black and lives in a poor, rural region of an isolated Caribbean island, and Harriet hails from the upper realm of the Philadelphia society. Marshall spends much of her narrative displaying the connection of race and class, and therefore these two women of different races and classes would be overlooked by the critics. Though Harriet and Merle are very different characters, they are both engaged as othermothers in Bournehills despite the differences in their backgrounds. That they can be so different yet perform the same social function in this community is a testament to Marshall's implicit criticism of how racism and classism work in tandem to produce a social structure of oppression in this postcolonial space. By examining the subject of othermothering through Merle and Harriet's experiences as the children of othermothers in addition to the othermothering duties they themselves perform throughout the narratives Marshall succeeds in presenting othermothering as a viable site of critical examination of the postcolonial experience.

The collective approval and support for the othermothers is directed toward the women rather than the children under their care. The narrative goes to great lengths to display the

othermothers as figures in the community that demand a kind of communal respect and recognition for the fulfillment of these duties. For Merle, the Bournehills children are seen as an extension of the community-at-large; indeed the adults relate to Merle with a watered-down version of deference that the children display when they refer to Merle as their former teacher at the school.[57] For Merle, othermothering is emotional rather than defined solely by her maintenance of the children; Marshall does not narrate Merle's relationship to the children in any kind of individualized detail, but for a few key instances in the narrative the children aren't even directly named.

The same is true for Harriet's experiences as an othermother: the children these women support through their care are not written as individuals—few of them have names or detailed histories in the narrative and many are viewed as members of shapeless groups of children.[58] Marshall makes clear that social and political vestiges of colonialism still linger. The novel begins with the arrival of an American sociological team who wish to study the residents of Bournehills in order to formulate and institute a plan for "modernization" in the rural community. Shifting focus of the relationship from the child to othermother allows for a more intricate investigation of circumstances that call for othermothers to exist; economic disparity, historical traditions, racist social structures etc. Merle's physical appearance defies easy

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[57] For the adults in the community the deference is watered-down because, having spent her childhood with her othermother in the poor community, she is one of them. At the same time, Merle spent her adolescence and early adulthood in the company of her wealthy (white) father, went to an all-white girls boarding school, and then educated in England, the adults also recognize Merle as part of the burgeoning coloured bourgeoisie that is emerging on Bourne Island.

[58] Harriet's first view of the Bournehills children: "Their eyes raised unblinking to the veranda, their feet with small splayed black toes rooted firmly in the sand. Simply presenting her with the fact of themselves: their thin potbellied bodies, the ragged clothing that hung like seaweed washed up by the tide on their thin frames, their closed expressionless faces" (*CPTP*168).

description—as the opening quote makes clear. Marshall introduces her heroine in this way to show that othermothering, like Merle herself, cannot be conveniently defined in static terms. What is less important than the "success" of othermothering because it is nearly impossible to quantify because it is measured by years of emotional and physical support—in regards to feeding, educating, and caring for children, a highly subjective activity. Furthermore, this the ambiguity of the practice also means that the corresponding collective support of the community for the othermothers does not follow a set or standardized pattern and can be hard to measure and examine.

The intersections of influence on Bourne Island in the space of this novel allude to Marshall's attention to the rise of globalization that minimize the importance of national identity and rely, instead, on the growing influence of capitalist influences in the global world economy (Mudimbe-Boyi xii). I will argue that Marshall's portrayal of Merle's othermothering is evidence of her critique of the economic disparity that exists on the fictional Bourne Island. This is further supported by her portrayal of Harriet who attempts, yet fails, to othermother the children in Bournehills. At its core Merle's othermothering practices are evidence of how othermothering as an activity (and the corresponding collective support from the community given to othermothers) can be performed as a way to lift the entire community out of its poverty. Merle recognizes that the communities as a whole views the success of the Bournehills children as a way to break the cycle of poverty and oppression, but Merle herself does not consciously distinguish between the adults and the children of the town; indeed, the children are no more living examples of the community itself than the adults. The deference that the adults of the community show to Merle also adds to this argument that the narrative and Merle view both adults and children as the lifeblood of the community. For Harriet—an outsider to the community further marginalized by

the townspeople because of her race, her foreignness, and her wealthy background—her practice of othermothering is presented as her attempts to gain access into the community. Because of the communal reverence for othermothers, Harriet becomes one herself to forge a bond similar to the one Merle already enjoys with the Bournehills residents. On the surface it would be easy to view Merle's successful communal othermothering and Harriet's failure to successfully perform othermothering practices in racial terms; as a Black woman, Merle is able to practice othermothering because of the racial solidarity she shares with the community as a whole and Harriet is barred from this because she is white.

I shall argue that it is the economic disparity and difference between the two women and how this disparity translates to the community as a whole that are the primary reasons for the success and failure of both characters. The narrative goes to great lengths contextualize the abject poverty of the Bournehills residents with the larger colonial history of Bourne Island—the Bournehills residents introduced in the scope of the narrative are the descendants of imported slaves brought to the island—but never goes so far as to present their poverty and their race as mutually dependent. At the same time, the narrative also takes pains to present the current postcolonial conditions in which the residents live as parallel in so many ways to the colonial historical past of the island that it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between the historical past and the contemporary present where the action of the novel takes place.

Othermothering, according to Marshall, is the product of social and economic diversity and disparity that exists on Bourne Island. *The Chosen Place* offers a unique opportunity to investigate how the othermothering displays the connection between race and class through the *experiences of othermothers*. By exposing the emotional turmoil that Merle experiences Marshall investigates the historical legacy of othermothering in the New World, and simultaneously

criticizes the expectations that are heaped onto the shoulders of the othermother. This can clearly be seen as the novel allows Merle to transition between the cosmopolitan urbanity of Spiretown and her affinity for the rural poor in Bournehills.

Part I of *The Chosen Place* is titled "Heirs and Descendants"; the main actors in Marshall's narrative are the inheritors of the displacement of the Middle Passage and the transatlantic slave trade and the novel displays that, even in the mid-twentieth-century, the social and cultural ramifications of this displacement are still at work. Harriet, though white and (economically) privileged, strives to separate herself from the nefarious legacy of the corporation that she inherited from her wealthy relatives.[59] Merle Kinbona's roots are in Bournehills and she identifies with the struggles of the rural working poor in this area, but the community at large acknowledges that she is not entirely *of* that community.[60] Marshall goes to great lengths to display how Merle's parentage, her childhood, and her adolescence are shaped by her experiences being raised by an othermother and her uneasy transition to living with her biological father. Conversely, Harriet's experiences with her othermother are displayed in subtle and enigmatic terms in the middle of the novel through memory flashbacks and uneven and non-linear conversations she has with other characters.

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[59] "'Must I really be held liable for them? . . . For all those Harbins and Shippens and what they did and didn't do . . . Well, I refuse" (*CPTP* 47). The care of Marshall's choice of words is very telling here; though it occurred in the distant past, Harriet recognizes that the sordid economic connection between the transatlantic slave trade and the formative years of family's company continues to resonate in the Americas.

[60] Though she lives in Bournehills and strongly identifies with the rural people there in their poverty and oppression, she is a sort of outsider in her homeplace as well. The division of the islanders between the upper-class, urban residents of Spiretown and the poor rural farm workers in Bournehills reflects the internal division within Merle herself. She is able to move within and between the color and class spectrum of both the urban and rural settings on Bourne Island (DeLamotte 228).

By narrating the experiences of two such different characters (who both are raised by othermothers, and who both engage in othermothering practices) Marshall investigates the racial implications of othermothering and challenges them. Put more simply; since the novel makes clear that in the postcolonial New World poverty and Blackness remain as interlinked as they were during the colonial era of plantation slavery, how can othermothers themselves work within this construction and, eventually, transcend the racial undertones inherent in the practice? Throughout the Black diaspora in the New World othermothing is not performed and practiced without its own paradoxes and contradictions; the informal nature and it's pseudo-sanctioning by the community at large leave room in the social sphere for othermothers to be praised one day for their practices and the next day vilified. These complications of the practice of othermothering will be discussed in more detail below but for the moment it is enough to add that for Merle and Harriet (othermothers privileged in the narrative above the children they care for) these contradictions and paradoxes are focused within the scope of the *tradition* of othermothering in the New World.

My inspiration to connection Harriet and Merle together through the scope of investigating othermothering in the New World is due to the (seemingly minor) similarities between the two women. Harriet and Merle are both women who, as children, were reared by othermothers. Though the conditions under which their othermothers performed these tasks differ greatly, this link between them is highlighted throughout the text in explicit and implicit ways.

Harriet Amron (neé Shippen) could be described as the antagonist of the novel because she is everything that Merle is not: as a wealthy White woman from a Philadelphia-brahmin family, her bourgeois demeanor contrasts starkly with Merle's sordid familial history. The

juxtaposition between the novel's two major female characters would seem to fit into the binary separation between islander/outsider, black and white, and rich and poor. Critical discussions of Harriet's role in the novel have been have been lacking in any real substance beyond viewing her as a corrupted product of a corrupted system.[61] If Merle, as protagonist, is presented as the mother/inheritor of the Black female experience in the New World, then Harriet's background of privilege makes her the heiress of the oppressions that dominate the Bournehills community. Harriet is as aware of how her family's history as Merle's own family haunts her. In this sense, Marshall's juxtaposition of the experiences of their respective childhoods with their othermothers creates a bond between them that is acknowledged in the narrative, but not to each other.

In the entire novel Harriet's flashbacks to her othermother (a black maid who worked for her family for years) are written as repressed memories that she eventually blames on her time in Bournehills.[62] Merle's experiences with her othermother are only mentioned, not seen through memories or re-told narration with other characters.[63] I am not arguing that Marshall establishes

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[61] "Critical discussions of *The Chosen Place* have minimally involved Harriet Amron, but she has a vital symbolic role if any reconciliation of communities is to be possible. In such a lengthy and tedious process, for communities and individuals alike, the initial requirements include casting aside hegemonic proclivities, transcending false barriers and misconceptions for past injuries" (Pettis *Wholeness* 49).

[62] *"You have no idea . . . nor did I until I came here, what a like is like in the Bournehills Valleys of the world. I don't think I will ever recover from the experiences of these past six months. Six months? It's more like six years! . . . I can't pinpoint what it is that's gone wrong or whether it's in any way serious. One thing I'm sure of, though. This place is to blame*" (*CPTP* 372, original emphasis).

[63] "'But that woman has been through enough to set out the strongest head, you see her there. Look, how when she was only a two-years child, the woman her father married to shot and killed her mother right before her eyes. It was the worst thing to happen in Bournehills since they killed Cuffee Ned long years ago. I remember Mis-Merle's mother good. Clara, she was called. She was only sixteen but fat and pretty in her skin and black like a real African when Ashton

a conditional that women who are reared and raised by othermothers will thus (naturally?) become othermothers themselves when they are adults. Rather, combining an analysis of Merle and Harriet's childhood experiences with their adult othermothering activities allows for a more in-depth examination of the practice of othermothering as a social tradition in New World cultures. Because of the informal and traditionally communal nature of its practice, Merle and Harriet posses the means of equating the children of Bournehills with the entire community; the good for the children is the good for all. This is part of the legacy to which Merle and Harriet both are the heirs and descendants. I believe that Harriet and Merle practice othermothering for the reasons that they do (to lift the community and to gain access to the community); othermothers occupy a social place that encompasses much of the civic and emotional authority of biological mothers, but are equally free on the social constraints usually associated with mothers (i.e.: marriage, financial independence etc.). Furthermore, the day-to-day activities of othermothering (as Harriet and Merle perform them) are the perspective through which Marshall's critique of how the colonial history in the New World is manifested. Through Harriet and Merle's othermothering a distinctly Black feminist view of an emerging globalization come forth by the clear connection between races and class both women represent.

Marshall's exploration of othermothering is steeped within the historical conditions in the New World—slavery, colonialism, and globalization in the twentieth century—and her creation of Harriet Amron as a child of an othermother is reflective of her determination to move away from essentializing the Black experience in the New World with and through othermothering.

Vaughan took a liking to her and bred her. Mis-Merle came looking everything like her except for the Vaughan funny eyes. And look how when she got to be a young lady and the father sent her to England to study, all the things that happened to her here: the wild people they say she took up with, and how the man she married walked out flat on her one day taking her child with him. The poor woman still can't bring herself to talk about it. Yes,' she said in conclusion, 'she's known what it is to suffer.'" (C*PTP* 33)

Marshall's novel does not directly engage with or confront the subject of racial identity in the New World, but how the history of relations (physical and social) dictate the motivations of both Merle and Harriet's othermothering. Harriet's transition from a setting where she is a member of the elite majority class to a setting where she is in the minority highlights how, despite her minority status, the cultural values she embodies presents a stark contrast to the realities of the Bournehills community.

In *The Chosen Place* Marshall's narrative does not focus on how othermothering is practiced as a result of a communal need for child-care; rather othermothering is blatantly political. Merle's othermothering role in the Bournehills community is a direct result of the collective need of an othermother to care for the children because the adults are, to a person, wage slaves at the local sugar plantation. These economic conditions do not allow the Bournehills community to define mothers within the scope of European-styled conceptions of motherhood. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of Marshall's entire body of work is the specific focus on how the Black experience in the New World differs greatly from the Euro-American system of values and social structures that are culturally imposed. For Merle, it is as if she is living simultaneously in two cultures; the (Black/folk) culture of the rural farm community and the (urbane/ White) bourgeois culture of Spiretown and Europe (Pettis *Wholeness* 27). Harriet, on the other hand, can only operate within a single cultural context; her removal from her upper-class Philadelphia environment to Bournehills does not create an opportunity to experience the same kind of duality that Merle does. Harriet—either deliberately or unintentionally—does not realize the psychic stress that Merle experiences; all of her othermothering efforts are performed in order to be granted access into the lives of the villagers. Marshall's construction of Harriet's dismal failure at othermothering does not lead to a conclusion that othermothering is the

exclusive province of Black women and/or Black communities, but instead it is presented as Harriet's naiveté regarding the reasons why othermothers are a social necessity. Harriet's myopic approach to othermothering is a result of her refusal to recognize the conditions which leave the Bournehills children without their parents. For Merle, these conditions aren't viewed or internalized within her own experiences; Merle is acutely aware of the long tradition othermothers have had in the New World.

It would be reductive to assume or argue that othermothering exists in only Black diaspora communities because of the institutionalized racism in the New World (a product of colonialism) or that othermothering is not practiced in non-Black communities. The focus of this chapter will not be the *origins* of othermothering in New World African diaspora communities, but the *function* of othermothering in the twentieth century. In the post-WWII context that effected Europe and the West, the conditions of black communities changed in the New World. The changing economic climate that inspired internal communal changes in diaspora communities in the Caribbean and African America and thus, the nature of the othermother's role within the community was also affected. Othermothering is traditionally an informal practice and (due to this informality) needs to be examined in detail before an analysis of these two characters can begin. The tradition must be historically contextualized in order to fully present its significance in New World communities in general, and Black diaspora communities in particular. Much debate about whether or not othermothering as a social practice is one of the remaining elements of traditional West African culture that survived the colonial intervention of the Middle Passage: critics who study Marshall's body of work cite othermothering as evidence of the "afrocentric" nature of her narratives (more on this later).

Merle Kinbona is the most obvious example of how an othermother serves multiple communal roles that all have their roots in othermothering activities, but extend beyond the tasks involved with caring for and rearing children. To this end, Merle becomes the spiritual leader of the Bournehills community, acts as their political and social advocate and spokesperson in a quasi-official capacity, and displays how othermothering activities offer opportunities for radical resistance to oppression. For Harriet, her failed attempts at othermothering do not exemplify how othermothering is exclusive to the Black communities in the New World, but rather how othermothering is borne out of economic need and, ultimately, displays how the connection between poverty and blackness that was established in the colonial period extends into the global period as well.

Marshall's focus on the othermother rather than the child(ren) under her care makes it possible to unpack the uneasy histories that influence the practice of othermothering in the New World and offer solutions to the seemingly one-dimensional nature of the othermother as only a caregiver, as only supplemental support to bloodmothers. By including Harriet's experiences Marshall also argues against conceptualizing communities in the New World based on race or history. The struggles that Merle and Harriet encounter in their othermothering experiences in *The Chosen Place* are: 1) clearly indicative of how colonial social categorizations of race are continued after colonial independence has been achieved, and 2) othermothering—its practice and its practitioners—continue to be adapted to global shifting conceptions of how race and economics are connected.

2.2: Paule Marshall, *The Chosen Place,* and a burgeoning Global consciousness

> **"I hoped that the novel [*CPTP*] would not solely be seen as a novel about the West Indies, even though it's set there, but a novel that reflects what is**

happening to all of us in the Diaspora in our encounter with these metropolitan powers, the power of Europe and the power of America" Paule Marshall (qtd. in Pettis *Wholeness* 3)

Paule Marshall's identity has been a subject of scrutiny—and sometimes confusion, for critics. Literary analyses of Marshall's body of work consistently invoke Marshall's own cultural and ethnic background and identity and claim that her multiple identities permeate the characters of her work. At once these considerations are insightful and (potentially) restrictive because it makes the task of classifying her work into a larger context of classification difficult. As the child of Barbadian immigrants who came to the United States after WWI her writings examine the multiple levels race and culture play in forging an identity:

> It was very early on that I had a sense of a very distinct difference between home, which had to do with the West Indies, and this country which had to do with the United States . . . I was made aware of the face that I certainly Afro-American growing up on the mean streets of Brooklyn, and at the same time there was this other component, this other very strong dimension which was Afro-West Indian. *I didn't see any contradiction or difference or problem with the two groups* . . . I saw myself as belonging to both. (Pettis "Interview" 117, 118, my emphasis)

Because of her unique position of being Black in America is considered to be both a member of the African-American literary tradition as well as one of the standard-bearers of contemporary Caribbean and postcolonial literary canon. Her inclusion across these fields gives Marshall a unique advantage of place as she writes from within and without all of these traditions and her characters, as well, struggle with trying to determine and define their place within contemporary

New World culture. Critics describe Marshall herself as an extension of DuBois's double-consciousness theory in regards to African-Americans. Marshall possesses a triple-consciousness with the inclusions of her immigrant-Caribbean identity and her works thus transcending conventional notions of identification.[64]

The balance of this trinity of cultural components is a constant struggle to the author because the traditional (colonial) habit of binary classification (and its corresponding cultural pit-falls) is something of which Marshall is acutely aware. Yet "Marshall compromises neither her African-American nor her African-Caribbean identity" (Denniston xiv) in her works, and neither do her characters. The ambiguity involved in trying to classify ambiguous her ethnic and cultural identity is one of the reasons why Marshall's second novel tackles the social practice of othermothering because it too defies easy classification and definition. Merle and Harriet's experiences with and through othermothering is Marshall's articulation of the social and political events occurring during the production of the novel. Because othermothering is informal, Harriet and Merle's approach to othermothering is equally (intentionally) ambiguous in the novel so that it cannot be viewed solely as a racialized tradition. In this sense, othermothering offers Merle and Harriet an opportunity to work through and make sense of their own identities and also offers a means to which their current place/position in Bournehills can be fostered.

The Chosen Place occupies a unique place in Marshall's body of work. Published in 1969, it has received less critical attention than her other creative works *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959) and *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983). These novels are to be considered a

[64] "The writers based in North America, and there are many . . . exist in a strange, hitherto undefined relation to the Caribbean literary tradition. Even when they attain American acclaim . . . they seem not to belong fully to either tradition" (Davies 70).

trilogy (Pettis *Wholeness* 4)[65] and it cannot be denied that the specific time and setting of the novels inevitably inform and influence Marshall's writing. Published in 1969, the wide scope of *The Chosen Place* and the "diversity" of its characters distinguish this narrative from Marshall's more introspective novels like *Brown Girl* and *Praisesong* and proved difficult for Marshall during the writing process.[66] *Brown Girl* was written throughout the 1950s and tells the story of a young girl (the daughter of Barbadian immigrants) coming of age during WWII. What is interesting about reading Merle and Harriet in a comparative way is that their respective ruminations about their roles in the Bournehills community supplies the middle-link in the progression of Marshall's protagonists in her previous novel, and in the novel she composed a generation after *The Chosen Place*. Both the characters are recovering from the same manner of identity crisis experience by Selina Boyd and the foreshadowing of Avey Johnson's unwelcome mental confrontation with her past. What sets this narrative apart, however, is that these inner-struggles are not narrated through the experiences of a single (Black) character; Marshall's second novel is the only time she expands her scope to include and examine the weight of the historical legacy of the New World in non-racially binding terms.

The "triple consciousness" describing Marshall and her novels can also be used to describe othermothering. The practice of othermothering both validates and challenges traditional (or idealized) conceptions and constructions of motherhood and mothering. Harriet and Merle's experiences with their othermothers validate and challenge the very need for

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[65] Pettis's text was published after Marshall's fourth novel *Daughters* was released in 1991, yet still maintains that her first three novels can be considered a trilogy because of their common themes, similar character types and settings (Pettis *Wholeness* 7).

[66] " 'I'm still recovering from that work [*CPTP*] . . . I had a terrible time for a number of years trying actually to make the transition from research to fiction, just to put aside all those facts that I had accumulated and move into the writing of the novel'" (qtd. in Pettis "Interview")

othermothers even to exist: Merle was reared by an othermother after the murder of her biological mother when she was a small child. Harriet, on the other hand, was reared by her family's black maid—a maid who was exclusively employed by her mother. Because othermothering is exclusively practiced by women, it validates the social perception of the separation of spheres between the genders: women must tend to the needs of children. At the same time, however, othermothers exist only in contexts of social inequality that do not always adhere to the social ideal of private and public spheres, nor strictly adhere to civic ad hoc segregations that are based on class or race alone. There are social standards and expectations (however informal) of what is expected of (biological) mothers; yet othermothering is not subject to the same scrutiny, nor is the practice (informally) standardized in any way. For this reason othermothering offers women—specifically through their role as an othermother—to defy expectations of mothers and of women in a social context.

I believe that this novel remains topical in contemporary investigations into Black women's studies and narratives of migration. *The Chosen Place* is a text that foreshadows the rapid progression of globalization before there ever was such a critical lens of analysis. If the shift away from "postcolonial" and/or "Third World" literature to a "global"/"globalized" conceptualization of the former colonial space and the migration of peoples increasing because of advances in technologies occurred during the 1970s then *The Chosen Place* can be read as one of the first narratives of the New World that can be included under the blanket of "global" literature. The novel spans almost a year of time as an American sociological team researches and lives with the residents of Bournehills. The native Bourne Islanders are drawn from both upper and lower social stratum of Bourne Island society that are conspicuous not only by their English accents (adopted from their university studies in the (then) "mother country") but also by

their varying shades of brown, rather than the distinctly black Bournehills residents.[67] The connection between race and class is obvious here: the whiter the skin, the more likely the chances are of belonging to the middle and upper classes. The American sociologists consist of a project manager Saul Amron, his assistant, and his wife, Harriet—who had to argue with her husband to be allowed to accompany the team during the period of data collection.[68] Bourne Island is thus constructed as existing in a sort of limbo; neither colonial nor (culturally) independent, the arrival of the American team to "study" the culture of Bournehills with quantifiable data is one of globalization's most obvious references: the people of Bournehills are no longer people per se.[69] Instead, the data collected about their lives becomes a commodity within the larger context of the global world market—the fact that the study is being funded by an international corporation attests to this. The people of Bournehills are people, but also elements of quantifiable data in the sociologist's pursuits. However, othermothering is an informal practice that is culturally and historically significant and, therefore, cannot be quantified. The hemispheric migration between the Caribbean and the North American mainland

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[67] "All the others were native Bourne Islanders, and black men—but black for the most part had been passed through the white prism of their history and been endlessly refracted there, altered, alloyed. So that the faces . . . presented . . . a shade and color spectrum which ranged from the soft, deep-grained black of the Honorable Member for Bournehills at one end, a stout ill-at-ease man named Deanes, with a nervous habit of glancing over his shoulder as if he were being pursued, to, at the other, the near-white skin and slate-blue eyes of a permanent secretary in the government" (*CPTP* 53).

[68] "'I still think it would be better if you stayed behind or at least waited until I got things underway down there before coming. Because I'm likely to be so busy for the first few months just getting my bearings I won't have much time to spend with you. The other thing is that it's sure to be rough on you living there. You have no idea how bad conditions can sometimes be in such places.' She was shaking her head with an unworried smile. 'You're wrong, darling," she said. "First off, I'm not some hothouse flower who will expire at the least breath of ordinary air'" (*CPTP* 48).

[69] See Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*.

are also Marshall's obvious attempt to situate the New World within the larger scope of "global" as well, because this migration is inseparable from the corresponding flow of money and goods between the regions.

An analysis of *The Chosen Place*, with special attention to the practice of othermothering, therefore has to balance itself between memory and forgetting, the present and the past, the past and a possible future. In addition to this, the role of the othermother carries the added burden of maintaining this balance. One of the most common themes that is evident when one reads the work of Black Feminist critics is their collective claim that Marshall denies a Black American or Afro-Caribbean consciousness and instead continually promotes a (continental) Black consciousness.[70] However, beyond their examination of Merle's clothes that are patterned after traditional African styles, the content of the novel is largely ignored by these critics. My reading of Merle and the wider significance of her role as protagonist in this novel is grounded in her interactions with the wider historical past of the island and with her interactions with the characters: American, British, local. Her ability to simultaneously inside and outside of these distinct groups makes this novel, I believe, hemispheric in nature because these groups are representative of the cultural make up of the New World. . The retention of traditional African cultural traditions is also a common theme that is discussed widely in regards to diaspora cultures in the New World and motherhood/mothering. The connection between these two recurring themes is summarized in Caroline Rody's *The Daughter's Return*: in African-American narratives of mother/child relations, the mother is commonly written as the responsible figure for the retention of traditional African cultural traditions and, also, passing on these

[70] Most of the critics I cite in this chapter—Coser, Pettis (all sources) and Wilentz—all take the time in their analyses to further this claim.

traditions to her children.[71] This responsibility transforms the African-American mother into the "mother of history" (109). By contrast, Caribbean mothers are frequently written as determined not to dwell on the past—either the historical abstract past, or the personal past—and the Caribbean mother is described as the "mother of forgetting" (110). When examining New World narratives the distinctions between Afrocentrism and the process of "creolization" become increasingly convoluted. Again, many of the theoretical works—from Dash, Burton, Glissant etc.—each raise interesting and thought-provoking arguments about the historical process of creolization in the New World (in the Caribbean and on the North American mainland) and all maintain that creolization is culturally and historically grounded in surviving cultural traditions from Africa which have outlived and outlasted colonialism and decolonization. According to Henry Louis Gates Jr. in *Signifying Monkey*, it is impossible to believe that all vestiges of "traditional" African civil life and social structures could have been obliterated during the Middle Passage. Though traumatic, the collective will of displaced peoples to retain elements of their previous cultural practices was not—could not have been—destroyed through the colonial plantation economies of the New World (4). This particular description of how this collective memory—retained through a collective will to remember—also reaffirms the New World's inclusion in the postcolonial world. Therefore, Afrocentrism as a critical lens that must always be contextualized through this collective action and collective will. At the same time, Richard Burton's *Afro-Creole* presents an almost identical definition of "creolization" in Afro-Caribbean culture:

[71] Rody discusses the importance of the passing on of this history and African cultural traditions within the context of the mother-daughter relationship because of the assumption that all daughters will eventually become mothers themselves (6).

> Africans were transformed (or not transformed, as the case may be) by the experience of slavery, through their interaction with each other, with the salves, both locally and African born, they encountered on their arrival in Jamaica, and with the various categories of Whites they confronted on and off the plantation" (4).[72]

While these similar definitions may not seem large, on the surface at least, their corresponding implications are weighty indeed when contextualized within the scope of analyzing mothering and othermothering. (Distinctions of this kind will also be investigated and explained in the following chapter.) It is important to remember that this moment of transformation was not a moment: instead it was a long and complex process that continued throughout hundreds of years, generations and generations of families. In a sense, *The Chosen Place* is a novelization of just another stage in this on-going process. However, because of the economic, social, and political circumstances that the novel examines, it becomes clear that othermothering plays a major role as individuals and communities grapple with their newly independent identity in a more globalized world.

Reading Marshall's novel through the critical lens of the transition from postcolonialism to globalization displays how othermothering has changed—and is changed by—the legacy of colonialism in the New World. The novel skirts the issue of whether or not othermothering—as displayed in this piece—is a remaining vestige of traditional West African cultural practices; this ambiguity could explain why there continues to be such debate in the field about this subject. In her essay on about African influences in New World diaspora literature, Gay Wilentz echoes

[72] "Afro-Creole cultures are themselves a paradoxical amalgam of the radical and the conservative that, to repeat, simultaneously challenges and confirms the dominant order by turning the latter's resources against it in a complex double game of oppositionality" (Burton 8).

Rody's description of the mother's responsibility to retain African cultural traditions and pass them on to her children. Wilentz denies the cultural trauma of the Middle Passage and how this trauma inevitably altered African diaspora civic life and culture in the New World (389-90). This denial serves two specific purposes for Wilentz's argument: 1) she argues against a cultural comparison of African diaspora cultures between the United States and the Caribbean, and 2) regarding mothering and othermothering, Wilentz claims that the communal nature of child-rearing in the New World is directly linked to West African traditions of polygamous marriage where multiple "mothers" are responsible for the care of the child(ren) (Wilentz 390, 395). This argument is useful to my project because it establishes a clear link between traditional African cultural traditions that are specific to the role of women, mothers, and othermothers when it comes to the communal drive to ensure the care, and responsibility, for all children.

I take issue with the denial of how diaspora communities' capacity to change, and be changed by, the Middle Passage and colonial encounters for centuries creates a culturally essentialist paradigm that can simultaneously hinder a diaspora community's ability to define itself on its own terms. By denying the cultural and historical significance of the way that African diaspora cultures operate in the New World as a result of colonialism, Wilentz's argument—which seeks to challenge colonialist dynamics of power—actually perpetuates this power dynamic by essentializing an originary African traditional past in the Americas. Marshall's vision of othermothering as practiced by both Harriet and Merle challenge this cultural essentialist model and advocates for a more global view of a community's role in the caring for child.[73] This global view is not limited by race or cultural heritage alone; instead the

[73] "More than a restitution of an authentic past, the intellectual articulation of history . . . shall be understood in the process of . . . colonial and imperial world order. To make a long story short, at the end of the nineteenth century, when . . . the cannibals of the early colonial period

focus lies in relational constructions of mothering and othermothering that are equally dependent on social structures and economic class.

My global reading of *The Chosen Place* uses Burton and Gates' definition of Afrocentrism because they both account for the cultural cross-fertilization between the North American mainland and the Caribbean. In addition, I also believe that Marshall's focus on the significance of othermothers and othermothering—from its historical roots in the New World in the colonial plantation era to the present—is indicative of the contemporary transition between theories of postcolonialism and theories of globalization. For this reason I have unpacked my analysis of Merle and Harriet and their othermothers, and their othermothering experiences, in order to highlight how in the twentieth century the globalization process adds greater weight to the function that othermothers serve. On the one hand the function is obvious: the child(ren) are cared for and raised. On a deeper level, the othermother is a figurehead of the community, a personified example of collective action and collective will (the same kind of collective will that Gates describes) that also allows room for political action and resistance to oppression. What makes othermothering in this sense so intriguing is that the othermother is able to embody traditional ideals of motherhood along with social activism that is commonly not allowed or incompatible with a community rising up as a whole.

2.3: Children of Othermothers: Merle, Harriet, and the Paradoxical Position of their Othermothers

> **[T]hroughout history most women mother in the institution of motherhood; that is, women's mothering is defined and controlled by the larger**

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were converted into the primitives of the era of colonial expansion and the standard of civilization was also stipulated among the major European powers, the civilizing mission and the concept of 'civility' became a regulative principle in interstate, imperial, and neocolonial discourses in the Americas" (Mignolo 44-5).

> **patriarchal society in which they live. *Mothers do not make the rules . . . they simply enforce them* . . . A mother raises her children in accordance with the values and expectations of the dominant . . . culture. (O'Reilly 74, my emphasis)**

In the Americas, othermothering has a long (and often vexed) history. The reasons for this are varied but, ultimately, they can be explained by O'Reilly's assertion above that mothers themselves do not shape or construct the structure of the institution of motherhood. For this same reason, othermothering (informally practiced outside of the dictates of dominant Euro-centric patriarchal social structures) allows for women to challenge the control of the practice of mothering. During the colonial era the reliance on slavery in plantation economies lead to the practice of othermothering in a variety of contexts that were not solely based on economic need. Instead, othermothering was viewed as part-and-parcel of the larger context of the plantation economy in the New World in African-diaspora communities.[74]

For the enslaved and lower-class members of society, othermothers were a necessity: slave mothers were forced to leave their children in the care of other members of the community while they had to work, and white plantation matrons were not charged with the practicalities of mothering because, of course, they had slave Mammies to care for their children. In this context, othermothering challenges the normative traditional model of motherhood and family structures that—simultaneously—support the patriarchal influences of colonial imperialism.

> The fact that the enslaved person's access to the issue of his/her own body is entirely clear in this historic period thrown in crisis all aspects of . . . relations, as captors apparent felt no obligation to acknowledge them . . .

[74] See Young's *Colonial Desire* 108-152.

> The enslaved property identifies the more familiar element of a startling proposition. But to overlap kinlessness on the requirements of property might enlarge our view of the conditions of enslavement . . . Because the Atlantic slaver trade involved heterogeneous social and ethnic formations in an explicit power relationship, we certainly cannot mean 'kinship system' in precisely the same way . . . within the intricate calculus of descent among West African societies. (Spillers 217)[75]

It is easy to identify who is an othermother and who is not in the context of colonial plantation slavery where socio-economic class had corresponding racial designations as well. It is also important to remember the significant socio-economic correlations to how othermothering is manifested between racialized communities in the New World. After the end of slavery in much of the world at the beginning of the nineteenth century, after its official end in the United States after the Civil War, it would have been absurd to believe that this informal practice would end abruptly.

Though the practice of othermothering can be traced, in a variety of manifestations, to the earliest days of colonial settlement in the New World, the end of colonialism and the end of slavery did not, of course, cease to exist. Instead, like all other social and political elements of civic life after the end of colonialism, practices changed in both how they are engaged in and the social meaning behind them. Forced enslavement was transformed into the same kind of wage slavery that is displayed in Marshall's novel; even after decolonization the Bournehills residents continue to work on a sugar plantation for an absentee landlord. Othermothering was not (is not)

[75] "[T]he monogamous patriarchal family, headed by a single, white father, was vaunted as a biological fact, natural, inevitable and right, its lineage imprinted immemorially in the blood of the species—during the same era [Victorian], one might add, when the social foundations of the family household were being replaced by the bureaucratic state" (McClintock 56).

immune to the rapid changes of global economic growth and cultural change being seen the world over. Othermothering is not a static practice and is manifested in a variety of ways; indeed, othermothering occurs only when social conditions are such that their function is a communal necessity. The important thing to remember is that social structures of domination are controlled by the elites who determine the parameters as to how motherhood is defined and maintained.

Black feminist theorists such as bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins discuss the social and civic significance of othermothers in African diaspora communities in the New World; these theories can be expanded beyond their original scope of describing African-America to include the Black Caribbean as well because Marshall's works are included in the literary canon of both regions. While their analyses specifically contextualize othermothering within African-American civic life, Marshall's triple consciousness makes their theories compatible with her novels. According to hooks and Collins, othermothering and othermothers serve a vital communal purpose; in the context of institutional and de facto racism in the New World, othermothers occupy a precarious and ambiguous position in Black diaspora communities. For New World women writers in general, and for Marshall's text in particular, the responsibility is compounded as the balance between presenting othermothers and othermothering in non-stereotypical terms becomes increasingly difficult.

> In African-American culture there is a long tradition of "mother worship." Black autobiographies [and] fiction praise the virtues of the self-sacrificing black mother. Unfortunately, though positively motivated, *black mother worship extols the virtues of self-sacrifice while simultaneously implying that such a gesture is not reflective of choice and will, rather the perfect embodiment of a woman's "natural" role*. The

> assumption then is that the black woman who works hard to be a responsible caretaker is only doing what she should be doing. (hooks "Homeplace" 45, my emphasis)[76]

Mother-worship is destroyed and the figure of the stereotypical Black matriarch is lifted to reveal that the mother is not a saint, she is not an angel, and she is not a voiceless Madonna.

All of Marshall's writings are concerned with challenging representations and stereotypes of Black women and, by extension, the entire Black community (Keizs 71). The stereotype of the strong Black mother is, in fact, a double edged sword for Black women and mothers who, because of their marginalized position due to institutional racism and classism in the New World, must balance the expectation of conforming within the dictates of Euro-centric definitions of motherhood and the realities of their every-day lives that shape their mothering . On the one hand social expectations demand that a mother care for her children and for her home; this is how society predicates the social function of the mother. On the other hand, the realities of economic conditions in the New World make it so that she cannot devote her entire time to her family because she works.[77] Despite the overwhelming evidence to support this, both Black and White (mainstream) feminist critics highlight how motherhood (the institution) is incompatible with capitalist realities for certain groups of (poor, largely Black) women in the New World, yet very few investigate how women of all classes and races resist this kind of institutionalized

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[76] Though hooks is speaking specifically of the African-American community, I believe that this notion can be attributed to Afro-Caribbean and other Black diaspora communities and culture as well.

[77] Many feminist scholars cite this as the prime distinction between mainstream (white) feminism in the United States and Black feminist theory that focuses on the connection between race and class. See "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory" from *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* by bell hooks (2000) and "Across the Divide: Contemporary Anglo-American Feminist Theory on the Mother-Daughter Relationship" by Andrea O'Reilly in *Redefining Motherhood: Changing Identities and Patterns* (1998).

control over the practices of mothering. Othermothering is one of ways this resistance is manifested.

Othermothers must confront the same paradoxes and double standards that the stereotype poses for Black mothers. The evidence of their own mothering activities are overshadowed and/or marginalized when compared with the biological mother. The presence of the othermother clearly works to counter the stereotype of the strong Black matriarch because it pulls back the curtain on the mother. Also, by exposing the realities of the double-standard many mothers face in light of these social conditions, what also remains largely ignored are the experiences of the children who are reared (by varying degrees) by othermothers. Marshall's novel is in this sense because the characters who practice othermothering in the text are themselves (now grown) children of othermothers. By comparing the experiences of Merle and Harriet—as children with their own othermothers and as adult women who practice othermothering—the vision of othermothering that Marshall produces is nuanced and subtle in order to challenge the stereotype of the Black matriarch both inside and outside the Bournehills community. At the same time, this continuum that the narrative projects leads the reader to view othermothering not as isolated within its specific time and particular socio-economic or racial conditions, but as a generational tradition passed from (other)mother to child.

Othermothering is fluid in nature and informally practiced. Marshall's display of both Merle and Harriet dispel the myth that othermothering is exclusive to African-diaspora communities in the New World. This fluidity 1) is the product of how race and socio-economic status are conflated together in Marshall's narrative, and 2) displays how this conflation clearly signifies a transition from a post-colonial context of mothering/othermothering and looks ahead to how othermothering will be altered in a more globally integrated world economy. Therefore, it

is important to remember that just as feminist critics insist that the personal is political, the insistence that the local is global is one of the motivating forces of this transition. In this sense, the previously accepted distinctions between "exile" and "migrant"—much like the colonial conceptions of "center" and "periphery"—is becoming increasingly irrelevant. Every context is local, every context is global in the same way that all political structures and social practices are, at their foundation, personal.

Othermothering operates both inside and outside of the traditional ideals of motherhood in both elite and lower-income areas of society.[78] Because of the long-standing "tradition" of the ideal practice of mothering, it is more subtle in some communities than others. Indeed, othermothering presents a unique opportunity where women, mothers and othermothers of disparate socio-economic statuses and of differing races can share a wealth of experiences. Just like the heretofore separations between personal and political, between local and global, are becoming obsolete in an increasingly interconnected world, the separation between the "public" and "private" spheres of the home and homelife are increasingly difficult to separate. Throughout *The Chosen Place* Marshall outlines the history of othermothering as a practice in the New World and displays the far-reaching influence of othermothers on children; this influence lasts well into adulthood.

Marshall's narrative does not allow Merle and Harriet to over-romanticize their experiences with their othermothers. Merle's biological mother was a lower-class domestic servant to Ashton Vaughan[79] —a white descendant of one of the original plantation patriarchs on

[78] By "ideal" I mean the notion of the institution of motherhood and the practice of othermothering fusing together.

[79] "Merle's father's small section of the family, who had remained in Bournehills and more or less carried on in the manner of Duncan Vaughan. (Merle's father, Ashton, for instance, a great-

Bourne Island[80]—who "bred" Merle's mother (*CPTP* 33) but did not pass down the Vaughan name to Merle.[81] Her paternity is not in doubt because, even though she is illegitimate, the wider Bournehills community still—on the surface—conforms to (colonial) Eurocentric conceptions of patrilineality. Merle's surname is from her mother's family line which signifies *de facto* matrilineality because of this. The fact of Merle's birth—her parents' complex and shadowy relationship—is taken as a matter of course by the native Bourne Islanders[82]:

> "She was the only child, an 'outside' child, it's true, as they say around here, meaning outside the pale of marriage, but the only one nonetheless.

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grandson of old Vaughan, had had her by the young weeder on his estate, Clara, although it had been 1924 then, a time when such practices should have been long past.) But some of the most prominent figures on Bourne Island were Vaughans and the name was respected throughout" (*CPTP* 69).

[80] "[O]ld Duncan Vaughan, who, long ago, had owned one of the largest sugar estates in Bournehills. The old man was something of a legend on the island. People still talked about how he had sired the last of the forty children he had had from the black women who worked on his estate at the age of seventy-five and then died six months before it was born sprawled in the planter's easy chair he slept in at night, his gout-swollen legs cradled in the chair's canvas sling" (*CPTP* 69).

[81] There is a shroud of mystery surrounding the death of Merle's mother Clara when Merle was only two years old. "Ashton Vaughan had provided Merle's mother with her own small house and a bit of land. And then one day she had been found mysteriously murdered, shot at close range one morning in the house. 'They never found out who did it, but everyone swears that Vaughan's wife, who was a 'high-colored' from town, meaning almost white like Lyle's wife, Enid, either did it herself or hired someone. No one really knows, though. Merle was the only witness they say, but she was only about two at the time and so, of course, couldn't say'" (*CPTP* 116).

[82] At a party where the Spiretown elite welcome the American sociologists one of the prominent lawyers on the island is married to a distant relative of Merle's: "Enid Hutson was a distance relative of Merle's, and shared with her the same maiden name, Vaughan, and the same arresting, see-through clear brown eyes. But the resemblance ended there, since Enid was as white as Harriet seated beside her except for the mildest hint of saffron to her smooth scented skin" (*CPTP* 69). Because of the prevalence of Vaughans on the island, and the local lore as to HOW so many Vaughans are various shades of white, brown, and black came to populate the island, Marshall clearly displays how colonial practices continue well after colonialism has ended.

> *Hers is one of those complicated family histories you still find in places like Bournehills*." . . . [Allen] went into his detached clinical way to give the circumstances of her birth, describing how, as was often the case in such liaisons, Ashton Vaughan had provided Merle's mother with her own small house and a bit of land. And then one day she had been found mysteriously murdered, shot at close range one morning in the house. (*CPTP* 115-6, my emphasis)

One of the most significant aspects of Merle's life—how she views herself and also how others view her—is as a *motherless child*. Like Caliban (whose significance in New World literature will be examined in the last chapter) the weight of her mother's absence is one of the core foundations of how Merle views herself and her place in the wider community. After the death of her mother, Merle lived with various relatives on her mother's side of the family. It was only after Ashton Vaughan's wife died having not been able to give him any (legitimate) children did he acknowledge as his heir. Merle was taken away from her relatives and Vaughan took charge of her care and reared her "according to her class": she attended an exclusive girl's school in Spiretown and, later on, sent her to England to attend university (*CPTP* 115-6).

Merle was moved in to the Vaughan mansion, Cassia House—where she currently resides—and he also sent her to England to continue her studies as a young adult.[83] What is interesting about Merle's childhood with othermothering is that she does not remember her

[83] "'Ashton Vaughan was somebody to call father?' [Merle] glared, deeply offended at him and he regretted having asked the question. "A man who for years made out he didn't recognize his own child when he passed her on the road? And who when he did finally decide to admit she was his and take her to live with him scarcely spoke to her, and as soon as he could packed her off to some fancy school in town, where the half-white children there made her life miserable because she was black and her mother had been a common laborer who had had with without benefit of clergy at sixteen" (*CPTP* 357).

childhood with her mother's relatives as her othermothers; instead, after moving in to Cassia House, Ashton Vaughan hired a woman to look after Merle, and this is the most significant othermother figure in Merle's life. "'[E]ven when [Ashton Vaughan] took her in he didn't pay attention to [Merle], and most of the time, especially when she was going to school, boarded her with an old woman in town whom she calls her aunt, and goes to see faithfully twice a week'" (*CPTP* 116-7).[84] It could be argued that Merle's obvious dislike for her "father" overshadows all memories of both her biological mother as well as the various othermothers that were responsible for caring for her before she left for England to attending university. However, at the same time, this dislike for Ashton Vaughan and her silence regarding her experiences with her othermothers could be interpreted as Merle's way of internalizing the personal trauma that lead her to be raised by othermothers in the first place. The entire community is aware of Merle's relationship with "Aunt Tie" but they do not speak of it openly. Merle, along with the Bournehills residents, views her childhood with various othermothers as a matter of course. As the title of the novel makes clear, the distinction between the historical past and the present is blurred throughout the narrative; othermothering was a fact of life during the colonial era, therefore the continued practice of othermothering even after decolonization is of little import to the locals. Because multiple evolutions in the social practice of othermothering in Bournehills are taken for granted by the community, it would be easy for critical analyses of Marshall's body of work to gloss over the significance of the practice in the novel. Harriet's experiences with her othermother—seen only in intermittent flashbacks throughout the narrative, are taken for granted. Like Merle, Harriet does not speak of her othermother—a family maid by the name of Alberta Lee—in the novel; she does not mention Alberta to her husband, nor does she recall even discussing the

[84] Merle speaks only of her othermother, by name, ***once*** in the entire narrative: "'Dear Aunt Tie," Merle said. "She was Mother and Father to me'" (*CPTP* 357).

significance of this relationship with anyone in her life. Unlike Merle's relationship with Aunt Tie, Harriet's experiences with Alberta are predicated by the economic disparity between the two.

Harriet's powerfully clear flashback about her childhood with Alberta Lee comes when she first encounters the children of Bournehills. The blank expressions and silence of the children conjures a connection to her childhood because Harriet believes that the children must resemble the nieces and nephews that Alberta spoke of: "[Harriet] had never . . . met Alberta's young relatives, had never even seen a picture of them, and yet suddenly, for a moment, it was as though she was seeing them in the children below" (*CPTP* 169). This sudden, momentary melding of the past and the present catches Harriet off guard. Marshall shrouds Merle's experiences with her othermother(s) in silence; her brief but powerful description of Aunt Tie's role in her life speaks volumes to their relationship because the relationship has not ended. Merle still visits Aunt Tie; their bond was never broken. Also, the trauma of her mother's murder and her father's distant emotional coldness is why the othermother(s) in Merle's life carry such personal significance. With Harriet, however, the fact that she had forgotten about Alberta, and Alberta's role as her othermother, addresses a trauma from which she is trying to recover.

Alberta Lee's employment with the Shippens is described in ways that are reminiscent of the racial and social history in the New World. Just as Ashton Vaughan's rape of Merle's mother is analogous to his colonial forefather—even though such practices were meant to have ended in the past (a point the narrative reiterates throughout the novel)—the relationship between Alberta and Harriet is inflected with the power dynamic that is directly comparable with the slave system. Marshall's description of Alberta's role in Harriet's life is meant to be obvious and stereotypical for an American reader: Harriet's mother—"a latter-day Southern belle (she had

come from Virginia)" (*CPTP* 41)—employed Alberta as her personal maid and had "insisted on bringing Alberta with her from Virginia when she came to Philadelphia as a bride, and she had remained with them up until the former's death" (*CPTP* 168-9). Alberta was employed by Harriet's mother and this employment included Alberta bearing the responsibility for the care and maintenance of the Shippen children; it is safe to describe this example of othermothering as a twentieth-century display of a modern Mammy. "[T]he mammy image represents the normative yardstick used to evaluate all Black women's behavior" (Collins 72).[85] The figure of the Mammy is not only indicative of White patriarchal control over how Black women are supposed to be and how they are supposed to act, but the Mammy also represents a specific kind of othermothering that is specific to the New World because of the history of colonialism and plantation slavery. In Black diaspora communities in the New World, othermothering is viewed as an example of community cohesion and solidarity in the face of institutional racism and systematic economic oppression. When there is no racial or class similarity between the othermother and the child, the imbalance of power created by the race/class disparity can by traumatic to the relationship; both the othermother and the child are scarred by the experience.

When confronted with the Bournehills children, Harriet's memory of Alberta highlights how differences in race and socio-economic class between othermother and child become the defining element of the relationship. Harriet's experiences with Alberta had a traumatic effect on her, not because of any cruelty or lack of love, but that the power imbalance (economic and racial) between the two is traumatic in itself:

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[85] "The first controlling image applied to . . . Black women is that of the mammy—the faithful, obedient domestic servant. Created to justify the economic exploitation of house slaves and sustained to explain Black women's long-standing restriction to domestic service. . . By loving, nurturing, and caring for her White children and 'family' better than her own, the mammy symbolizes the dominant group's perceptions of the ideal black female relationship to elite White male power" (Collins 72).

> As children, she and her two brothers, had always, once a year, sent Alberta's nieces and nephews all the clothes they had outgrown as well as those toys they'd become bored with. Once, though, she remembered, she had refused to part with one of her toys. And it wasn't because the toy had been a favorite of hers. *She couldn't even recall what it had been, it had mattered so little to her*. It was just that she had felt she was being asked to give too much and had balked. *She had been calm, dry-eyed but unyielding*, and when her mother, aghast at her behavior, had insisted that she send the toy, whatever it had been, *she had quietly threatened to burn it. She had been allowed to keep it finally, but she hadn't ever played with it again . . .* (*CPTP* 168-9, my emphasis)

Harriet's experiences with Alberta display how "Marshall expands boundaries to show that memory is crucial for members of all ethnic and minority group, not just for Blacks, since the same process of recovery is operable for all oppressed peoples" (Meyer 101). This is the moment in the novel when Harriet first begins to realize the intersection of racism and classism that are at work not only in Bournehills but also in her own environment in Philadelphia. In addition to this, she is also, at this point, is beginning to recognize her active (if seemingly innocent and naive) role in the continuation of these structures of power. The recovery of memory for Harriet is unwanted and unwelcome and, simultaneously, carries meaning on a multitude of levels, it seems Harriet has repressed them because otherwise she would be overwhelmed. It is not the nature of the memory itself that is the source and cause of Harriet recognition of this trauma. Instead the visage of these children combined with the ambiguous memory of Alberta—and her acknowledgment that this memory was intentionally repressed—is the first step in her eventual

revelation of how she is personally implicated in the children's poverty-stricken condition.

Both Harriet's and Merle's experiences as children of othermothers contextualizes their own othermothering practices, but these contexts are not meant to be viewed as *justification* for how they othermother the children of Bournehills. I do not mean to claim that Harriet tries to othermother the children solely out of a sense of guilt for her behavior towards Alberta as a child, nor do I claim that Merle is an othermother to the children as a result of her anger towards her (now dead) father.. Instead, what I argue is that these two characters' experiences fully display how closely connected race and class are within the othermother/child relationship. Indeed, the conjunction between race and class—and all of their social trappings—are the determining factor as to whether or not a child's experiences with an othermother are traumatic. In addition, Marshall's lack of narrative detail, in regards to length and detail of Harriet and Merle's memories of their childhoods, displays how "the past competes with the present in Bournehills" (Pettis *Wholeness* 52). The melding of the past and the present in the lives of the characters is directly analogous to the melding of the colonial/postcolonial/global in the narrative. In the middle of the twentieth century when Marshall wrote the novel the decolonization movements around the world were becoming increasingly successful and the Civil Rights era in the United States was in its (final) glory days. Thus, while institutional racism was being challenged directly in the New World, the process of globalization that marries racism with socio-economic class was beginning. Because this novel describes the transition between post-colonialism and globalization, it stands to reason that Merle and Harriet's othermothering practices are also indicative of the conflation of race and class.

2.4: Merle Kinbona—Othermothering to Lift a Community

> **When we renew our concern with homeplace, *we can address political issues that most affect our daily lives*. Calling attention to the skills and resources of black women who may have begun to feel that they have no meaningful contribution to make, women . . . who have essential wisdom to share, who have practical experience that is the breeding ground for all useful theory, we may begin to bond with one another in ways that renew our *solidarity*. (hooks "Homeplace" 48, my emphasis)**

I open this section with this quote from hooks because of her connection between the unspoken solidarity within and between communities and the political relevance of the domestic "everyday" social practices of women's lives. At the same time, hooks' focus on the Black community in particular a convenient way to highlight the socio-economic aspects of othermothers and the children in their care; the solidarity spoken of above therefore, can be expanded beyond the racial boundaries she works within. Merle and Harriet's different experiences with their othermothers highlight how precarious the position an othermother occupies in society. Unlike most creative works that examine the significance of social othermothering from the perspective of the othermother, Marshall's novel examines othermothers from the perspective of the children in her care. Furthermore, Marshall tackles this subject from these "children" when they are adults in order to highlight the lasting impact of their experiences with their othermothers. This aspect of Marshalls's text displays the ability of othermothers to transcend the so-called boundaries between "public" and "private" spheres.

The interdependent nature of public and private spaces allows institutional racism and socio-economic status to affect how the pseudo-"primary" relationship between othermother and child is acted out. At the same time, othermothering allows for subtle and specific challenges to

the status quo. This endeavor—to overtly be influenced by social structures of power in order to covertly resist them—harkens back to the paradox of "mother worship" within African diaspora culture in the New World.

Patricia Hill Collins discusses the institution of Black motherhood as both dialectical and dynamic. On the one hand, because it is the social institution of (Black) motherhood, perceptions of mothers and othermothers within the boundaries of the institution display the intersections of racial, gender, and class oppression. At the same time, Black mothers—especially as othermothers—are able to work within these social boundaries to form their own distinctive sense of self-importance and self-reliance and pass on this particular kind of personal empowerment to the children in their care (Collins 176-7).Though Collins uses the terms "Black" and "African-American" interchangeably throughout her text, Marshall's "triple consciousness" and the narrative's own inclusive nature that resists national or culture essentialism allows this argument to apply in this conversation. Moreover, the inherent inclusive nature of the practice of othermothering makes this argument all the more relevant.

According to Collins, the empowering nature of the "institution" of Black motherhood is only possible because of *collective community will* to resist the idealized traditional (read: White) construction of motherhood.[86] The othermother occupies a precarious position in the midst of these socialized gender tensions. On the one hand, the othermother is independent of the community at large and therefore not as closely monitored by the larger community that limits the behavior of the bloodmother. This internal monitoring of the bloodmother's duties and the overall welfare of the children are a direct result of institutionalized racism in the New World

[86] "In a context of institutionalized racism where African-Americans have long aimed to present a united front to Whites, many U.S. Blacks learn to police one another . . . Internal dissent is especially frowned upon when it come to motherhood, the seeming core of family, culture and community" (175).

and its corresponding economic effects.[87] On the other hand, the othermother is an agent acting on behalf of the community, and in a sense represents the communal will of the people. "Othermothers can be key . . . [i]n confronting racial oppression, maintaining *community-based child care* and respecting othermothers who assume child-care responsibilities can serve a critical function in African-American *communities*" (Collins 180, my emphasis). With Merle acting as an othermother in Bournehills she is the central figure who is the standard-bearer of the confrontation with the social, economic, and racial oppressive dynamics on the island.

On a local level, the significance of the othermother within a particular community is easily recognizable and, correspondingly, easier to monitor within the scope of community will. I propose that othermothers carry on the othermothering tradition because of the effects rapid economic growth has widened the chasm between rich and poor; by retaining the traditional, the global effort for cultural conformity is resisted. In a more abstract sense, the precarious and paradoxical position of the othermother is affected by the globalization process.[88] Texts of othermothers and children (as with narratives that focus on the mother/child relationship) are primarily interested in the experiences of the children. Marshall's novel confronts the paradox of the othermother from the othermother's experiences, to highlight her criticism as to how racism and classism are a source of inspiration for othermothers to engage in resistance of the combined oppressions of racism and sexism. I begin with Merle Kinbona's othermothering in Bournehills

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[87] This internal monitoring is primarily carried out within the context of patriarchy: "Glorifying the strong Black mother represents Black men's attempts to replace negative White male interpretations with positive Black male ones" (Collins 175).

[88] "Precisely because women are systematically trivialized and ignored . . . women's knowledges have developed—globally—with a degree of autonomy and distance from both the assimilationist . . . mechanisms of modernity. The product of forms of agency . . . women's knowledges systematically offer alternative conceptualizations of the global relations" (Pratt 30).

because the psychological effort of resistance in the context of community collusion is one of the main concerns of the novel.

Merle's personal history as a descendant of one of the Bournehills poor and her adolescence was spent surrounded by the Brahmin elite on Bourne Island makes her place in the Bournehills community as an adult complicated to say the least. She is both inside and outside of their close-knit society that is predicated on their lives as laborers. Equally relevant is that Merle is both inside and outside of the bourgeois culture of the Spiretown residents; her English education and her connection to the Vaughan family (and family name) grants her access to many places that the Bournehills laborers cannot enter. Her ability to transition between each community—almost seamlessly—attests to Merle's commitment to othermothering the children of the community. Though the children in Bournehills do not need an othermother for the same reasons that Merle did when she was a child, it is a safe assumption that, because she spent so much of her formative years being reared by othermothers, Merle would take the practice of othermothering as seriously as she does throughout the course of the novel.

Merle "epitomizes the paradoxes and incongruities of the community" (Pettis *Wholeness* 47). It is no surprise—when one considers the myriad ways Merle does not, cannot, be easily classified either socially or economically on Bourne Island combined with the inherent contradictions an othermother embodies—that she is experiencing what Pettis calls a "fractured psyche." Fracturing is described as being primarily responsible for generating feelings of incompleteness, vulnerability, alienation, and displacement; these feelings work together in tandem and, thus, a fractured psyche is a permanent condition that is continuously ongoing (Pettis *Wholeness* 12). The interdependent and complex systems of power and oppression work

in discordant ways so that Merle's inner fracturing is made evident through her othermothering experiences.

These complex systems of power harkens back to Marshall's triple consciousness and the novel's "moment" of globalization. Merle's character is emblematic of how cultural, class, racial and gender identification are becoming increasingly difficult to balance in a rapidly globalizing world. The abstract cultural implications, according to critics, is the eventual result of a global mono-culture where the balancing act between these intersecting oppressions becomes less and less relevant. "This *simplification* of complexity encompasses the totality of the . . . world . . . [and] of the relationship with [the] nature . . . of subjectivity itself . . . and of community. A new economic attitude . . . will now establish itself: the capitalism" (Dussel 13, original emphasis). The attempt to simplify the complexity of Merle's life in a newly independent postcolonial island is also exposed to the burgeoning neocolonial influence of the United States. Rather than the residual cultural influence of England—and the nascent pressure being exercised by multinational corporations (such as the corporation that is a major contributing funder of CASR[89]) as displayed as the primary sources of oppression in the novel, though their influence is not necessarily recognized by the characters. Through Merle it becomes increasingly clear that Marshall is trying to make *sense* of this complexity; she does not attempt to simplify it or to find a balance within this complex system without losing any of the significance that is contained within this complexity. This is most emblematic in Merle's practice of othermothering; in addition to caring for children, an othermother is also charged with teaching the children in her care.

[89] CASR is the foundation that is funding the sociological development plans in Bournehills.

The history of the island, and of Bournehills, is something that Merle is deeply concerned with; and likewise in her role as an othermother, it is something she is active in instilling in the Bournehills children. This is becoming of increasing importance—not just for Merle but for the community as a whole—because of the increasing frequency of Bournehills residents who leave the community for economic opportunity in the United States. In order to formulate a viable future, the role of the othermother is to ensure that knowledge of the past is instilled in the children of the community. Marshall has insisted that history is the only way in which diaspora peoples can overcome their legacy of oppression:

> [A]n oppressed people cannot overcome their oppressors and take control of their lives until they have a clear and truthful picture of all that has gone before . . . This knowledge of . . . one's history . . . serves as an ideological underpinning for the political, social and economic battles they must wage. It is the base upon which they must build. (qtd. in Meyer 101)

As an othermother in Bournehills, Merle is responsible for transmitting the collective spirit Marshall is speaking of above; this collective spirit and collective will is the inheritance of the Bournehills ancestral past that she imparts onto the community's children. In Merle's generation it was the privileged few who were able to cross the Atlantic to work/study in England; however, in the newly independent Bourne Island and the increasingly globalized world, opportunities for the lower and rural residents to engage in migration have begun to fracture the community. The ancestral past and the poverty-stricken present leads many of the Bournehills children to quit the community and leave; some migrate the United States looking for low-wage manual labor, others (like Merle, when she was younger) leave for England where the lure of Oxbridge remains a potent aspiration. With the younger generations leaving the community, the residents left

behind have become vulnerable the destructive elements of a globalized economy. Most of the Bournehills residents work as manual labor on an industrialized sugar plantation owned by absentee landlords in England.[90] To supplement their income the residents also farm their own small plots of land to grow sugar cane and Economic opportunities outside Bourne Island have created a generational rift in Bournehills: "'You know what happens to some of these young fellas when they go to America on the labor scheme. They forget all about a small island like this. They want the big time, the big lights'" (*CPTP* 8).

Merle uses her role as an othermother to educate the young Bournehills children to prevent their migration away from the island and, thus, temper the generational split that happens in the community throughout the course of the novel. Since her return from England after the death of her father, Merle has systematically sold off portions of the ancestral Vaughan land to the townsfolk for this purpose.[91] But the townsfolk need more than land to resist the temptations of migration, they need pride in their history and, by extension, themselves in order to keep the community together. Merle uses her role as an othermother to instill this pride by becoming an educator of the children of the community; by doing so she is not just othermothering the children, but the community as a whole.

"People seldom exist independently from their culture and their history, and . . . bonding the public history of the setting with the private history of the characters illustrates this interdependency" (Pettis "Talk" 111, my emphasis). The promotion of community collectivity

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[90] In the climax of the novel, the landlord sells the land and the sugar mill to a subsidiary corporation owned by Unicor, the corporation that Harriet's family founded.

[91] "'She inherited all of it,' Allen said . . . 'Her father left her both the house and what little land was left from the original estate. She kept the house but sold the land in small plots to the people of the village—probably just gave it to them since it's unlikely any of them would've had any money to pay her. But she didn't want it to fall into the hands of the Kingsley group, who practically own the entire district'" (*CPTP* 115).

through a personal relationship with the historical past is the key motivation for Merle's othermothering. What is interesting about Merle's othermothering is that it is not necessarily described as such by the townsfolk, but if we use Collins's and hooks's analyses of the significance of the homeplace and the role the othermother serves the community as a whole, then Merle can safely be described as such. Efforts to promote communal collective solidarity and collective action are of primary concern for Merle. Within the community she is respected and revered because she is able to transcend the social boundaries that exist on Bourne Island between the rich and poor, between the rural and the urban.[92] This ability to transcend the self-imposed separations on the island between the rich and poor allows Merle to possess a "double-vision" that others cannot comprehend.[93] Merle's precarious position on the island—belonging to each social sphere, but never fully incorporated into any of them—speaks to the larger ambiguous positions of othermothers. The role that Merle plays within the communities on the island is understood in the context of her relationship with, and love for, the Little Fellas of Bournehills. For this reason Merle's othermothering is centered on making the community's history relevant in their present in order to foster a sense of collectivity.

The collectivity based on a common history is exemplified through the only significant historical event that occurred in Bournehills is the Pyre Hill Slave Revolt lead by the notorious Cuffee Ned:

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[92] "'As for the people at the bottom of the heap, the Little Fella, as they're called in Bournehills, she can do no wrong. Because although she was 'raised decent,' as they say, and has lived in England and hobnobs with the bigwigs in town . . . she's never put on airs with them. They know she's on their side and really takes their problems to heart'" (*CPTP* 117).

[93] "This capacity implies . . . double vision . . . the ability to see different forms of oppression superimposed on one another; to see the oppressor superimposed on the mind of the oppressed" (DeLamotte 236).

> "The Pyre Hill Revolt! *There was never anything like it before or since.* It's the only bit of history we have worth mentioning on Bourne Island . . . The only real hero we've ever had around here. Dear Cuffee . . . You know . . . sometimes strangers to Bournehills wonder why we go on about Cuffee and Pyre Hill when all that happened donkey's years ago and should have long been done with and forgotten . . . *We don't ever forget anything, and yesterday comes like today to us*" (*CPTP* 102, my emphasis)

The threat of migration of the younger people away from Bournehills is also a threat that this history will be forgotten, but it is the capacity to view the past and the present in tandem that distinguishes the people of Bournehills from other residents on the island. It is not so much that the slave revolt was not a success, but that the revolt is the most significant example of collective action by the people of Bournehills. It is this potential for collective action that Merle is seeking to preserve through her role as an othermother.

After the death of Ashton Vaughan, Merle returned to Bournehills and was employed at the (then colonial) town school. Her determination to foster a sense of collectivity within the community was evident through her formal position as a teacher who was educated in England, but these efforts were quickly thwarted. Merle was fired from the school because of her refusal to teach the standardized, colonial version of the Pyre Hill Slave Revolt that conformed to the promotion of colonial historical accounts of Cuffee Ned.[94] Merle's dismissal from her official

[94] "She was teaching history or one of them big subjects. But it seems they didn't like the way she was teaching it. She was telling the children about Cuffee Ned and things that happened on the island in olden times, when the headmaster wanted her to teach the history that was down in the books, that told all about the English. But she refused, saying that way it made it look like black people never fought back. Well, they fired her in no time flat. And I hear tell she performed something terrible down there the day, told them all where to get off at, even cursed the headmaster-self. You know Mis-Merle. She says what she feels to" (*CPTP* 32-3).

position as a teacher does not alter how this role has transformed her into a teacher for the entire community, no matter how informal that teaching may have been. This ability to transition between formal and informal modes of othermothering is actually one of its central hallmarks.[95] Merle is able to (re)negotiate her relationships within the community because of her precarious and ambiguous life that does not conform to the binaries that separate the communities (rural/urban, rich/poor) on the island. That Merle was fired for teaching about the Pyre Hill revolt that does not conform to the "official" (colonial) narrative displays the weight of responsibility Merle feels toward the future generations of Bournehills. In order to free them from the "official" colonial versions of history, her othermothering is marked by her continuous attempts to forge a new future that is uncertain if the past cannot be sufficiently, and honestly, retold and confronted.

Through this manner of othermothering in Bournehills signifies Merle's desire to make sense not from a political perspective, but displays how she is constantly looking for a political perspective to make sense of her past and help her forge a clearly definable place within the community that has little to do with her storied past (Cook 1). The fusion of her past with the collective past of the community is how Merle shapes her othermothering. In order to lift the community out of its poverty—and resist the control the Spiretown elite try to wield over it—Merle insists that the (colonial) past never be forgotten in the daily lives of the townsfolk. Abstractly, Cuffee Ned belongs to everyone in Bournehills, he is an essential part of their past

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[95] "The institution of Black motherhood consists of a series of constantly renegotiated relationships that African-American women experience with one another, with Black children, *with the larger . . . community, and with self*. These relationships occur in specific locations such as the individual households that make up . . . extended family networks, as well as in Black community institutions . . . Moreover, just as . . . women's work and family experiences varied during the transition from slavery to the post-World War II political economy, how Black women define, value, and shape Black motherhood as an institution shows comparable diversity" (Collins 176, my emphasis).

and they therefore continue to make the Pyre Hill revolt relevant in the present.[96] The past/present fusion in Bournehills is by no means limited to Cuffee Ned's revolt during the colonial era. The sins of the colonial past and the horrors of their postcolonial present are not a source of shame or embarrassment for the Bournehills residents; instead—under Merle's guidance—the community has transformed their history of oppression into a source of communal On the morning of the annual Carnival Saul happens upon Merle sitting under a tree telling the town's children an Anancy tale:

> She then resumed her story, and beside her, already feeling somewhat soothed, Saul listened absently, his gaze on the *rapt upturned faces of the children*. She was recounting another episode in the life of Spider, the wily hero of the Anancy tales told through the islands, who, though small and weak, always managed to outwit the larger and stronger creatures in his world, including man, by his wit and cunning. *In the fretwork of sunlight and shade under the tree the children's eyes as they listened were enormous, huge wells, reservoirs they seemed to him, which were storing everything she was against some future use*. (*CPTP* 224, my emphasis)

The significance of this passage is not the tale that Merle is narrating to the children; but rather the visual of Merle that Marshall provides; The rapt children, Merle's posture as othermother/sage who instructs the children on the parable of self-definition and strength is perfectly suited to her social role as an othermother. A bit later in the narrative the manifestation

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[96] Much to the consternation of the Spiretown residents the Bournehillsians perform the same re-enactment of the Pyre Hill revolt every year at Carinival. Also, on his wanderings throughout the novel, Saul Amron observes on multiple occasions that the workers, the constables, and other residents of the town debate the Pyre Hill revolt and Cuffee Ned's role in the rebellion casually; the revolt is more than a source of pride, it is interwoven into the fabric of their lives.

of the parable is displayed by the Bournehills performers at Carnival. Though the Spiretown elite bemoan how the Pyre Hill performance has become common every year and does not entertain the Island's new tourist class, the chant raised throughout the performance is "They had been a people, they had worked together."[97] An explanation for the comparison between Merle's intimate storytelling of the town's children and the later collective action by the adults from Bournehills could be summed up by the following: the townspeople themselves speak of Cuffee Ned continuously and thus Merle is just replicating this interest in the past as a method of continuing communal collectivity in the present. However, I believe that the while the adults have already internalized this dictum, Merle's othermothering ensures that the communal collective pride will continue through the next generation. Furthermore, that Saul was included in the intimate setting to witness firsthand Merle's othermothering denotes the patterns of reconciliation that are imperative in a globalizing world (Schenck 53).

Merle's othermothering is meant to lift the community because it reconciles the anxieties that the Bournehills residents have about the postcolonial present on Bourne Island and the ambiguous globalized future they all face together. Furthermore, the ambiguity that is imposed

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[97] "They were singing . . . of Cuffee and Pyre Hill, of a particular event, place and people, *simply telling their story* as they did each year. Yet, as those fused voices continued to mount the air, shaking the old town at its mooring on the bay, *it didn't seem they were singing only of themselves and Bournehills, but of people like them everywhere*. *The struggle on the hill which had seen Cuffee triumphant . . .was . . . the experience through which any people who find themselves ill used, dispossessed, at the mercy of the powerful, must pass. Differing in time, in the forms it takes, in the degree of its success or failure, but the same*. A struggle both necessary and inevitable, given man. Arms outstretched, hands opened, the marchers sought to impress this truth upon the watching throngs . . . "*They had worked together!*"—and as it, in their eyes, this had been the greatest achievement, the thing of which they were proudest, the voices rose to a stunning crescendo that visibly jarred the blue dome of the day . . . "If we had lived selfish, we couldn't have lived at all." They half-spoke, half-sung the words. They stood as one against their enemies. *They had been a People*. Their heads thrown back and welded voices reaching high above New Bristol's red-faded roofs, they informed the sun and afternoon sky of that they, Bournehills People, had been capable of" (*CPTP* 286-7, my emphasis).

on Merle (in how her identity is defined through her disparate parts of both loyalties to the Bournehills people though she is not necessarily one of them)is one of her motivations to lift the community as a whole through her othermothering. Just as othermothering in the New World was transformed into a non-biological communal activity by the very fact of the imposed diaspora of Africans, the notion of othermothering as a way to lift a community as a whole also speaks to how conceptions of diasporas are changing in a globalized world. Merle is ONLY an othermother in Bournehills, can only lift a community because of the historical facts of its location and historical make-up. While this history—personal and public—is painful for Merle, and one could say is painful for the entire community, it is essential to the composition of Merle's identity. Socially, in order for the political nature of the "everyday" experiences of women to be manifested through othermothering, women need to experience a level of comfort and security in their homeplace. However, for Merle, she cannot feel at home either in Bournehills, or in England, or in Spiretown. The historical colonial conditions of the island's past prevent this, and the postcolonial present also hinders Merle's ability to feel at home anywhere.

> Identity is no less an identity for being historical . . . Contrary to a hegemonic cultural reification or a . . . preoccupation with the location of "home," . . . what is important is to enable people to feel at home where they live. This does not require that people abandon their legacies, only that they recognize the historicity or their cultural identities and that those identities are subject to change in the course of historical encounters. (Dirlik 115, my emphasis)

Merle can only feel comfortable where she is, doing what she does: othermothering. In a similar vein, the community would be lacking without her presence as landlady, educator, and advocate with the elite in Spiretown. This is possible only because of the shared poverty in Bournehills. Though she lives in Cassia House, Merle is accepted as one of the rural poor in the community and it is for this reason that she is fully and completely embraced by the Bournehillsians.

2.5: Harriet Amron: Othermothering as a means of integration in to the community

> ***You have no idea . . . nor did I until I came here, what life is like in the Bournehills Valleys of the world. I don't think I will ever recover from the experience of these last six months . . . I sense a change in myself . . . I can't pinpoint what it is that's gone wrong or whether it's in any way serious. One I'm sure of, though. This place is to blame*. (*CPTP* 372, original emphasis)**

Scholars of Marshall have struggled in their examinations of Harriet Amron—her identity as a tragic heiress, the embodiment of the WASP stereotype—in their analyses of *The Chosen Place*. Harriet is first introduced in the narrative as the heiress of Unicor: an American corporation that can trace its roots to the late eighteenth century and plots its expansion through the high imperial period of the nineteenth century.[98] By the time the novel begins the business interests of Unicor now spans the entire globe. Their industrial involvements are so convoluted that neither Harriet, nor Marshall, even attempt to deconstruct the structure of such a significant

[98] Unicor's early business ventures were to ship salted cod fish from Newfoundland to "places like Bourne Island" before expanding to the colonial sugar industry in the nineteenth century. From there the company expanded "like endless sproutings over the generations" to include partnerships with Kingsley and Sons, Ltd. who are the absentee landowners of the sugar fields in Bournehills (*CPTP* 37).

corporation.[99] Harriet is the heiress to Unicor, but the novel does not make this connection between Harriet's role in the Bournehills community and her family's business just for the sake of furthering the plot.

Like all things in this novel, Harriet's family's ancestral and historical past is given greater meaning. Unicor's founding investors--Harriet's ancestors--were heavily involved in the slave trade and the narrative makes allusion that the descendants of these investments populate Bournehills. Harriet's character in the novel oscillates back and forth between genuine concerns for the people of the community combined honest interest in the philanthropic nature of CASR, and her disgust and confusion as to how and why the Bournehills people live the way they do. On the surface Harriet could be defined as a one-dimensional character that embodies the contemporary condition of "white guilt." However, the fact that Marshall takes so much care to highlight the similarities between Merle and Harriet in their upbringings--specifically their experiences with their othermothers--challenges this myopic analysis of her.

It would be all too convenient to categorize her as a simple antagonist: if Merle is the obvious protagonist then Harriet, an almost mirror opposite of Merle, would seem to fit into this classification. Classifying Harriet in this unflattering light (in many respects she could be considered a caricature of the "poor rich girl") does not fully account for the complexity that Marshall gives to Harriet despite the limited space in the novel devoted to her. Some see Harriet a character who serves as a historical link between Europe and Africa and the Caribbean.[100] In

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[99] "Unicor was now part of that giant commercial complex which, like some elaborate rail or root system, endlessly crisscrosses the world, binding it up, until the world almost puts you in mind of one of those high-bouncing balls children used to make years ago by twisting layer upon layer of rubber bands around a toy marble" (*CPTP* 37).

[100] "[T]he disaporic link repeatedly surfaces through the emphasis on historical antecedents, the immutability of Bournehills, and Cuffee Ned's resistance to oppression. Harriet Amron's

this sense, Marshall's novel makes clear that one of the essential elements of the New World condition is that ALL people in the New World (Black, White, and everything in between)--either explicitly or implicitly, and through a variety of contexts--have a historical investment in the colonial past and, thus, all continue to struggle with the contemporary ramifications of this complicated history. Other critics reduce Harriet's significance to a convenient link between Saul (the head sociologist and Harriet's husband) and Merle (and, thus, a convenient moral obstacle to their emerging sexual affair). This view of Harriet is limited because, while it works within the argument that Harriet, Saul and Merle represent cultural "microcosms" of their respective cultural histories (Kubitschek 48), it does not take the time to investigate the complexity of the culture that Harriet hails from. In short, these critics assume that Harriet's identity as a member of the American WASP-ish class is taken for granted and analyzed only at face value.

I propose a closer reading of Harriet's significance in the novel specifically in regards to her othermothering activities. Ignoring Harriet's role in this novel—especially in any discussion about the conjunction of race and class and how it is manifested through the practice of othermothering—would actually validate and reproduce the same kind of binary oppositional colonial mindset that Marshall is clearly trying to overcome. This investigation is important because it is predicated on a comparison, rather than a contrast, with Merle. By viewing Harriet in this context (othermothering) and by comparing her to Merle (the protagonist) then it becomes possible to read Harriet's othermothering in the same manner as Merle's. Merle's othermothering in the community is meant to be emblematic of the social role the othermother

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presence and ancestral background establish the obverse side of the triangular relationship among these communities. The novel thus evokes African, the United States, and the Caribbean as contiguous entities that, once bound through a commercialism that included human beings, may not easily divorce their affiliations" (Pettis *Wholeness* 52).

has; in this sense, her othermothering is a form of resistance to the social and economic oppressions that are inflicted on the entire Bournehills community. Harriet's othermothering, on the other hand, is more subtle and she does this so that, like her husband, she can be fully accepted into the community. Looking at these characters in this way, the primary difference between Harriet and Merle is not limited to their difference racial identities, or just their own socio-economic backgrounds, but Merle is aware and conscious of the forces of oppression in Bournehills and Harriet is not.

This analysis is precarious at best but it remains imperative because it displays Marshall's ability to present Harriet as a victim of history as much as Merle. Indeed, the complexity with which Marshall composes Harriet denotes "the ability to see different forms of oppression superimposed on one another; to see the oppressor superimposed on the mind of the oppressed" (DeLamotte 236). Harriet's othermothing in Bournehills displays that racial and class oppressions, while overlapping onto one another, harkens to Marshall's feminist critique of the postcolonial consciousness. It is not Harriet's identity as a White woman that points to this conclusion, but how race and class are connected not only in a colonial dynamic but also are a central element in a newly emerging globalized world.

Harriet's othermothering practices are not consciously intended to challenge the connecting oppressions of gender, race, and class in Marshall's narrative. They are Harriet's way to gain access to the community in Bournehills. For Merle, full inclusion is guaranteed for a variety of reasons, but for Harriet this inclusion must be earned because of her status as a rich, White woman from Away. Harriet is psychically limited by the intersection of racial and class oppressions at work in Bournehills; for Merle, actively challenging these oppressions is what

liberates her. The difficulty for Harriet is trying to unpack how these interweaving oppressions can even be accomplished.

One of the cultural results of the colonial enterprise in the New World is that Whiteness as a racial category is assumed as an outward, immediately recognizable symbol of social authority and thus, for Harriet, is unconscious. She is unaware of the extent to which her Whiteness grants her social powers until she arrives in Bournehills and becomes *defined* by this Whiteness, this authority. She can never be fully incorporated in to the community of Bournehills because she is unaware of the extent to which her privileged position as a rich (and White) women grants her privilege, thus her othermothering is affected. It would be impossible to separate how this unconsciousness influences Harriet's othermothering and, ultimately, sets her up for failure.

Merle's othermothering activities the othermother is a visible figurehead of community collectivity, a form of othermothering that emphasizes connectedness and consciousness (Abrahams 769). Harriet's othermothering is thwarted not solely because of her social faux pas as she tries to ingratiate herself into the community, but for the most abstract complexity that is contained within the practice of othermothering. Harriet accompanies Saul to Bournehills because of her commitment to the mission of CASR and Saul's other sociological ventures throughout the world. Having been married once to a nuclear scientist, Harriet is attracted to Saul because of the altruistic nature of his work in "improving" communities around the world.

The stark contrast between Harriet's two husbands says much about her character; the recurring nightmares of her first marriage haunt Harriet and the escape that Saul offers her from these images of death and destruction explain her determination to accompany him to Bourne

Island.[101] Before they depart, Saul voices his reservations about Harriet's ability to internalize and understand the conditions in Bournehills. Despite her assertion that she does not need to be warned of conditions, that she is not a "hothouse flower" (*CPTP* 48) in need of protection from the harsh realities of extreme poverty, Saul's reservations are predicated not on perceived flaws in Harriet's character per se, but rather the conditions of her life which make her less suited to full incorporation in to the community. Responding to her argument that her work in the poverty-stricken neighborhoods of North Philadelphia and her ability to function in a pseudo-activist-othermothering capacity, Saul warns that the economic conditions of Harriet's life ultimately do not allow for her to integrate (pardon the pun) and/or ingratiate herself into that community.

> "It's not the same, Harriet. It's true you might have gone out to North Philly but you always came home to this after each visit"—his hand took in the tastefully furnished, softly lighted room in which they were sitting—"*but there won't be any coming 'home' at the end of the day in Bournehills. That will be home—and for quite some time at that*." (*CPTP* 49, my emphasis)

Saul's warning is, coincidently, the very reason that Harriet's interactions with the townsfolk of Bournehills can be considered othermothering in the first place. The homeplace, as we have seen with Merle, is the site where othermothering occurs, though Harriet is from "Away," rich, and White, the description of Bournehills as her (albeit temporary) homeplace allows Harriet to be considered an othermother.

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[101] The nightmares are short in their description by Marshall, but the effect they have on Harriet throughout the novel are undeniable: "In the midst of the most innocuous dream there would suddenly be an explosion so massive it seemed the molten center of the earth had erupted, and in the searing light that followed, a great cloud shaped exactly like the toadstools she had often uprooted as a child on her morning walks in the woods would slowly and majestically rise into the final silence" (*CPTP* 39).

Unlike Merle, Harriet is acutely aware of how her childhood experiences with her othermother dictate how she interacts with the community—especially the children—in Bournehills. Harriet's attempts at othermothering are reflections of her attempts at (re)gaining a sense of spiritual wholeness.[102] Marshall contextualizes the socio-economic class ramifications of othermothering through a character underrepresented in Black fiction. When she first arrives at Cassia House she spends her time engaging in typical bourgeois wifely duties in making sure that the harsh realities of the outside world do not—cannot—intrude on the serenity of the home she and Saul share.[103] It is not just her (un)conscious endeavors to perpetuate the binary of inside and outside that Harriet does this: these are the only activities she can do that help her maintain a link with the only reality she knows. For example, the first people Harriet meets on her own in Bournehills—without the aid of an introduction from Saul, Merle, or any other member of the sociological team—are a group of children. Thin, gaunt, undernourished, Harriet is taken aback by their eerie silence around her.

Though she was able to argue a case for accompanying Saul on his project to Bourne Island,[104] her perceptions of the inhabitants of Bournehills are confused and condescending.[105]

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[102] "Spiritual wholeness may replace fracturing when the character reclaims self from the killing impulses of capitalism-materialism and consciously participates in redefining them" (Pettis *Wholeness* 8).

[103] "By the time Harriet finished with their wing of the guesthouse she had *transformed* it into a *comfortable, attractive* two-level apartment which not only *bore her unmistakable personal stamp* but seemed *completely separate and apart* from the rambling, cluttered building" (*CPTP* 167, my emphasis). Here it is not only Harriet's attempts to keep the outside world at bay, but also establishing an aesthetic space that bears no resemblance to the shady history of the building they are living in. In a similar vein, all evidence of Merle's life—indeed, it is her house—is banished as well.

[104] "'Some years ago the Institute opened a large recreation center in North Philadelphia which . . . is close to being the worst slum in the world, and I made a point of going out there as often as I could, mainly to help out, but also because I wanted to see for myself how the Negroes there

Her understanding of the Bournehills residents signifies her impossible position between her past and the future. Wedged in this uncomfortable position allows for memories from the past that Harriet has tried to ignore and/or forget; especially her own experiences with her othermother. Harriet's "unconscious condescension" (Meyer 109) results from of her failure to fully comprehend the interdependency between history and culture, between race and class status, and this is exacerbated by the continued perception that, while the townspeople interact with her, she is not fully accepted.

The people of Bournehills use their relationship to their unique history as a means to cleanse themselves of the conditions of their present situation (Pettis *Wholeness* 55-6). This seems eccentric to Harriet initially; she struggles with the ease in which the people around her can speak of the past and the present in a seamless way. However, this particularity of Bournehills does allow her to be accepted—to the same degree as Saul—because of the people's familiarity with rich white matrons.[106] Harriet's relationship to her history serves the same

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lived. And yes, I did find it rough at times, to use your word. I would come away utterly demoralized some days, just sick with guilt and anger that people had to live that way. But I always went back. I managed, in other words. And I'll manage where we're going" (*CPTP* 48).

[105] "Seeing them [the children] there, Harriet almost had the impression they had been standing on the beach all night—and even longer than the night, waiting for her to come out. *And they scarcely seemed children to her for some odd reason*. *Something unnervingly old and knowing lay within their dark gaze* and was suggested by the quality of their stillness. They might have been very old people who had lived out their time, and then instead of dying, had resumed the forms of their children they had once been and begun the life cycle all over again" (*CPTP* 168, my emphasis).

[106] "They came to sit . . . and to talk endlessly among themselves and to her about events in Bournehills both past and present. And peculiarly they treated the events of the past as though they had only just occurred and *treated her, almost from the beginning, as she somehow knew about them, and was thus no stranger, but part of the place, bound to it and to them in some way*. It interested, amused, and vaguely puzzled her, the manner they assumed with her. It might even have annoyed her had it not been for the feeling that had remained with her . . . *that sense of being a spectator* seated on stage during the performance of a play, someone virtually right in the middle of the swirling action yet apart, an onlooker" (*CPTP* 171, my emphasis).

function with the opposite effect, being the holder of the memories of the oppressors hinders any chance of healing. Marshall's narration ensures that characters mirror the problems that are enacted in the larger social space of Bournehills and Bourne Island. In *The Chosen Place* "[p]eople seldom exist independently from their culture and their history, and Marshall's technique of bonding the public history of the setting with the private history of the characters illustrates this interdependency" (Pettis "Talk" 111, my emphasis).

After meeting with the children on the beach in her early days in Bournehills, those children who conjure memories of her childhood with Alberta, Harriet is inspired to focus her attention to the needs of the children of the community. "She had bought a medicine cabinet in town and stocked it with a few drugs and first-aid supplies to dispense to people in the village. And on top of the medicine cabinet, in a large jar shaped like a fishbowl, she kept candy—hard round sour balls and English toffees—for the children" (*CPTP*167-8). In addition to this Harriet is subtly afflicted by a bourgeois romanticization of motherhood[107]—because she has no children of her own—and thus assumes the role of caregiver/nurturer without fully acknowledging the complexity of the community she is living in and their own traditions of othermothering.[108] The prime example of this is when Harriet, the one and only time during her stay in Bournehills that she acts "without stopping to question her actions so certain was she that

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[107] "To some extent, the romanticization of motherhood by bourgeois white women is an attempt to repair the damage done by past feminist groups and give women who mother the respect they deserve . . . As long as women or society as a whole see the mother/child relationship as unique and special because the female carries the child in her body and gives birth, or make this biological experience synonymous with women having a closer, more significant bond to children" (hooks *Feminist Theory* 136, 137).

[108] "Without any work of her own, without a career, [Harriet] feels an emptiness that can only be filled through her importance or value to someone else" (Dennison 114).

she was doing right" (*CPTP* 175). She ventures to the house of Stinger and Gwen[109]—both of whom work daily in the commercial sugar fields—to find the home empty save for their "innumerable children" and she is appalled that the children had been left alone all day, and had not eaten (*CPTP* 175). Never having confronted poverty and/or hunger on this level first-hand,[110] Harriet feels helpless and feeling helpless reminds her of her mother; thus Harriet briefly tries her hand at othermothering in response. This is what prompts her resolve to harden in her blue eyes (*CPTP* 176). It is when she discovers half a dozen untouched eggs in the kitchen that her response to the hungry children takes shape: she decides to make an omelet for the children.

On the surface Harriet's attempts at othermother fall in step with the practice and could seem to be evidence of her desire to be included into the community. This is unlikely because Harriet's character is shaped through her avoidance (attempted avoidance) of the past. As the scene progresses Harriet becomes less and less concerned about the hungry children and more concerned with her own feeling of empowerment.

> [F]inally there lay the finished omelet—a little too browned on one side, stained orange by the butter and woefully plain (so unlike the ones she occasionally liked to make with diced meats, herbs and sometimes a little wine), but an omelet nonetheless. *She was suddenly inordinately proud of*

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[109] Harriet goes to the house to check up on Gwen who works in the fields despite the fact that she is pregnant. As the novel progresses and the months drag on without Gwen giving birth it becomes increasingly apparent that she is not, indeed, pregnant. Speculation flows between Saul, Merle and Harriet as to whether Gwen has a tumor that is going unchecked, undiagnosed. The novel never resolves this mystery.

[110] "She remained . . . in the middle of the kitchen gazing with a kind of numb fixity at the soot-covered pot in which the day's rice had been cooked. It had been scraped clean. Even the burnt part at the bottom had been eaten" (*CPTP* 176).

> *it. There was something of a miracle about it almost; the fishes and loaves*. Above all, she felt an immense relief. *She had done her part*, she told herself, gazing down at it steaming gently on the plate, to quiet ravenous presence charging up and down the two rooms. She turned then, and for the first time since entered the house *really looked at the children*. And she was smiling tentatively, and hoping, with a certain wistfulness, to elicit a similar response from them. *Their pleased smiles would have been a small reward. But they continued to regard her with the same flat, noncommittal curiosity, the same refusal to be grateful, impressed or moved*. (*CPTP* 178, my emphasis)

What is most significant in this scene is that the oldest child present, Brenda, does not utter an unsolicited word to Harriet as she prepares the food. [111] At the same time Harriet's corresponding silence displays the unrecognized tension in the room.

"The effects of motherhood are dependent upon the social context in which it occurs, so it is important to understand that context . . . The emphasis . . . is . . . on the symbolic nature of everyday life and interactions and on the role of that meaningful activity in creating gender—defined as personal identity" (Fox 161-2). In Harriet's mind she is helping the hungry children; aware that their parents are workers in the cane fields she is also equally aware that this context

[111] "[Harriet's] hand began to tremble slightly, and picking up the fork she dealt the first egg a sharp little whack that broke it cleanly in two. At that Brenda, who had returned to stand in the doorway with the others after lighting the kerosene stove at Harriet's request, uttered a near-soundless, quickly stifled cry of protest or dismay—it was impossible to tell, and then silently bowed her head" (*CPTP*177).

necessitates an othermother. More focused on the task at hand, she is also acutely aware that this one act will present her as such to the community at large.[112]

Initially the scene seems to fit perfectly into the mold of othermother/child relations, and as such this should be the moment in the text where Harriet is taken into the fold of the community as an othermother herself. It does not follow that line, however, because of the power-dynamic that exists between Harriet and Brenda, and between Harriet and Gwen (Brenda's mother) who is not present in the room. When Gwen returns from the fields to find their eggs cooked and eaten by the children Brenda is punished. Harriet was unaware of Gwen's arrangement with the town postmaster to supply him with eggs every week in exchange for cash. Brenda did not tell Harriet of this agreement. However, what remains unsaid by all parties involved is the real reason why Brenda does not—almost cannot—tell Harriet of Gwen's arrangements because that would indicate a direct challenge to Harriet's authority.

Harriet's brief attempt at othermothering fails miserably because it can only be effective for the persons involved and the community at large if there is an implied equality between blood-mother and othermother. Harriet's status as a rich White woman dictates that Gwen punishes Brenda but says nothing to Harriet herself about the situation; instead she informs Saul of the incident and Saul is responsible for informing Harriet of her (unintentional) social transgression. "'If only you would stop and ask, Harriet, before taking things into your own hands! I'm sure it never occurred to you to find out if the eggs hadn't been left there for a reason'" (*CPTP* 180).

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[112] During the first few weeks in Bournehills Saul observes that the townsfolk are defined by and through their roles and their character is measured by how well they perform their respective functions (*CPTP* 140). It is possible here that this could be a subconscious attempt on Harriet's part to be included in this structure.

Ultimately, Harriet's identity as a privileged White woman hinders her ability to be incorporated into the community in the same manner as Saul and also leads the community to avoid her othermothering attempts because it does not contain the same thread of social resistance as Merle's othermothering. What makes Harriet's character so interesting to read in this particular light is that she too, like Merle, is a victim of the increasingly globalized consciousness that is seeping into life on Bourne Island. The overlapping tensions between race and class, and Harriet's initial inability to recognize this synthesis, only results in the essentialization of race in an othermothering context: othermothering exists for the poor and is practiced by the poor, and because the poor are predominantly Black in this novel, Harriet was doomed to fail from the onset. Like all the characters in the novel, Harriet is a victim of history in the New World.

2.6: Conclusion(s)

The Chosen Place, The Timeless People is an often-overlooked novel in Marshall's body of work; ahead of its time because it foresaw the dilemmas that arose as a result of decolonization in the New World. Whereas the colonial period is distinguished by the promotion and retention of social structures that adhere to essentialized racial binaries, the post-colonial consciousness promotes essentialisms that manifest themselves in similar ways. The essential component of othermothering—the socio-economic conditions and contexts of the blood-mother, othermother, and child(ren)—is partially acknowledged by the split between the Black (radical) feminist community and the more mainstream White feminist community.

> To some extent, the romanticization of motherhood by bourgeois white women is an attempt to repair the damage done by past feminist groups and give women who mother the respect they deserve . . . As long as

> women or society as a whole see the mother/child relationship as unique and special because the female carries the child in her body and gives birth, or make this biological experience synonymous with women having a closer, more significant bond to children. (hooks *Feminist Theory* 136, 137)

Political in nature—with Collins' analysis of othermothering as a form of "activist mothering"—the frequency and pervasiveness of othermothering across cultures challenges the marginalization of this practice as a site of political resistance to domination. This occurs on several fronts, yet one of the most significant is the classification of who a mother is and the definitions of her duties in a biological context. Othermothering, outside of most biological relations, is further downplayed because it challenges these definitions. The setting and all of the characters are either implicitly or explicitly connected to othermothers and othermothering. With this is mind Marshall's narrative takes on new meaning in regards to the disjunction between the denial of the significance of othermothering and the scope of the practice when the added interconnecting oppressions of race and class are factored into the modes and methods that othermothering presents to a community at large.[113]

[113] "The repetition and crisscrossing of patterns of domination across the Americas and the world is the major emphasis in the novel, where . . . commercial empires; members of Parliament; lawyers; overseers; and the middle classes in general cooperate and support one another in the exploitation of the bodies of the poor and the resources of the earth" (Coser 56).

CHAPTER 3

Clare did not tell her mother anything which was close to her. She avoided any subject which she thought would make her mother uncomfortable. (*Abeng* 80)

3.1: Matrifocality and Migration in Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*

This chapter examines how New World matrifocality is an example of "rebel consciousness" in Michelle Cliff's novels *Abeng* and *No Telephone to Heaven*. The works of Michelle Cliff have been established in the canon of Caribbean literature and contemporary women's writings of the New World since the 1990s. Despite the historical distance between these texts and my writing of this project, I have chosen to include them here because Cliff's novels of maternity and mother/child relations examines how social definitions of motherhood have a long, and established, tradition of resistance to colonial and postcolonial oppression. Also, writing a generation after the publication of *The Chosen Place*, Cliff's works are a clear example of the progression of how New World women writers continue to promote the significance of the politicization of the homespace in order to challenge linger colonial and patriarchal social domination postcolonial period.

Cliff's narratives are prolific in their description of the transition from a postcolonial consciousness to a more ambiguous and amorphous global consciousness. *Abeng* and *No Telephone* display how a family unit is affected by the cultural and economic upheavals of decolonization and how migration (hemispheric and transatlantic) has become yet another condition of a New World zonal identity. A common theme running throughout all of Cliff's works is the interdependency between patriarchal oppression, *de facto* and *de jure* racism in the

decolonized Caribbean and in the United States, and socio-economic disparity within social structures all work in tandem to propagate the continual oppression of women. These migrations highlight how colonial conflation of racism, sexism, and socio-economic class oppression is still very much a viable aspect of New World culture.

This continued oppression has allowed matrifocality to develop into an active rebel consciousness at the same pace as the transitions from colonialism to decolonization to globalization. By incorporating the subject of migration with an established tradition of motherhood Cliff is able to display how matrifocality can be viewed as rebellion from the homespace into the wider social world. Hemispheric migrant narratives by New World women almost exclusively focus their attention to the experiences of a solitary migrant leaving the home (and mother, by extension) for economic reasons (Edmondson 140).[114]

For Cliff, New World matrifocality represents the continued connection between institutional racism and economic oppression in the twentieth century. Matrifocality is a tradition of motherhood that runs counter to Eurocentric patriarchal (read: colonial) definitions of motherhood. While this is certainly true in Cliff's novels, she also expands the social potential of matrifocality as a cultural symbol to challenge the elements of globalization that are manifested in the postcolonial New World. In this sense, matrifocality refers to the institution of motherhood (however informal) ***and*** also describes a particular form of mothering practices. Matrifocal traditional motherhood exists in family structures where the mother occupies the central authority in the family. This New World tradition was originally borne out of necessity and survival during the era of plantation slavery in the Caribbean and the United States. Cliff

[114] "[M]igrants, especially females, appear to be 'puppets on a string', doomed to follow a pre-written script, dependent on the help and leadership from others in search of a new identity. This perception of migration as a cause for identity deterioration is not new" (Lutz 95).

investigates the intricate nature of how race is internalized for both mother and daughter by examining in detail how the matrifocal tradition is a key component in the form and function of the family as a whole. In *Abeng* and *No Telephone* Cliff composes a narrative where the public and private spheres are always already connected; the personal is always the political in these works. At the same time, the continuous conflict between the members of the Savage family is through the continuation of the pretention; in a family where colonial support and colonial resistance takes on added racial and historical meaning, matrifocality becomes an element in this conflict inside and outside the homespace. With this matrifocal rebel consciousness fostered in these novels, Cliff's canonical works shows that women/mothers and their children are able to continue their resistance to oppression in the wider social context outside the home.

With *Abeng,* Cliff is able to display how the advent of decolonization did not necessarily resolve the socio-economic, cultural, or racial conflict created through centuries of colonial rule. In addition, *No Telephone* deviates from Edmondson's study of hemispheric migrant literature in that the novel shows a family migrating to the United States from Jamaica ***together***. Detailing the effects of migrant experience in the context of a single family unit and by showing the mother and child engaging in migration together allows for Cliff to investigate the implications as to how both mother and child internalize and (at times) rebel against the intersections of sexism, classism, and racism in the postcolonial New World.

Cliff's novels paint a portrait of a matrifocal family in the twentieth century as they, like most of the New World, must adjust to the after-effects of decolonization. In addition, each novel also examines of how matrifocality is as political consciousness as well as a personal practice; matrifocality is shown as an anti-colonial, woman-centered folk tradition that is perpetuated "by recalling the folk wisdom, resilience, and survival strategies for . . . foremothers" (Springer 43).

Caribbean and New World women develop rebel consciousnesses in order to resist and oppose social and political oppression. Cliff's novels "chart the terms of resistance in women's daily lives and illustrate ways in which women can move from the apparent powerlessness of exploitation to the creative power of rebel consciousness" (qtd. in Springer 44).[115] In essence, the significance of these novels is two-fold. On one level the experiences of the characters show how the homespace is very much a political site where the public/private binary separation is revealed as false. On a deeper level, Cliff's continuous flashbacks to the historical (colonial) past of Jamaica and how it invades the identities of the members of the family take on a very woman/mother-centered affirmation of the potential for rebellion against the oppressions of the postcolonial New World encapsulated in the continuation of matrifocality.

I contend that Cliff's description of hemispheric migration of an entire family unit displays how the shift from the Caribbean to the United States at the advent of the Civil Rights Era[116] actually works to pathologize a matrifocal family and, ultimately, severs the relationship between mother and child. Plantation slavery and colonialism in the New World occurred concurrently between the Caribbean and the North American mainland; likewise, the era of decolonization occurred concurrently with the socio-political advancements in American civil

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[115] "'Rebel' names these women as well as signifies their acts of resistance. 'Consciousness' refers to attentiveness to the ways in which their society and culture affect Caribbean women's everyday experiences. Women's awareness of their marginality and their willingness to fight back exemplifies a 'rebel consciousness'" (Springer 44).

[116] While the term "Civil Rights Era" is rather reductive of the years of social and political resistance to racial oppression and the oppressions of class that are specifically tied to race in the United States, my working definition of the Civil Rights Era comes from Melinda Chateauvert: "Between July 3 1964 and 30 July 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed bills granting all three types of rights: The Civil Rights Act, covering employment and civil liberties; the Voting Rights Act of 1965, extending political rights; and the 'social rights' of citizenship through the anti-poverty programs of the Economic Opportunity Act, and the extension of Social Security with Medicare and Medicaid" (200).

society. Hemispheric migration between the regions highlights the significance of this sense of shared history and collective identity; indeed, through this collectivity matrifocality can foster a rebel consciousness. These threads of common (communal?) history in the New World create a dynamic where a collective identity by women through the definition of motherhood and through mothering practices can be formed and fostered.

Most critics describe *Abeng* as a fictionalized rendering of Cliff's own childhood[117] in Jamaica during the final days of colonial rule.[118]Indeed, the majority of the criticism of either of these two novels is almost distractingly concerned with personal connections between Cliff and the heroine of her novels. These connections are superficial and always are introduced through visual characteristics: Michelle Cliff's light skin and Clare Savage's ability to pass as White in *No Telephone*. This racial ambiguity—for author and character—situates Cliff's examination of how the postcolonial and globalized New World creates a literary context where a ambiguity is the hallmark characteristic of a zonal identity (Rody 152).Clare's identity as a light-skinned Caribbean migrant adds a layer of conflict within the matrifocal family: the family itself is divided racially (at least on a physical perceptive level) between the parents. The father, Boy Savage, is also light skinned and remains unshakable in his denial of his own racially mixed kinship network; indeed, he chooses only to acknowledge his white lineage and attempts to indoctrinate Clare into the same mindset. Kitty Savage is visibly Black and in *Abeng* her Blackness contextualizes and justifies her matrifocal background as well as her affinity to the

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[117] Jennifer Thorton Springer describes *Abeng* as a "mostly autobiographical" novel (44).

[118] "[A]utobiographical practice reflects absence, and Michelle Cliff achieves a particularly successful rendering of the cultural discontinuities that form the basis of her protagonist's inquiry and motivation . . . The narrative [*Abeng*] weaves the personal and the political together, allowing the protagonist, Clare Savage—*who is a thinly disguised alter ego of the author*—to negotiate the conflicting elements of her cultural and familial background" (Lionnet 25, my emphasis).

rural poor of Jamaica. The racial disparity that exists within the Savage family unit reflects the extent to which race and racial politics of the decolonized Caribbean and the emerging racial political consciousness in the United States can permeate and influence family relations, specifically the relationship between mother and child. In social contexts where race is the primary mode of separation (between socio-economic classes, between the genders, between family members) Clare's dual identity as both Black and white results in a continuous sense of unbelonging.

Clare's unbelonging is two-fold. Because of Kitty's affinity for the Black rural poor is a result of "anger at marginalization" Clare develops a similar love for the bush and Miss Mattie's house. At the same time, despite efforts by Boy to instill a sense of colonial pride in his elder daughter, Clare also experiences a sense of "guilt over the colonial past" (Robinson-Walcott 95). Within each social structure there is an imposed system of domination and subordination; individuals and groups of people thus act accordingly to these socially prescribed roles.[119] The family unit is thus a social unit and is the primary place where these power relations are enacted and reinforced.[120] A child first learns of the wider social formations of domination and subordination and how gender influences (and is influenced by) these structures (*Domination* 12n19).[121] For the Savage family the racial disparity between Kitty and Boy, between Clare and her sister Jennie, is a reflection of how colonial binary separation between the races. Therefore,

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[119] See *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* by James C. Scott (1991).

[120] An example of this would be Gayle Rubin's essay "The Traffic in Women" which focuses exclusively on the construction of gender and kinship systems without specifically positing either of these concepts within the framework of the family. Kinship is thus spoken of in rather abstract and reductive terms.

[121] Scott's wider argument claims that even subordinated people and/or groups of people, without ever knowing any other kind of social structure, still recognize their subordination and, more specifically, the injustice of it.

the unbelonging that Clare experiences again and again—despite her many migrations in each novel—is first learned by observing and internalizing relations between her parents. The conflict between Kitty and Boy is not only about the racial and historical mixture of the family, but also whether or not the rebel consciousness of a matrifocal maternal environment is an additional burden on Clare.

My readings of these novels unpack how Cliff's narration of matrifocality, as a practice, is a rebel consciousness that is the only method to challenge unbelonging of this nature within a family unit. Cliff writes of this unbelonging as effecting BOTH the mother and the child at the same time. The result for Clare and Kitty is an undeniable claim as to the relevance of a collective identity of women predicated on their status as mothers—no matter how amorphous this conception of motherhood is—within a matrifocal environment.

3.2: Matrifocality Past and Present

> **There is a fundamental dissonance between the accepted ideals of . . . societies and the objective possibility of their realization by the majority of people. This is not due simply to a failure to master instrumental norms; *it has to do with the mode of integration of colonial or ex-colonial societies around the acceptance of white superiority*, while at the same time political power was deployed for the maintenance of a relatively fixed pattern of social and economic relations. (Smith *Matrifocal* 35, my emphasis)**

In the 1960s anthropologist Raymond T. Williams began publishing articles in sociological and cultural journals about family structure and kinship networks in the recently decolonized Caribbean. Through these articles the term "matrifocality" was introduced to academia. Smith's studies examined how New World post-slavery family units and kinship

structures deviated from the European ideal of traditional families. Even after decolonization the disjunction between traditional/folk matrifocality and idealized bourgeois patriarchy continued in the New World. Matrifocality describes a motherhood tradition that grants all family authority to the mother; this authority is due to her position **as** a mother. With family authority reversed from their traditional gender roles, many critics in the field of gender and feminist studies conflate matrifocality with matriarchy (Rowley 22). Matrifocality, as I will use it in this chapter, describes a social (albeit informal) traditional institution; while there are corresponding mothering practices that are integral elements of matrifocality, they will not be the focus below.

Matrifocality and matriarchy are not the same.

The desire to use and confuse matriarchy with matrifocality stems from a feminist inclination in the 1970s in order to offer a social alternative to patriarchal social structures. If European forms of patriarchal control were disseminated the world over through colonialization, these "Third World" feminist critics[122] looked to the historical past to find cultural origins of matriarchal systems. Matriarchy is meant to offer a mirror alternative to patriarchy: "[S]ince patriarchy meant the dominance of men as a class over women as a class, then matriarchy would be defined as the mirror opposite: a society in which women as a class had power and authority over men" (Webster 142). What these studies do take in to account the various forms an umbrella term like "patriarchal control" can take. Ultimately their analysis of matriarchy is as reductive and as damaging as the social structures they are seeking to subvert. Promoting matriarchy as an alternative to patriarchy reverses and repeats (but does not alter) the social division between the sexes. According to this definition of matriarchy the formation of gender

[122] See Rubin and Reiter for a discussion on the promotion of matriarchy as a viable alternative to European forms of patriarchy. For an expanded discussion on the promotion of matrifocality—especially as an alternative to this form of matriarchy—see Mohanty, Rowley, and hooks "Homeplace."

and gender identity is predicated on the biological distinctions between men and women. Dialectical gender oppositions are thus *natural*: power structures which are formed around these differences become intrinsic. This explains the propensity to make no differentiation between matriarchy and matrifocality. Combining "matriarchy" and "matrifocality" together lends greater weight to their opposition to patriarchy regardless of the multiple distinctions in the forms that patriarchal control can take.[123]

According to Rubin, matriarchy is socially opposed to patriarchy based on the biological, and not social, conditions of gender. In a matriarchal society women would be at the figurehead of the kinship network because they are *women* regardless of their status as mothers. Matrifocality, draws heavily from the connection *between* biology and society. A matriarchal society places far too much emphasis on the *biological* components of motherhood, and assumes that society will follow suit. The cultural and social contexts that contain matrifocality and matrifocal families must be examined to the same extent as how Cliff narrates the interactions between the Savages.

Debates about the "origins" of matrifocality in the New World continue to be waged within the field of New World literature studies as well as postcolonial and Black feminist studies. On the one hand, some critics claim that forms of matrifocality are a lasting cultural

[123] In the Introduction to *Gendered Realities* Patricia Mohammed discusses both the rigidity of the social dialectics of gender—specifically the public/private (male/female) dynamic—in contrast with the reality of the malleability of gender, regardless of the regional or cultural context. The core of Mohammed's investigation of this topic is specifically the social functions of gender which are justified by visible physical (biological) differences which, in turn, explains the prevalence of patriarchal control. Put more simply, a form of control is less likely to be challenged when it is visible and physically demonstrated in almost every facet of life. (xiv-xvi)

tradition from various West African societies.[124] Others claim that matrifocality is the direct result of "colonial intervention" that occurred as a result of the Middle Passage where all forms of family life and kinship structures were destroyed (Alexander 23).[125] Regardless of its origins, it cannot be denied that matrifocality has been practiced within the Black communities of the New World from the earliest days of colonialism.[126] The confusion between matriarchy and matrifocality reflects the marginalization of motherhood and mothering as critical sites of inquiry within the context of the transition from a postcolonial to global consciousness. It is easy to understand how the tradition of matrifocality continues in decolonial, global era in the New World once contemporary globalization is viewed as a second wave of colonialism.

My discussion of matrifocality as a form of resistance specifically within New World Black communities is because the practice—in this context—allows for an integrated

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[124] For a fuller discussion of West African influences on New World Black family structures see "Toward a Diaspora Literature" by Gay Wilentz. Smith does make mention that the familial structures in the plantation colonial Caribbean retained elements of family structure that bears striking similarities to "traditional" family structure in Western Africa, but he maintains throughout his text that the conditional of plantation slavery and New World colonialism make the contemporary New World manifestations of matrifocality independent from their African roots.

[125] Because matrifocality is not necessarily defined through direct biological lines, Nancy Bentley describes the tradition of matrifocality in New World Black communities as a response to the "biopolitical fracture" that was the social result of New World colonialism and plantation slavery (271).

[126] According to Melinda Chateauvert the linkage between "traditional" West African cultural traditions with contemporary narratives of Black family structures in the New World yields its own difficulties and problems: "This 'from Africa to America' or 'from slavery to freedom' progression . . . supports other scientific tropes and intellectual concepts such as the demarcations drawn . . . between 'savage' or 'primitive folkways' of southern rural people versus the 'civilized' lifestyles of urban dwellers. Specific terms such as 'dysfunctional,' 'illegitimate, 'matriarchy,' 'pathological,' and even 'family' have shifted meanings over time, reflecting he authors' evolving views with regard to household composition and racial advancement" (207).

examination of how institutionalized racism, classism, and sexism work in tandem to marginalized women as a group, and mothers in particular.

> "Matrifocality" . . . implies a cultural and affective centrality of women *within their kinship group*. "Matriarchy", however, transcends notions of kinship, and addressed not only the familial centrality of women, but also a centrality that extends to the ideological and institutional ordering of social organization. The complexity of family structures and the household . . . is such that matrifocality can exist where males are present. Similarly, it is not to be automatically expected that female-headed households necessarily imply a matrifocal family structure. It is within these domestic . . . distinctions that . . . matrifocality [can be] distinguished from matriarchy. Furthermore, what this distinction also suggests is that the Caribbean has never been a matriarchal region, by virtue of its matrifocality. (Rowley 24)[127]

During the plantation era matrifocality emerged as a "crucial survival mechanism" within slave communities (Chateauvert 206) where kinship was defined in matrilineal terms despite the fact that social and political structures remained patrilineal/patriarchal in nature. The condition of the child was determined by the political condition of the mother in the Black community; this system was constructed with the intention of allowing for absolute deniability of paternity (for those white men who sought to sexually exploit slave women[128]) and also to maintain the

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[127] While both Smith and Rowley limit the scope of their studies on matrifocality to the Caribbean, I believe that similarities which exist within and between communities in both the Caribbean and North American mainland allow for an expanded investigation of matrifocality in the New World.

[128] "The corollary of this is that the adulteration of the race derives from the attraction felt by the white for the black or yellow, and therefore, by inference, since the production of mixed-race

imposed condition of kinlessness on the slave community. Without social or political acknowledgement of paternity or a patrilineal kinship structure, the slave community was ingrained with a sense of separation from the wider social context in which they lived.[129] Imposed kinless in Black communities of the New World was the precondition for the institutionalization of racial theory that was developed throughout the colonial era. The New World matrifocal tradition was developed in order to adapt to the trauma of this imposed kinlessness and has survived the end of colonialism and the end of slavery in the New World because vestiges of these imposed conditions continue to exist in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In the contemporary global era, this imposed kinlessness is further complicated through hemispheric migration because, as I shall show below, the personal agency involved in migration back and forth between the Caribbean and North America changes the nature of how this kinlessness is perceived and internalized. On the one hand, this kinlessness is a historical condition imposed on New World Black communities from above and, therefore, a rebel matrifocal consciousness can be clearly understood and justified. In Cliff's second novel, the

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children is the issue, by the white male for the yellow or black female. This union can be effected because the white male, belonging to a strong, conquering race, will be in a position of power . . . it can only be this that allows the instinctive attraction felt by the white man to the black or yellow woman. It is at this point that we encounter a glimpse of the disjunction, but also the link, between discursive desire and the violence of colonial desire in its execution. In the relation of hierarchal power, the white male's response to the allure of exotic black sexuality is identified with mastery and domination, no doubt fuelled by the resistance of the black female. This sadistic imperative, increased by the repugnance felt by the black for the white, is inevitably accompanied by the requirement of a masochistic submission by the subordinated, objectified woman" (Young 108).

[129] "Kinlessness . . . isolates the reproductivity of slavery . . . as the site for extracting biopolitical matter, the denuded human 'increase' that defines and perpetuates a class of infrahuman beings. Conceived as a bare genealogy , the transmission of genetic life alone, kinlessness operates to make the facts of the body serve the sociopolitical order of New World slave societies" (Bentley 271).

kinlessness that Clare Savage experiences is imposed from within; it is her own mother who quits the family and migrates away from her daughter. This self-imposed kinlessness is what distinguishes Cliff's novel apart from other literary representations of matrifocality and also displays how kinlessness in a globalized era (where it is imposed from within and not from without) can inspire a rebel consciousness.

A matrifocal family unit deviates from the "normalized" and "traditional" family "ideal" because it always already assumes the father/ patriarch is not the centralized figure of power within the family. In the colonial period the rebel potential of matrifocality was two-fold. Slave women and lower-class women were allowed a level of autonomy and authority within the family unit that was denied to them in the wider "public" space. A matrifocal family offered the only space where women/mothers/"matriarchs" was granted authority and social respect within the community. The existence of Black matrifocal families challenges the intricate structure of colonialism that conflated sexism and racism, racism and classism. Not only are these family units operating outside of what was (and still is) considered a "traditional" social norm, it weakens the very nature of patriarchal control over both social and private spheres.

Matrifocality is a form of rebel consciousness because it has managed to survive and adapt from the colonial to postcolonial to global historical periods. It has survived as a form of rebellion specifically because it can and does exist within established patriarchal and racist structures. A rebel consciousness is first fostered in the homespace and from there it is transferred to the wider social sphere where the potential for resistance against structures of oppression and domination is multiplied exponentially. Matrifocality as a "tradition" can be understood as an ever-evolving process as well as an established (if informal) social tradition. The perpetuation of matrifocality through colonization and decolonization is a testament to its

rebel nature because of this constant evolution and adaptation. For women who have, historically, been doubly marginalized by their race and class, the tradition of matrifocality has persisted because it allows women to form their own ways of self-definition.[130]

The continuous adaptations in the matrifocal family tradition in New World women's writings indicate that the social matrifocal institution of motherhood remains a viable source of resistance to oppressive forces against women in general and mothers in particular. The fluid nature of matrifocality also indicates that matrifocal kinship networks and family units are in a constant state of (re)negotiation with the boundaries that confine (and sometimes define) its presence in the New World. Michelle Cliff's novels display how the concept of matrifocality is not static. Cliff's portrait of matrifocality presents the tradition (and the corresponding mothering practices that are a part of this tradition) as fluid and ever-evolving along with the transition from a colonial to a postcolonial era. This tradition is also undergoing a process of transformation with the transition to a global economy.

Cliff's narrative displays the always already tension between the forces of (colonialist) patriarchy and (rebel) matrifocality and the damage it can do to a single family unit and forever frame how the Savages relate to each other. Cliff clearly ascribes the racial divide between family members and the wider social sphere to add another layer of complexity to her portrait of a matrifocal family. What is interesting is that these familial relations are also constantly linked with the larger colonial past of Jamaica; the tradition of matrifocality and its potential for rebellion is implicitly referenced with multiple scenes of the violence colonial slave women endured.

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[130] "[P]rocesses of self-definition continue within the wider contexts in which we act, work, and live. The importance of recognition thus pertains both to our development and to our ongoing sense of who we are. Consequently, the denigration of one's social identity by others is not simply an external annoyance, but a deep undercutting of self" (Warnke 94).

In *Abeng* the historical necessity for matrifocality is described through a series of flashbacks that are separate from the main drama of the novel. Much of the narrative consists of Clare Savage's coming of age in the mid-twentieth century Jamaica at the end of imperial rule. Clare's nuclear family reflects the traditional ideal of patriarchal authority residing entirely with her father. Clare's extended family (on both sides of the Savage and Freeman family trees) is matrifocal in nature. Despite the differences in each family's historical past,[131] matrifocality is a thread that permeates each family either blatantly or subtly. Cliff's novels show a kind of matrifocality that haunts the colonial past and is undergoing a period of redefinition in the postcolonial present. Clare Savage's coming-of-age story reflects the same discomfort with her emerging understanding of the colonial past of Jamaica and her anxieties about her development from child to young woman can be read as a metaphor for the decolonization of the New World—which the novel hints at the end. Clare's development throughout the novel is framed within the tension between these two family structures. Kitty Savage, Clare's mother, is the key character who embodies this restricted rebel consciousness as she defers, throughout the text, to her husband.

Cliff makes the differences between Kitty and Boy so blatant that the real development for Clare is how her relationship with her mother represents her growing awareness of how

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[131] A discussion of the significance of Cliff's choice of surnames for Boy and Kitty's families will follow in the next section. What is important at this moment is that each family conceives of their historical connection to Jamaica as a whole is defined in terms of whiteness. While Kitty and Miss Mattie's sympathies always lay with the Black rural poor of the island, the Freemans also chart the family's upward mobility is directly related to the whiteness in their skin. "They [the Freemans] were as old a family as the Savage family. *All Jamaican families were old families*. There had been no waves of immigration. No new settlers seeking a frontier. Only a setting of blood as some lighter skins crossed over one or other of the darker ones—keeping guard, though, over a base of darkness . . . The Freemans did not question this structure . . . The Freemans fit themselves into the structure and said that yes they were red people, and *that was nothing to be ashamed of. At the same time preserving their whiteness*" (*Abeng* 54, my emphasis).

matrifocality (as a tradition) is one of the ways colonial women (in the historical past or in the contemporary New World) develop their rebel consciousness. The tension in the novel is created because Clare feels she must choose between her father and her mother. To identify with Boy and the other Savages is to deny the matrifocal rebellion consciousness that her mother represents. To identify with Kitty and Miss Mattie's rebellion is to deny herself all of the wonders of European greatness that her father promotes. With these interludes Cliff demonstrates a clear connection between the multiple forms of rebellion that were included in matrifocal contexts during the colonial era.

No Telephone to Heaven continues with the tensions established in the first novel. The family moves from Jamaica to New York City in the 1960s; the ambiguities and anxieties present in their migration are further exacerbated by the political, civic, and social turmoil in both regions. The tension between Kitty and Boy is made much more evident in this work than the previous novel. In *Abeng*, the narration would imply Kitty and Boy's dislike and moderate distrust of each other; when Kitty complained or voiced her frustration with her husband's influence on her oldest daughter it would be spoken of quietly with her mother, when she was sure no one was listening. "Kitty usually ignored Boy's pretentions about whiteness and lightness, giving him room for this delusions" (*Abeng* 130). Once transplanted to a new environment that is like yet still immensely different, Kitty finds it increasingly difficult to keep her silence. Cliff does not directly juxtapose the flashbacks (and sometimes flash-forwards) in the novel away from Clare's development from adolescent to woman. Likewise, the slight alteration in the construction of the narrative from clearly delineated into convenient then/now modes of narration. Moreover, this also presents matrifocality as a tradition rooted in the past,

the ambiguous ending for Clare Savage wedged uncomfortably between her parents racial and colonial identities, but the survival of this tradition in the future is equally ambiguous.

No Telephone imagines how this tradition, and the rebel consciousness from which it was borne, develops and adapts to the cultural and political changes in the late twentieth century. Kitty's experiences in New York as a Black immigrant are integral in her development from silently rebel consciousness grows into fruition; and as such, in order to fully assume the mantle of rebel matrifocality left absent by Miss Mattie (who dies early in the novel) and return to her true home in the rural bush of Jamaica. The primary conflict of this novel for Clare Savage to resolve is how to assume her mother's place when Kitty dies.

No Telephone's ending is just as ambiguous as its predecessor and ends with the same tone that balances anxiety and ambivalence. Clare assumes her mother's rebel consciousness and the narrative ends with her death as she and a group of revolutionary guerrillas laid siege to an American film crew shooting a movie on the island. The target of this uprising is movie; the film crew is symbolic of how cultural and economic neo-imperialism is created and disseminated around the world in the modern *global* era. With the destruction of the movie set Cliff's narrative destroys the fantasy that the social and cultural ramifications of colonial plantation slavery are still very much present in the global present. Clare's transition from teenager to a social non-bloodmother to a pack of political militants addresses how matrifocality in the New World is always already an element of a rebel consciousness.

3.3: *Abeng*: A Family of Savages

> **The definition of what a Savage was like was fixed by color, class, and religion, and over the years a carefully contrived mythology was constructed,**

> **which they used to protect their identities. When they were poor, and not all of them white, the mythology persisted. They swore by it. (*Abeng* 29)**

Michelle Cliff explains the symbolic significance of the name of *Abeng*'s heroine in her essay "Caliban's Daughter":

> Clare Savage's first name signifies light-skinned, which she is, and in the worlds she knows, light skin stands for privilege, civilization, erasure, proximity to the colonizer . . . Clare Savage's surname is self-explanatory. It is intended to invoke the wildness which has been bleached from her skin . . . [and a] knowledge of history, the past which has been bleached from her mind, just as the rapes of her grandmothers bleached her skin. (44-5)

Clare is seen mostly in the company of her father in this novel, yet the emotional distance she feels from her mother is palpable. With Boy and Kitty acting as representatives of their racial and class loyalties, Clare's name is more is a play on the word "clear" because, throughout both novels, she reflects the same kind of loyalty Kitty shows for the Black folk and Boy's colonial nostalgia. Clare feels she is trapped between her parents and confused about her racial identification she absorbs and embraces the sentiments of each parent when in their individual company, but this metaphorical transparency also works against her own psychological development. If she is, indeed, clear to camouflage her own identity, then what are the stakes of remaining stranded between Kitty and Boy's social and racial differences?

Boy Savage's first name frames his character is a perpetual state of childhood; a childhood that is only tangentially connected to his own upbringing. Boy's passionate loyalty to the grandeur of his Irish (read: White) relatives/ ancestors assertions of colonial nostalgia. He is a

faithful follower of the colonial system that not only promotes Whiteness as a social and economic ideal (more on this later), but at the same time he is most comfortable as the father/patriarch of the current Savage family. Boy's father was *not* a Savage; he was born out of wedlock to his mother when she was in New York as a dancing girl (*Abeng* 41). On the surface it would seem that Boy's inheritance of his mother's name displays how even he cannot escape the matricentric social traditions of Jamaica in that the name is passed down through the matrilineal line. While Boy and his mother never interact in the novel—are never seen together in fact—her power as his mother is transferred into Boy's loyalty to all things white. Therefore, it is through his mother's absence in America where Boy formulates his own identity. " *He longed for her* and built his longing around the Great White Way and Tin Pan Alley, places she described to him, and tried to visualize life with his mother there. . . . *Boy never forgot her*" (*Abeng* 42, my emphasis).

Boy Savage is the embodiment of colonial bourgeois urbane culture: he is eternally "caught between the future and the past—both equal in his imagination" (*Abeng* 22). The irony here obvious; Boy's promotion of all things European to Clare, and especially the value of the Savage name, the narrative moments which display the actions of the Savages abusing their position as colonial plantation patriarchs counter any argument Boy can make to Clare. The "Savage" family's European roots begin with an ancestor who is described only by way of his Irish (read: White) lineage (*Abeng* 23) and whom Boy tries to humanize for Clare when he teaches her about the family's past; instead of referring to him by name, Boy refers to him as Clare's "great-great-grandfather" (*Abeng* 25). Boy does this because he wants Clare to believe, as he does, that these ancestors are actually relatives; by presenting the ancestor in this way Boy strives to create for his daughter a link with her past in the same manner Kitty and Miss Mattie

connect with the colonial past in real, everyday ways. The Savage children, like their parents, are distinguishable by their skin color. Because Clare is light-skinned like Boy, Boy assumes the role of teacher to instill in Clare the same manner of Savage-pride that he works so hard to maintain in himself. Neither Clare nor Boy discusses why Clare's sister Jennie (who is visibly Black like Kitty) is excluded from these "lessons."[132] Boy's denial of his Blackness[133] translates into a lifetime of denial of certain parts of Jamaica's history that Clare's mother embraces wholeheartedly.

The narrative infers as to why the same manner of distance between Jennie and Boy mirrors the distance between Clare and Kitty. Kitty Savage and her mother Miss Mattie are the main matrifocal characters in both texts. Boy's devotion to urbane colonial sophistication stands in direct contrast to Kitty's affection for the rural poor (black) community where Miss Mattie lives. Unlike Boy, whose obsession with the past is his attempt to place himself on the "winning side of history" (Edmondson 127), Kitty's relationship with her mother, and with the rural

[132] Boy's instructions to Clare about the history of the Savages throughout the plantation era in Jamaica take place in a decayed colonial manor house that was once owned many generations back by a Savage. The irony of Boy's colonial nostalgia is that the manor house and the surrounding property has been sold to an American develop to transform them into a tourist destination. "'May we go in, Daddy?' 'I don't see why not; after all, it did belong to *us* once." So father and daughter climbed the veranda steps and heard the noises of lizards running through the vines and across the latticework" (*Abeng* 24, my emphasis).

[133] In a final twist of irony, even this seemingly harmless manifestation of Boy's devotion to the British Empire (and his small place in the creation of that Empire) cannot escape the permeation of plantation slavery's evil into every family tree on the island. Boy is not a direct descendant from the European Savage line. What matters to him is the glory of the English Empire and his constant promotion of all things white and English speaks to the larger anxieties within the text of the coming decolonization. "Mr. Savage was caught somewhere between the future and the past—both equal in his imagination" (*Abeng* 22). With the denial of the matrifocal past that he intends on instilling in his oldest daughter, he is laying the groundwork for Clare to deny herself her own rebel consciousness, not just in a matrifocal context, but also she is expected to deny herself the black history that her mother and her grandmother represent.

residents who neighbor Miss Mattie's property, symbolizes the collective community which Rody claims is a result of matrifocality.[134]

> *These two distinct places created the background for the whole of their existence. And the places reflected the separate needs and desires of the two parents. It seemed to Clare that Kitty came alive only in the bush, while Boy armed himself against it* . . . The daughters' lives were bound, as are the lives of most children, by the personalities of their parents and the events of their lives, *the way the car took as they drove between the country and town, were dictated by the needs and desires of these two people*. (*Abeng* 49, my emphasis)

Kitty and Boy's differences set the stage for the identity conflict both of their children will face in the novels. On the surface this passage dispels the notion of strict cultural binaries which are in place in colonial contexts and survive even after colonial liberation.[135] Writing a generation after Marshall's *Chosen Place* was released, Michelle Cliff recreates the same rural/urban separation between cosmopolitan "coloured" culture and the folk (Black) rural areas. The stakes in this novel, however, are raised because, unlike Marshall, Cliff's attention is focused on how those caught in the in-between spaces must make a conscious choice between the two.

Clare matures from childhood it becomes shockingly clear that not only are the binaries themselves fraudulent, but that they themselves are not even stable ideologies. When we first

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[134] "Miss Mattie did not speak about her own childhood to her children—or to many other people for that matter . . . The slaves were freed by the Crown in 1834, and Miss Mattie was not born until 1892, but she knew the kind of slavery which had often followed on emancipation" (*Abeng* 141).

[135] For a more complete reading of cultural binaries in Jamaica during the colonial and post-colonial periods, see *Afro-Creole* by Richard Burton (1997).

meet the Savage family we see them attend two separate churches on Sunday. Boy Savage favors the church that is solidly European; complete with a "red-faced Englishman" who officiates over the services and a harpsichord to accompany the congregation when they sing "God Save the Queen" (*Abeng* 6). After visiting this church the family returns home, changes their clothes and then travels to a separate church which is described as "Mrs. Savage's place of worship" (*Abeng* 11). The congregation at the Tabernacle is described in singularly Jamaican terms[136]; but, again, the seemingly simple binary separation between Kitty and Boy is made more complex. Clare recognizes that the distinctions between these two churches carry implications beyond their cultural ramifications: Boy's church is peopled by the middle and upper-middle class of Kingston (*Abeng* 7). Conversely, Kitty's Tabernacle is occupied by the rural poor and Black (*Abeng* 12). The tension between Kitty and Boy savage is meant, initially, to display the dynamic of colonial binary opposition.

The rebel consciousness that Kitty and Miss Mattie try to instill in Clare is implicitly connected to Cliff's subtle promotions of matrifocality. Kitty and Miss Mattie's matrifocality is always already racialized; for them their attempts to instill a matrifocal rebel consciousness in Clare is hindered because of Clare's light skin. This is exasperated in the text by Boy's

[136] What is most evident to Clare when she gazes at the other congregants is how the children her own age are dressed: "The boy children wore the khaki most Jamaican boys wore, with their school insignia showing in the colors of the epaulets on their shoulders. The girl children were small replicas of the [adult] women" (*Abeng* 11). My reason for describing this scene as "Jamaican"—whereas Boy Savage's church as "European"—harkens back to Edmondson's definition of aesthetics within the colonies: "[I]t it precisely the mastery of . . . Englishness which provided the mode for instituting a specifically West Indian consciousness" (*Making Men* 45). That the boys are wearing their "Jamaican" khaki along with their (assumedly) colonial school jackets embodies this aesthetic.

attachment to Clare, and mother and grandmother, are anxious about whether or not Clare will fully assimilate to her father's political and social positions.[137]

Boy Savage is the only member of the family who understands the awkward social position light skinned West Indians have in the postcolonial era; this partially also explains Boy's relentless promotion of all things colonial. The vehemence of his adoration of his Savage lineage could be viewed as overcompensation for an underlying recognition of the violence in his extended family tree.[138] This obvious difference is an unspoken wall that springs up between Clare and her mother and grandmother, because she does not resemble them to the extent as her younger sister Jennie (who does not speak in the course of this novel) and. Kitty and Miss Mattie recognize that in the larger social sphere her skin is an asset and impressive to their other relatives which, in turn, reflects well on them.

Throughout the novel Kitty and Miss Mattie work to instill a sense of class justice in Clare; this is manifested through their continuous, yet subtle, way of connecting matrifocality to the development of a rebel consciousness. Kitty Savage and Miss Mattie Freeman use their rebel consciousnesses as a way of opposing the economic disparity in Jamaica that is most evident through racial differences. If Clare is to accept her Blackness, she must turn away from Boy's lessons of the famous Savages and, instead, retreat into the bush with her mother. Likewise, both Kitty and Miss Mattie resistances to the continuation of an institutionalized racism interwoven with the class system on the island is presented as a source of political and cultural pride. "Kitty

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[137] "Boy taught his eldest daughter that she came from his people—white people, he stressed—and he expected Clare to do preserve his green eyes and light skin—those things she had been born with. And she had a duty to try to turn the green eyes blue, once and for all—and make the skin, now gold, become pale and subject to sunburn. These things she should pursue" (*Abeng* 127).

[138] SeeWalcott-Robinson and "Caliban's Daughter"

had a sense of Jamaica that her husband would never have. She thought that there was no other country on earth as beautiful as *hers*" (*Abeng* 52, my emphasis). Kitty's matrifocality is expanded beyond the nuclear family unit. Kitty's drive to care for the unknown poor whom she encounters displays an unspoken social condition on the island where the women establish a collective identity through the care for children. "The country people touched [Kitty] in a deep place—these were her people, and she never questioned her devotion to them" (*Abeng* 52, my emphasis).

Clare's mother and grandmother focus their efforts on the disjunction between the bourgeois and urbane residents of Kingston and the rural poor of the bush who are Miss Mattie's neighbors. Kitty and Miss Mattie are the living matrifocal mother and foremother examples for Clare. At the same time, the levels of visibility as to how race and socio-economic class work in tandem to create and reproduce the structures of power that are the fabric of the colonial system in Jamaica both past and present. Clare's light skin is, at once, considered an accomplishment for Clare and her family. "Visibly, [Clare] was the *family's crowning achievement*, combining the better of sides, and favoring one rather than the other" (*Abeng* 61, my emphasis). Though Miss Mattie appreciates the status of having such a light skinned granddaughter affords her, she also is made uncomfortable at how and why having a light-skinned granddaughter would afford her this in the first place. Her internalization of this colonial axiom (even in the twentieth century) is directly related to Miss Mattie's identity as the direct descendant of liberated slaves.

> Individuals internalize the categories that race serves up and interject them as descriptions of who they are, as identities that shape their prospects and life plans. In this way, race acquires a solidity in individuals' conceptions of themselves . . . If social identities such as race are the product of power, if they have been

> imposed on one as a source of negative expectations and restrictive, demeaning scripts, then to appropriate such an identity consciously, to take it up as who one is, is to defy the negativity associated with it. (Warnke 98)

Unlike Boy Savage who is able to conveniently dismiss some of the darker aspects of Jamaican colonial and contemporary life, the internalization of the racial oppression woven into the fabric of New World cultures is particularly difficult to dismiss as a woman. Going further than the obvious rape of slave women displayed throughout the novel and in Cliff's "Caliban's Daughter," Miss Mattie's continuous discomfort around her peers as she witnesses their admiration of her "best features" generates an anger that translates into vehement sense rebel consciousness to avenge the lower (Black) classes on the island.

Clare is acutely aware of the differences between Kitty and Boy, especially their conflicting class and race loyalties. Boy pines for the colonial past while Kitty quietly mourns the destruction colonialism brought to the island and is being exacerbated by the impending independence of Jamaica. Both parents are caught in the past, but for Clare it is the ambiguous future—of her country, of her family, and herself—that adds layer upon layer of anxiety throughout the novel. To follow her father, always forever trapped in the past, is to dismiss her love of Jamaica as a *Jamaican* Savage; to create a rift in her relationship with him in this way would damage their relationship beyond repaid as Boy's colonial loyalty saturates his character. To follow Kitty would be to retreat into the rural bush where her white skin is more emblematic of bourgeois urbanity more than anything else. This tension works to frame Clare Savage's development throughout the novel with a sense of fragmentation: between her Black and White, European and former African, rich and poor sides of her family's tree. Simon Gikandi discusses extensively the level of fragmentation in both context and content that runs throughout both of

Cliff's novels. While Gikandi's analysis focuses more exclusively on the symbols of colonial fragmentation that surround Clare—the ancestral Savage home, the portrait of the Queen ("Our-lady-of-the-colonies" (*Abeng* 5)) etc.—this fragmentation can also be applied to the rebel consciousness that Miss Mattie and Kitty try to instill in Clare.

The disjunction the narrative presents between Kitty and Boy means more to Clare than the navigating structures of power within her own family unit. Instead, Cliff goes to great pains to show that Boy and Kitty each represent a distinct postcolonial consciousness. Boy, obviously, identifies with waning cultural influences of English colonialism. At the same time, because his own mother migrated to the United States, and because the novel begins during the final days of British colonial rule in Jamaica, Boy recognizes the emerging cultural imperialism developing from the North American mainland. Boy is only able to do this because he identifies himself as White; as such, because of Clare's skin color he encourages her to do the same. Kitty, for the same reasons as Boy, identifies as Jamaican—and according to Cliff, to be Jamaican is to identify as Black. It would be too simple to assume that the survival of matrifocality lies in the promotion of one mindset over the other or, by one racial loyalty over the other. Glissant notes that Caribbean consciousness is predicated on the resistance of self-definition as fixed. Because the New World as a whole came in to being through a series of migrations back and forth across the Atlantic, denial of the mixture of colonial peoples (Black and European) as a defining element of Caribbeanness ignores the central role the historical past plays in constructing the contemporary present (*Discourse* 14-5). Both parents are to blame in this case. Kitty's loyalty to the Black rural poor is just as myopic as Boy's unquestioning devotion to the long-dead Irish Savages who came to Jamaica in the early years of colonialism. The dilemma for Clare, then, is not only to negotiate the relations between her parents and the differing consciousnesses they

represent, but also negotiate how her mixed race balances between these two mindsets. How can she assume the heritage of Kitty and Miss Mattie's matrifocal rebel consciousness when her outward appearance marks her as a (White) Savage? How can she follow along with Boy's tall tales of her Savage ancestor when his devotion to all things British disregards and rejects the central role slavery played in constructing the modern Caribbean (evidence of which still remains in the rural folk life that Kitty loves so much)?

Kitty's rebel consciousness is to ensure that matrifocality is at least practiced in her own immediate family, no small task while she is married to Boy:

> *Perhaps* her marriage to Boy was an attempt to contain colonialism in her own home—*not conscious, of course*. Both Boy and Kitty were locked in the past—separate pasts to be sure, but each clung to something back there . . . If Kitty could have shared her love-which-proceeded-from-darkness with anyone, it would have been with Jennie, her younger, darker child, in the same position at birth as Kitty herself . . . But Clare would never gain admission—*she had been handed over to Boy the day she was born*. (*Abeng* 128, my emphasis)

Kitty realizes the influence Boy has over her daughter, and, moreover, Kitty herself is partially responsible for pairing Boy and Clare together because of their skin color. At the same time, she is also aware that it is part of her rebel consciousness that demands she instill a sense of matrifocality into Clare in order to pass on the tradition. Kitty's matrifocality and her determination to contain the permeating effects of colonialism within her nuclear family is evidence of a matrifocal rebel consciousness. The source of Kitty's despair relates directly to matrifocality; while it does present a rebel consciousness that challenges the patriarchal authority

that Boy embodies, at the same time it is subject to that authority. She despises her husband's denial of his own mixed racial ancestry. By comparing it to the damaging effects of Boy's colonial promotion, both Savage children are paired off with each parent according to the very social structures that matrifocality is meant to challenge.

Michelle Cliff's critique of colonial loyalty, and the damage it can do, is evident throughout all of the interactions between the Savages and the Freemans in *Abeng*; their dysfunctional relationships with each other and their semi-functional relationship with the colonial past can be read as further evidence of the similarities between colonialism and globalization. In this novel where colonial independence is just over the horizon, the ghosts of the past haunt the present for the characters. Cliff's exhibit of how colonialism permeates and saturates every primary relationship in the novel allows for a focused and complex examination of matrifocality in the postcolonial New World. At the same time, her narrative also shows how the characters are constantly working to overcome or work through these familial and social dysfunctions. This is no easy task in a place where upward social mobility is always already related (pardon the pun) in some way to (White European) racial and cultural identification, to turn away from the pull of a globalized cultural assimilation of bourgeois values. To become a (White) well behaved young girl, a future more befitting her position as a light skinned Jamaican urbanite, Clare must outwardly embrace the colonial loyalty that keep this system of oppression and subtle resistance alive. Clare is sent away from her usual summer residence with Miss Mattie because she shot a bull grazing on Miss Mattie's land. It is not the killing of the animal that is the cause for Clare's punishment entirely; her crime is to transgress the gender boundaries for what is allowed for a young girl, and also the racial prohibitions that dictate that Clare's responsibility as a light-skinned girlchild translates into less and less time in the bush with her grandmother.

Clare is last seen sitting on the porch in the middle of a quiet night internalizing the significance of her first menstruation. This physical change completes her development from girl-child to woman in the course of the text. "Cliff's heroine makes the vital discovery that . . . solidarity with other girls [through menstruation] can restore a symbolic connection to the lost mother . . . It is thus a maternal vision of . . . solidarity that Clare's story affirms; bodily identification with other women is doing the unburied mother's work" (Rody 177). While Clare sits contemplating the gravity of this experience she does not think of her father; she does not think of how her possible future as a mother is related to her family's explicit and implicit hints that one of her duties would be to have child as light skinned or lighter than her. The transition from girl to woman symbolizes Clare's abstract psychic connection to motherhood; once Clare menstruates she now possesses the power to become a mother herself. At the same time Cliff's framing of the novel in this way also (simultaneously) promotes an anti-colonial objective by breaking away from the colonial mater-narrative conventions that display women and girl characters as being the property of family patriarchs (Francis 63). This literary tradition is combated by Cliff through her focus "on girlhood and the attending patriarchal logic that governed socialization; especially evident in mother/daughter relationships" (Francis 63).

Its Kitty's words and Kitty's advice that Clare recalls as she cleans herself: "Kitty told her it was a 'sweet pain,' and nothing to worry about. Something which would pass. Something which only meant that her body was working as it should" (*Abeng* 166). The development of Clare's body reflects the political and social changes happening in her own family and also on the entire island. The voice of her mother calming her, assuring her of the natural progression and assuaging her fears and uncertainties of the changes happening in her body that she cannot see, ends the novel on an ambiguous tone, but a hopeful one. That Clare hears Kitty's gentle

calming voice and does not think of Boy displays Cliff's conclusion that while the future of matrifocal rebel consciousnesses in the future is also unstable.

What is significant about this final snapshot of Clare at the end of the novel is that it encapsulates her chronic condition of in-between-ness. First, the setting is important; Clare is not in Kingston, she is in the country, but not in the bush with her grandmother. She has been sent to an English matron to school her in becoming a "Lady;" she will no longer be allowed to run free with the rural Black folk as she had in her youth. In this sense, Clare's removal from her grandmother signifies that she must act according to her color; she must live up to the "achievement" of her light skin, as Miss Mattie's friends describe Clare. Clare must become a Savage, in every sense of the word and transition from girl to woman. At the same time, because it through her father's lineage that this identification is understood, Clare cannot really become a Savage, because her maturation is a physical reminder that Clare is more like her mother. Second, the recollection of Kitty's words signifies that Clare can never, fully become a Savage in the sense that Boy expects; her mother will always be with her, even in her flesh and the machinations of her womanly body. The longing that Clare feels at the end of the novel really speaks to the sense of distance that Clare feels from Kitty and her unconscious apprehension about where she fits in the larger matrifocal context; a proper "lady" has no need to resist the patriarchal control of defining what a woman/mother is in a postcolonial setting and, therefore, does not possess any inkling of rebel consciousness. Clare's recollection of this is a reminder that she can never fully escape the history which produced the consciousness of rebellion in her grandmother and her mother. More so, she understands that at some point she will either have to intentionally and consciously deny this rebellion in herself, or give over to it completely.

The ambiguity that the closes the novel also has far-reaching significance regarding Cliff's over-all argument about the contemporary Caribbean condition; Clare cannot exist eternally in the in-between space between her parents. Likewise, neither Kitty nor Boy can continue to exist in their separate realms of colonial and rebel loyalties because of the effects it has on their daughter. So long as the family remains in Jamaica where this balance is at least possible, in the second novel the removal to the United States destroys any chance of harmony. In *Abeng*, Clare's youthful age hinders her from fully realizing the potential of the strength that matrifocal rebellion can contain because Kitty herself never allows her own matrifocality to fully emerge. In *No Telephone to Heaven* this rebellion boils to the surface because hemispheric migration to the United States tips the balance between Kitty and Boy. In a context where the significance of the colonial history of the New World is not as palpable—but the emerging cultural and social domination of globalization are more evident in explicit racism and sexism—Kitty's matrifocal rebellion results in her abandonment of Clare to her father. Therefore, the ambiguity at the end of *Abeng* signifies the ambiguity of the postcolonial period where rebellion is present but not necessarily powerful; Kitty resists Boy when she can, but she does not actively challenge him. Clare's silent contemplation about the changes in her body foreshadows the future she must make for herself; whether or not to assume the rebel matrifocal mantle of her foremothers.

3.4: *No Telephone to Heaven*—Migration and Matrifocality

> **With as strong a desire for the mother-of-history as their African-American counterparts, but with a more chastened hope . . . Caribbean daughter-figures must be especially heroic, must sacrifice their lives in anticolonial resistance, pursuing the maternal . . . through violence and grief to tragic**

> **endings. Their plots signal victory only in *symbolic gestures* toward futurity, the *spiritual mothering* of daughters in a new Caribbean day. (Rody 122, my emphasis)**

The main plotline of *No Telephone to Heaven* follows the Savage family as they move from Kingston to New York City at the height of the Civil Rights era; the political tensions in Jamaica resulting from decolonization are mirrored by the social upheavals occurring in the United States. *No Telephone to Heaven,* much like its predecessor, focuses primarily on Clare Savage's development from adolescent to young woman. Unlike *Abeng*, this development is introduced alongside the theme of hemispheric migration in the postcolonial period of the mid/late twentieth century. Because of the social and political changes—both tied to a reconceptualizing of racial identity that deviates from colonial forms of binary separations—shatters the precarious balance between Kitty and Boy Savage and their children that was narrated in *Abeng*.

The Savage family leaves Jamaica for the United States in 1960. Boy Savage, no longer extolling the virtues for the "mother country," is eager to leave Kingston behind and thrilled to enjoy this "new start in a new world" (*NTTH* 53-4). As with his colonial bravado in the first novel, Kitty remains unimpressed with Boy's excitement and distrustful of his confidence. Cliff adds this layer of tension over the layers of tension that already exist in the Savage family and the migration to the United States represents the beginning of the end of the marriage.

Cliff continues to employ her non-linear narration with periodic flashbacks to the historical past and also the immediate aftermath of postcolonial Jamaica which prompted the Savages to quit the island. In the first novel it is clear that Cliff goes to great pains to separate contemporary Jamaica from the distant colonial past. In *NTTH*, the separation between the past

and the present is ambiguous, almost imperceptible for Clare and Kitty. This raises the stakes for Kitty who becomes more and more rebellious to her husband and his whims after the family has migrated; her relationship with her daughter in the second novel reflects Cliff's generalized anxiety about the survival of the mother-centric tradition (that is singularly New World in nature) in a time of decolonization. With the swiftness and breadth of the political and social changes happening throughout the Atlantic world in the 1960s, Clare's decision to follow in either her father or her mother's footsteps is one of the primary concerns of the novel. Matrifocal family traditions exist in some form in the Caribbean and North America due to similar histories and geographical closeness. While the significance of the colonial/historical past of the Caribbean is one of the primary concerns of the previous novel, in *NTTH* Cliff's focus is on the present and an ambiguous future for the postcolonial world with the rising advent of globalization. In the era of protest—the decolonization of the Caribbean and the expansion of Civil Rights in the United States—Cliff's narrative is emblematic of Black feminist critics who assert that the structures of power that shape postcolonial social and civic politics are really continuations of colonial and colonialist structures of power.[139] This cross-cultural connection makes it convenient to assume that all forms of matrifocality in the New World are homogenous; this assumption is commonly made in conjunction with the critical confusion between matrifocality and matriarchy. Likewise, this manner of thinking also leads to the safe and convenient assumption that all post-emancipation Black communities can be broadly generalized in the same manner. The tradition of matricentric and matrifocal families within the Black communities in both the Caribbean have

[139] "The concept of post-coloniality . . . almost mandates that one ignores or rationalizes the numerous colonizing operations still taking place. The numerous peoples that are still existing in a colonial relationship . . . have to automatically participate in the post-colonial moment whether their experience warrants it or not, and remain somehow outside of the bounds of discussion to be explained away" (Davies *BWWI* 83).

produced a body of literature that presents contrasting visions of the mother and, by extension differing conceptions of the nature of matrifocal families.[140]

Cliff's decision to fictionalize a hemispheric migration also offers a perspective to act as a companion to mid-century transatlantic by writers like V.S. Naipaul and George Lamming.[141] Boy's forsaking of the cultural security of the colonial metropole reflects Cliff's critique of colonialism in the New World. The damaging effects of this migration and Boy's patriotic American rhetoric are tempered for Clare in the first half of the novel. Boy's decision to move to America displays how the act of migration itself does not necessarily resolve the social structures of domination and subordination that result from the original colonial enterprise in the Atlantic. What is interesting about Cliff's narrative of hemispheric migration is that it shows an entire family migrating *together*; unlike other narratives of hemispheric migration where the intersections of racial and economic domination is manifested through a female migrant's separation from her family.

The psychic trauma a migrant New World woman experiences in contemporary writings is a popular motif in Cliff's writings, and in the works by her peers. Furthermore, this separation

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[140] "Women writers created several figures of the failed, unmothering maternal bodies listed earlier, a catalogue of horrors surpassing the outrageous mother-figures of the African-American women's renaissance. These contradictory Caribbean mothers suggest a certain incoherence in the symbolic structure within which Caribbean women render their histories—as if a revered mother source somehow spurns specific daughters, or as if strong human mothers reside in a sick, dying mother-land. Maternal figures like these mirror the paradox of reclaiming a history of disaster and disempowerment" (Rody 120).

[141] "The shift of the London/Caribbean axis to the United States is clearly linked to the shift in migration patterns after the independence of the British colonies, when North American, not Britain, became the mecca for Caribbean peoples seeking economic prosperity. . . [T]his emigration out of the Caribbean, particularly in the last twenty-five years, has been of a heavily female nature, owing particularly to the burgeoning market in domestic work. Many social scientists have noted that the large influx of Caribbean women who have migrated to metropolitan centers such as New York since the 1970s" (156).

is almost always linked with the separation between mother and child. Indeed, one need only survey the works of Merle Collins, Jamaica Kincaid, Maryse Condé and other distinguished authors of modern Caribbean canon to observe the popularity of this motif. *NTTH* deviates from this pattern; in this text the mother and daughter migrate together. Migrating together tests the strength of the nature of the relationship between Kitty and Clare. In Jamaica, the constant movement between town and country—between bourgeois coloured Kingston life and the Black rural folk lifestyle of Miss Mattie's house—tempered the tension between Kitty and Clare that was always already made visible by their racial disparity. Without this activity to maintain the balance of power, Kitty's rebel consciousness begins to emerge, and Clare's relationship with her mother is forever altered.

No Telephone shows a very different side of Kitty Savage that was never seen in the first novel. The migration itself is written as a major for Kitty. Suffering from a culture shock that Boy himself does not experience, the migration ignites Kitty's rebel conscious and it manifests itself externally.. The narrative obscures the impetus for the migration—Boy's debts? A chance to start over anew? A reaction to the death of Miss Mattie? The novel makes it unclear as to whether Kitty agrees to this course of action because she is emotionally traumatized by the loss of her mother, or out of habit for bending to Boy's decisions (*NTTH* 71). Whatever the reason, Kitty does not separate the move to America with the death of her mother; both are presented as equally traumatic. It is also difficult to determine if Kitty's transformation from quiet and agreeable wife to a defiant and rebellious matrifocal figure is a result of her generalized unhappiness with her life in America or if she recognizes the empowering effects of rebel consciousness now that she has fully assumed the matrifocal responsibilities in Miss Mattie's absence.

Cliff's ambiguity in regards to Kitty's transformation from the first novel to the second is emblematic of the political context about which she is writing. Kitty's about-face from a silently suffering wife to a rebellious woman is analogous to the unleashed social and political developments of decolonization and its continental counteractions in the United States. At the same time, Kitty's ultimate rebellion—her decision to return to Jamaica and break the family—foreshadows the destructive power of this rebellion in the globalized era. In order for Kitty to exorcise the feeling of homelessness that begins on the family's first day in America,[142] she must abandon Clare and, unwittingly, spark a feeling of abandonment that Clare carries with her throughout the rest of the novel. Instead of migrating to the United States (re)solving the already strained relations between Kitty and Boy, the migration itself is the tipping of the scales for Kitty. She is not impressed with Boy's excitement at the possibility of the adventure; instead Kitty is lost and hopeless which create conditions where Boy's enthusiasm becomes so ridiculous that she begins to quietly challenge him.

These challenges are not as passive as they were in the first novel, they are active; beginning with small admonitions build up the entire time under the surface, building toward a powerful crescendo. On the surface, Kitty's life in New York is similar to the life she led in Jamaica; much like the life she led in *Abeng*. The Savage family is still largely structured along racial lines with Clare attached to Boy and Jennie (still largely silent in this novel as well) always already linked with Kitty. Instead of moving between urban Kingston and the rural bush, Kitty oscillates between the neighborhood she lives in with her family and the poorer sections of

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[142] "All became excitement, adventure for Boy—encountering but trying to evade the quiet apathy of *Kitty, who didn't hold to metamorphosis and felt but homeless, breaking silence to tell her husband that he sounded like a character in a boy's annual*. He ran on and on, spinning his head into the backseat to address his daughters—Clare and the younger Jennie. 'Mind the road, man,' came Kitty's sharp advice" (*NTTH* 54, my emphasis).

Brooklyn where the Caribbean immigrants are the most concentrated. Unlike *Abeng*, where Kitty's movements between town and country maintain the precarious balance of power within the family unit she shares with Boy, her movement between her neighborhood and the Caribbean diaspora community shatters the balance within the family. This occurs because Kitty fully realizes her own Caribbean self once she is away from the Caribbean, but even this revelation is always already framed around her underlying longing for her own mother.

> [Kitty] lived divided, straining to adjust to this place where she seemed to float, never to light . . . She questioned why she was so miserable—and immediately responded that her mother was dead. Her mother would not have approved of her—her mother who told her to make the best of it. Whatever *it* might be . . . She felt her mother's loss, keen. But there was more to her discontent, that she knew. She was not at home with pretense. (*NTTH* 75)

Kitty's longing for the Caribbean, and the self-surety that she feels there, is (of course) a result of the family's migration. However, what makes Cliff's text unique is that in this case, the longing for the mother is inseparable from the longing of feeling Jamaican. Glissant notes that migrations are what construct a sense of Caribbeanness; for it was transatlantic migration which created the Caribbean in the first place (*Discourse* 14). While Kitty can recover pieces of her fractured Caribbean self in this diaspora community, it does not temper the longing for her mother, nor the rebel consciousness Miss Mattie instilled in Kitty.

Going to these shops reveals to Kitty her own rebel consciousness. Keeping with the Cliff's connection between matrifocality as a means of expressing this rebel consciousness, Kitty is finally ready to assume her mother's role actively resisting the cultural colonial elements in a

global era. With this revelation complete, Kitty takes Jennie and returns to Jamaica. Kitty is able to finally fully embrace the steeping rebel consciousness was held in check while in Jamaica, where her retreats into the bush allowed for some relief from Boy's authority over the family. Likewise, the bush is also where Kitty would retreat to the safety of Miss Mattie's house and the matrifocal environment she fostered. Trapped in one of the largest urban metropolitan centers on the plant, the closest Kitty can get to the bush is the Bed Sty of Brooklyn; these frequent trips allow the façade of compliance with Boy.

> In these shops she *broke her silence*, here she felt most the *loss of home, of voice*, even as she brushed the loose dirt off the yam-skin, imagining its origin in the bush, stroked the rough green lips where the cho-cho split, stuck her finger in the sap where the mango had been joined to the tree, remembering how it could burn and raise a sore. (*NTTH* 65, my emphasis)

The homelessness that Kitty feels is assuaged when she begins to frequent the Bed Sty sections of Brooklyn is also a desire to speak, to challenge Boy, to rant against her menial job where she works as a laundress. Contemporary global migration is responsible for her to imagine the bush, to relish in a brief sense-memory that takes her away from the disappointment of her reality. At the same time this brief relief, he cannot resolve the root of problem: she can no longer go along with Boy's insistence that he and Clare pass as White; it is a denial of her rebel matrifocal consciousness to allow herself to continue with the pretense of accommodating her husband. .

Kitty's final acceptance of her rebel consciousness is evident only to the reader; Clare does not discuss the complicated dynamics of passing as White with her mother while they are in America, nor does Kitty share with her oldest daughter the extent to which she continues to mourn Miss Mattie or of her own unhappiness. Cliff's decision to hide Kitty's emerging

acceptance of her matrifocal rebel consciousness from her daughter sets the stage for Clare's own journey toward embracing the legacy of rebellion passed down from her foremothers. Kitty cannot empathize with Clare's experiences in America because she is Black, likewise, Kitty's decision to go to and from Bed Sty without her daughters hinders Clare's ability to relive her Caribbean past in the same way. Clare does not engage in the same sense-memory activities that Kitty does in these shops where the touch, and smell, and feel of her homeland feed the growing discomfort and anger at her rootless life. Glissant notes that the Caribbean subject does not come into consciousness of their Caribbeanness until they leave the Caribbean (*Discourse* 22-3), the trips back and forth between the homespace and the diaspora neighborhood confuses this process. On the one hand connecting to her homeland through sense-memories in the marketplaces soothes Kitty's anger at her current condition as a menial worker and brings to the surface her burgeoning racial consciousness which was tempered when she lived in Jamaica through her frequent trips to the bush.

In *No Telephone*, Kitty's reservation in the previous novel is actually what causes the sharpest emotional pain that Clare experiences over and over throughout the rest novel after Kitty leaves. Regardless of the many forms rebel matrifocality can be expressed, Kitty's rebellion is singularly Jamaican; it cannot be expressed or expected to generate a sense of rebellion in an urban metropolis far removed from the land of her foremothers. Her departure from New York with Jennie, leaving Clare alone with Boy displays the destructive potential of matrifocality; Clare spends the rest of the novel, the rest of her life, trying to reconcile herself with Kitty's abandonment of her. All the more emotionally traumatic as her mother's departure is that Boy insists that Clare pass as White in the United States. In *Abeng* Cliff never directly associates Blackness with righteousness in either the main plot of Clare and the other Savages, or

the through the flashbacks. Indeed, *Abeng* is slightly distrustful of Kitty's vehement loyalty to the nameless rural poor she works to help; Clare is acutely aware of her mother's passive emotional distance from her and other members of the family (*Abeng* 51). The narrative is sympathetic to the difficult decision Kitty had to make to leave her husband and daughter in America. However, that Kitty takes Jennie with her and return to "her people" leads Clare to forever link her developing racial identity with her mother's abandonment.

For Clare, who is excluded from these excursions, this is exacerbated by Boy's insistence that she pass as white because it affords her economic and social possibilities which would not be possible otherwise, she is never able to experience her burgeoning Caribbeanness, or her rebel consciousness because of Kitty's emotional distance. Once Kitty leaves New York and takes Jennie with her, any chance of acknowledging her Caribbeanness disappears. Glissant is right in pointing out that when one migrates the foundational elements of identity construction for a Caribbean subject are amplified exponentially because the subject realizes the stakes in surrendering these aspects of identification. Kitty is able to discover a context in New York where these elements can foster, but because Clare is still kept at a distance by her mother she cannot come to the same psychic awakening. Alone without her mother—the matrifocal rebel who would have been able to guide her through the most important years of her development—Clare cannot develop Glissant's Caribbeanness in America. What is most interesting about this text is that Cliff goes to great pains to display the differences between Clare and Kitty—differences that are fostered by both mother and daughter.

Kitty's abandonment of Clare in *NTTH* is actually the key element that highlights their similarities. Kitty's migration to the United States comes fast on the heels of the death of her mother; therefore one even is difficult to separate from the other. Clare experiences almost the

same situation; her migration to the United States (with her mother) is followed hard upon by Kitty's return to Jamaica. Both events involve the absence of the matrifocal figure who is the embodiment of the legacy of matrifocal rebellion for both women. Kitty is able to embrace her matrifocality because she was fostered in such an environment and by taking Jennie with her signifies to Clare that as a light-skinned Caribbean subject there is no room for her in a matrifocal context. As a teenager growing into a mature woman where motherhood is a possibility, Kitty's abandonment could not have come at a worse time.

Clare's development in the rest of the narrative can be viewed as a series of quest to reconcile herself to the trauma of having to pass as White by her father. This is exacerbated by the political upheavals happening in the United States. Boy no long conflates Whiteness with being European, he now conflates Whiteness with being American, but this is not just a repetition of his racial/cultural loyalties (delusions). In the 1960s the violence that was an indelible element of the political resistance movements are a viable and legitimate threat to their safety. When Boy catches Clare staring at a hidden picture of one of the victims of the Birmingham church bombing he confronts Clare:

> "You're an *American* now. You need to realize what that means . . . This is for the best . . . *We are not to judge this country . . . they give us a home*. Your mother could never understand that . . . she blamed the whole place for a few ignorant people . . . that's why we lost her." (*NTTH* 102, my emphasis)

Passing as White is the most damaging activity Clare engages in order to prove her loyalty to her father; in this sense it is not just a denial of her racial heritage, but of her mother and her foremothers' legacy. How can she rebel against racial oppression if she is pretending to be a

member of the ruling class? What place does a rebel consciousness have in a context where the maintenance of the status quo is the primary goal? Clare understands her father—the evidence of how racism is always already linked with poverty is all around Boy and his daughter in the City, the de facto racism that permeates the public school system is further justification of Boy's concern for Clare's economic and social future. Despite this concern on the part of her father, Boy's mention of Kitty's absence makes Clare's struggle to develop her own sense of racial identity emotionally and psychically painful.

In order for Kitty to reconcile the loss of her own mother, she had to migrate away from Jamaica in order to fully realize and embrace her rebel matrifocal consciousness. I believe that the only way Clare can claim her mother's matrifocal legacy is to retrace the migrant rebel experiences of her own mother. Taking her cues from her mother, Clare cannot conceive of herself as a legitimate Caribbean subject because of her light skin; it is from Kitty that she first learns of the connection between Caribbeanness and Blackness. Unlike Kitty, Clare does not return to her homeland to reclaim the memory of her mother or the corresponding matrifocal mantle which is her inheritance. Instead, Clare ("with the logic of a creole" (*NTTH* 109)) continues with her passing and denial of her Caribbeanness in Europe. Like Kitty, Clare cannot reconcile herself to the absence of her mother, identifying more and more with the first mother-less colonized subject Caliban, whose experiences and anger become more and more real to her the older she gets. Through Clare's journeys Cliff expands on the heretofore established traditions of matrifocality; that only a mother can be a matrifocal figure. Instead, what Cliff accomplishes through her narration of Clare's multiple migrations throughout the Atlantic world is a growing understanding that matrifocality is as defined through its rebel consciousness as it is through its maternal definitions.

The following migrations of Clare Savage in the rest of the novel—from America to England, and (finally) back to Jamaica—Cliff retraces the transatlantic slave trade. Clare still feels as internally fragmented and confused as she did when *Abeng* begins. This process similar for Clare, but the results are more abstract. Clare cannot begin to conceive of herself as a New World woman until she travels to England. Away from the New World, Clare's rebellion is not contextualized or presented as a result of her burgeoning Black identity, but her identity as a MIXED New World woman. This rebellion is New World in nature, but most definitely seeks to challenge how global culture continues, though augments, colonial forms of domination and subordination.

As an adult Clare returns to Miss Mattie's land in the bush that Kitty loved so much. Walking around the land Clare is struck and angered by how the developing tourist industry in postcolonial Jamaica is encroaching on the bush, threatening the traditional way of life that Miss Mattie and Kitty each tried, in their own way, to continue. Clare is able to make peace with her memories of her mother when confronted with these images: "'I was fortunate I knew her here.' [Clare] heard her voice, clipped, distant . . . No, she said to herself. I was blessed to have her here. Her passion of place. Her sense of the people. Here is her; leave it at that. But Clare did not speak this out loud; she could not trust her voice" (*NTTH* 174). With this closure achieved, Clare assumes her matrifocal mantle; the target of her resistance is the destruction of the American movie set and as the flames burn into the night, Cliff solidifies the importance of the adaptations of colonial forms of female matrifocal resistance in a global economy.

If the possibility of motherhood is a metaphor for the uncertainty of the future after colonial rule, then it becomes clear why Cliff has Clare return to her homeland after suffering a gruesome miscarriage. The pain and blood falling in clots gives birth to a kind of clarity of

identity, if not purpose, for Clare. Clare's miscarriage is not the end of the novel. Instead the miscarriage—a failed possibility of motherhood—leads her to quit Europe and move home to Jamaica. While in the bush on Miss Mattie's land Clare's moment acceptance of her rebel consciousness expands the boundaries of matrifocality: "The importance of this water came back to her. Sweet on an island surrounded by salt. She shut her eyes and let the cool of it wash over her naked body, reaching up into her as she opened her legs. *Rebaptism*" (*NTTH* 172, my emphasis). Cliff's second novel also expands definitions of family and kinship in a global consciousness. Clare is a matrifocal figure despite her childless status; instead she is a figurative mother to the revolutionaries who are active in the rural areas of Jamaica.

> My history brought me to this room. The history I have learned . . . rather, recognized . . . since my return is something else. I know only that the loss, the forgetting . . . of resistance . . . of tenderness . . . is a terrible thing. Look, I want to restore something to these children. And of course you are right: what good is imagination . . . whatever imagery available to it . . . to a dying child? A child damaged beyond imagining? I . . . it seems I contradict myself. (*NTTH* 196)

Kitty's love her for her people—rural, Black—stems from grief because the association, the understanding in New World social hierarchies that link race and class together. Clare's matrifocality inspires anger and action. Transitioning from conceptualizing the significance of matrifocality as a mode of rebel consciousness to matrifocality as inspiration for actual rebellion, the novel is emblematic of the larger anxieties of the transition from a postcolonial consciousness to an expansive and uncertain global identity.

Expanding the definition of matrifocality, and narrating Clare's journey in this way where her search to reclaim her Caribbeanness is first and foremost a reclamation of her place in the twisted branches of her family's trees, Cliff is seeking to promote the inclusion of matrifocality as a foundational element of Caribbean culture that can only be recognized after migration takes place. If Glissant is correct in asserting that migration away from the Caribbean yields a growing self of Caribbeanness, then it can also be said that separation from the mother can amplify identification with the mother. For Clare, this identification is manifested in her rebel consciousness which could only be achieved as a result of her migration: "Caught on the borders between two culture areas, and between exile and home, movement and fixidity, these daughters who nevertheless listened, evoke the landscape, food, people, stories from the Caribbean. Writing home means communicating with home" (Davies *Black Women* 125-6). Clare's return to Jamaica is the culmination not only in her search for a sense of home but also her search for her matrifocal roots. How appropriate, then, that she becomes a member of a rebel organization whose sole purpose is to fight against the oppressions and repressions of the rural folk to whom her mother was so devoted. This also represents a further development in how matrifocality—and the rebellion inherent in its continuation as a tradition—the global era demands that old practices adapt in a changing world. In this sense, matrifocality inspires rebellion instead of the colonial paradigm where rebellion is always already situated within a matrifocal family environment.

3.5: Conclusion

> **Migration and the fluidity of movement which it suggests or the displacement and uprootedness which is often its result, is intrinsic to New World**

> **experience, fundamental to the meaning of . . . diaspora. (Davies *Black Women* 128)**

Like Paule Marshall, Cliff understands that the historical trauma of colonialism and plantation slavery cannot be dismissed with the distance of a few generations because the trauma permeated (and continues to heavily influence) contemporary cultural and social encounters. In this sense the tension between Boy and Kitty Savage makes perfect sense; their (dysfunctional?) marriage is emblematic of the extent to which these past traumas continue to haunt the present. What remains unclear, even after the end of *No Telephone*, is Clare Savage's internalization of these elements of New World history being repeated in the present. On the one hand, it is more difficult for Clare to assume a similar level of comfort in her own skin in the same way as her parents. Kitty is comfortable around the rural poor of Jamaica and the urban Caribbean immigrants in New York City in *No Telephone* is not encouraged for Clare: her studious nature and her academic achievements throughout life as presented as a bourgeois (read: White) endeavor. In this sense, it would seem logical for Clare to follow along the same path as her father who extols the virtues of Mother England and the glory of the Savage family to the point of delusion.

Michelle Cliff's pair of novels contextualizes matrifocality as a tradition created by colonial women in order to form a collective rebel consciousness. The rebel consciousness is imperative for New World women because the era of colonial plantation economies created social structures along a hierarchy where women are always already dominated by men. For women of color, this domination is much more acute because of the intersecting oppressions of racism and sexism creates a context where they occupy the lowest levels of social authority. Matrifocality is a tradition where the home and the family unit are transformed into a site where

women can come together as women and rebel against these oppressions through their identity not solely as women, but as mothers.

CHAPTER 4

> **[S]he vanishes . . . She's done it all her life . . . [S]he indulged in this habit of erasing herself, of turning into the third person, a minor character, the best friend (*or daughter!*) of the dying first-person hero or heroine *her mission in life—after the curtain falls—to tell the story of the great ones who have passed on*. (*Salomé* 8, my emphasis.)**

> **[T]hough I complain sometimes about the confusion resulting from being of neither world, and about the marginalizations created on both sides—the Americans considering me a writer of ethnic interest, a Latina writer . . . or the Dominicans reaming me out . . . tough I complain about the confusion and rootlessness of being this mixed breed, I also think its what confirmed me as a writer, particularly because I am a woman. This is probably true for many of us Caribbean women writers. (Alvarez *Declare* 174)**

I: Introduction

Julia Alvarez is one of the most critically acclaimed and popular contemporary novelists of the late twentieth century. Alvarez was born in the United States, but her early youth was spent in her native Dominican Republic. Before adolescence Alvarez's family was forced to flee the island during one of the purges of the dictator General Raphael Leonidas Trujillo in the early 1960s. Her novels have been adapted into feature films, achieved commercial success, and Alvarez's essays and poetry are commonly included in the canon of modern feminist literature. Despite this success and popularity, Alvarez's work is difficult to classify or categorize within

the field of contemporary New World women writers: postcolonial? Neo-colonial? Latino/a? "Hispanic"? Like Michelle Cliff, Alvarez shies away from common academic terms of ethnic classification and, instead, embraces and advocates for a global migrant identity (identities).

Alvarez's characters in all of her works struggle with the complex and complicated task of peeling back layers of identity and methods of identity construction: woman? Migrant/ immigrant woman? Latino/a migrant/immigrant woman? It could go on and on, and Alvarez's writings investigate how these layers are formed and the socio-political implications of their foundation and formation. Unfortunately, Alvarez's own complex identity and her own migrant experiences have been used as means to exclude her works from popular anthologies of Caribbean and literary hemispheric migration collections. At the same time Alvarez is frequently pigeonholed into the larger umbrella category of North American "Hispanic" literature; the linguistic link between Spanish-speaking Caribbean and mainland Latino literature is convenient on this front. Mainland Latino/a and Chicano criticism and theory is preoccupied with the moveable nature of arbitrary borders and the tensions between nations that arise as a result.[143] But Alvarez's works categorized in such a way does a disservice to her Caribbean and migrant roots, and essentializes the linguistic separation between Anglophone West Indian and French Creole literature with mainland American and Latino literature.

Canonical Caribbean hemispheric and transatlantic literature of the twentieth century deal almost exclusively with the cultural and psychological trauma of the effects of the Middle Passage and plantation slavery, the failed promises of Empire, decolonization, and, now,

[143] This is a gross over-generalization; contemporary border theory and LOTA theory also investigate and critique the social and literary intersections of race, class, gender, language, nationalism, and, yes, postcolonialism. For the purposes of this study, however, where the prime focus is postcolonial and global migration theory and criticism, I offer this up only to highlight the difficulty of describing and categorizing Alvarez's works within the academic world and commercial markets.

globalization. Alvarez is commonly an afterthought in these collections and critiques. My project is no different; my analyses of mother/child relations in literature is an attempt to add to the conversation of concern over how contemporary racial identity formation, globalization of culture and capitalism, and gender subjectivity.

The linguistic divisions which are, at times, self imposed create a ripple effect in the field of Caribbean literary studies and postcolonial studies. Alvarez's quote above makes clear that these divisions and boundaries within the field can restrict a writer rather than free them; the continuous feeling of rootlessness is a theme Alvarez explores in all of her works. I have chosen to include her in my project because this feeling of rootlessness is always already described and felt in relation to the gender identities of Alvarez's heroines. The condition of a rootless Caribbean/American/migrant woman/writer who continually struggles to carve out a place for herself is a result of globalization; increased migration affords women new economic and social freedoms while simultaneously imposing antiquated social expectations on them which are out of synch with a rapidly mobile and fluid world. My reading of *Salomé* explores this dichotomy: on the one hand Alvarez constructs a narrative that, at first glance, marches in lock-step with colonial romantic family literature—the mother/daughter symbiotic narrative. At the same time, the manner in which she constructs her narrative—alternative time frames and narrative structures—challenge the restrictions of this convention and its larger assumptions about mother/daughter relations from within in order to subvert it's larger cultural meaning.

I have included *Salomé* in my dissertation because, on the surface, this text fits perfectly into the analytical framework of Caroline Rody's study of mother/daughter literature in the New World. Rody's study is concerned with comparing the literary traditions of mother/daughter fictions from African American and the Black Caribbean because, she claims, the cultural

reverberations of the Middle Passage and plantation slavery continue to haunt the postcolonial cultures of the New World. Alvarez is mentioned in Rody's Introduction as being one of the most prominent contemporary writers who is actively re-envisioning the creative possibilities mother/daughter relations have in fiction (15). It is understandable that Rody excludes Alvarez (who is neither African-American nor does she identify herself as Afro-Caribbean) from her study; by citing Alvarez's works in this way Rody makes clear the significance of Alvarez's contribution to the cannon of Caribbean/ hemispheric migrant literature. At the same time, this brief mention also justifies Alvarez's exclusion from Rody's study in particular, and marginalizing *Salomé* to the periphery of the New World literary traditions of mother/daughter fiction in general. I propose to expand Rody's assertions beyond how race is a determining factor in the literary conventions of mother/daughter historical fiction of the New World. Rather than situating mother/daughter literary traditions in racial/racial terms alone, I propose to read Alvarez's construction of the mother/daughter relationship in such a way that, like my reading of Michelle Cliff, Alvarez adopts colonial Eurocentric literary conventions in order to subvert them. In order to use my reading of *Salomé* in order to continue with Rody's analysis, I examine Alvarez's novel as a rebellious refraction of the (colonial) European family romance novel as a genre, specifically the trope of mother/daughter symbiosis.

Salomé is an historical novelization of the life of the poet laurite of the Dominican Republic Salomé Henríquez Ureña and the life of her only daughter Camila. With the blending of historical fact and drawing inspiration from the lives of real people, Alvarez's mother-daughter novel directly confronts how this very specific relationship is almost completely dictated by patriarchal social structures. Furthermore, by melding the past with the present and constructing the narrative in such a way where the past and the present become more difficult to

distinguish from each other Alvarez fictionalizes the experiences of her characters to show that hemispheric migration is an integral element of New World zonal identity. This novel is a historical novel that spans both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; with the social and political changes in the New World incorporated into the fabric of the narrative Alvarez advocates the assertion that the New World was always already a "global" space where identification and identity construction was/is constantly in flux. Indeed, this falls directly in line with Trouillot's linkage between the power structures of colonialism and the way these structures helped shape the New World as a whole:

> We cannot start with a clean deck. The history of the last 500 years has marked us all in ways that we cannot deny. Indeed, if there is proof of what I call the Atlantic moment of globality, the proof is that few of us can think about the last 500 years as though they were not inevitable, as if North Atlantic hegemony was not in the very premises of human activity. (Trouillot 16)

Alvarez's narration of colonial and postcolonial Hispañola fits perfectly into Trouillot's assertion that the driving elements of colonialism mirror the driving forces of contemporary globalization; Salomé (the mother) comes of age during the decolonization of the Dominican Republic in the nineteenth century and Camila (the daughter) develops in the twentieth century and witnesses how globalization effects the political and economic progression of the entire New World. Furthermore, Alvarez's attention on the mother/daughter relationship in this novel incorporates the significance of the homeplace, and the institutions of motherhood and daughterhood, into the larger context of New World zonal identity/identities. With this in mind, the progression of the mother/daughter relationship in this novel is also presented as part and parcel to the transition between a postcolonial consciousness to a globalized consciousness.

The term *symbiosis* is commonly used in scientific circles but many feminists have adopted this term in order to highlight the extreme closeness of the relationship.[144] Adrienne Rich describes the relationship between a mother and daughter in other-worldly terms: "[T]here is nothing in human nature more resonant with charges than the flow of energy between two biologically alike bodies, one of which has lain in *amniotic bliss* inside the other, one of which has labored to give birth to the other" (225-6, my emphasis). The relationship between mothers and daughters has been described as symbiotic because of their physical similarities and the cyclical this similarity presents; in every daughter there lies a potential mother, the mother of every daughter was once a daughter herself. Rich's description of this relationship is overly dramatic and does not take proper account into the extent to which the social realm shapes and almost constricts how the dynamics of the relationship are formed. Indeed, it is difficult to determine if this "bliss" is a result of the biological similarities that exist between mothers and daughters and, thus, makes a biologically deterministic case for mother/daughter symbiosis. On the other hand, it is impossible to deny that these biological similarities (intentionally?) determine how mother/daughter symbiosis is enacted in the social realm.

The shared gender identification between mother and daughter is a social relationship that knows no boundaries and, as such, women's fictions of mother/daughter relations have becomes an established sub-field within the scope of feminist literary criticism.

> [T]he fictional heroine [has] to occupy both the position of subject and that of the object in the narrative . . . [T]he basic paradigm to include[s]

[144] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the definition of symbiosis is as follows: [An] association of two different organisms (usually two plants, or an animal and a plant) which live attached to each other, or one as a tenant of the other, and contribute to each other's support. Also more widely, any intimate association of two or more different organisms, whether mutually beneficial or not. (*OED* online 1/7/2012)

> the stories of daughters and eventually also the stories of the mothers, but, ultimately, they do not entirely . . . frame the basic conception of family as static structure, of the relationship of familial patterns and narrative patterns . . . The notion of the family, . . . extrapolated from Freudian definitions and extended beyond them, can account for the ambivalences and duplicities . . . to pull towards complicity, and the difficulties of dissent. It accounts for the process of "becoming a woman," of engenderment, which is intimately tied to the process of transmission and the relationship to previous and subsequent generations of women. (Hirsch 10-11)

The allusion to Freudian psychoanalytic literary criticism is imperative; this tradition is always already understood in psychological/social terms. The mother-daughter narrative tradition was heavily influenced by, and also helped perpetuate, colonialist ideals in the New World. It important to point out the colonial nature of this model of analysis because it already assumes a normalizing of an imposed cultural model of a family dynamic and, therefore, any deviation from this model regarding mother/daughter relations is viewed as atypical and, possibly, pathological. Alvarez's novel takes the conventional trope of Camila's development into a woman, but superimposes this development with Salomé's experiences as a daughter and then as a mother. In this text, mother/daughter symbiosis is not only a social convention that Salomé and Camila are expected to perform, but it is also performed through the construction and organization of each character's narrative. Each characters life, and their performance of motherhood and daughterhood occur concurrently. Salomé and Camila do not interact in the scope of the novel; every other chapter in the novel alternates between first and third person

narration. Salomé's narrative moves forward in time and is told in the first person while Camila's narration moves backward in time and is written in the third person. Rafael Perez-Torres makes note that Alvarez's use of the backwards narration challenges the "normative Euro-American literary tradition" (550). Camila's reliance on the memory of Salomé—memories she herself does not possess—"serves as a reminder of a past that is ever present, reconsidered, and revisioned" (551).

Alvarez's novel offers a unique opportunity for this kind of investigation. Challenging the literary conventions of mother/daughter narratives Alvarez's novel gives equal space and weight to both the mother and the daughter. In this way the analysis of the mother, Salomé, will focus on her role as a mother as well as a woman in her own right. Furthermore, Camila's narration, from the perspective of the child, can be approached from a variety of vantage points; how the child (inter)acts with the mother as a child as well as an individual. The lives of the mother and the daughter are separated in this kind of narrative construction: Salomé dies while Camila is very young and the daughter must rely on the memories of her family members to offer a holistic and balanced portrait of her mother. Salomé bears only sons before Camila's arrival; the closeness mothers of daughters feel toward their daughters is not an element, or even a consideration, throughout her narrative. This text challenges conventions of traditional mother/daughter fictions, but also operates within the paradigms of mother/daughter literary symbiosis. While this term is most commonly used in scientific circles as the definition suggests psychoanalytic writings concerning mother/daughter relationship use this term to add emphasis to the extreme closeness of this relationship. It is not unprecedented to use scientific or mathematical terminology when discussing literary works. Indeed, Kelli Lynn Johnson's critical text on Alvarez's body of work (the only text-length study of Alvarez's writings that have been

published to date) discusses the concurrent flows of identity as narrated by Alvarez as evidence asymptotic: the notion of two bodies that revolve around one another but never meet (37).Other feminist critics who study mother/daughter relations in literary works describe how this connection (this bond) is greater than its social manifestations or expectations in the social realm and is something otherworldly.

My examination of *Salomé* will bring to light the extent to which mothers and daughters are together forced into this symbiotic framework as a result of patriarchal control of both motherhood and daughterhood (I am using the same definition Andrea O'Rielly uses for motherHOOD to describe daughterHOOD in that the institution is shaped and defined by patriarchal social forces). Rody's study of mother/daughter fictions by New World women can (and should) be applied to literatures outside of the African-Caribbean and African-America. Alvarez's text proves the point that the intersecting oppressions of patriarchy and race, combined with hemispheric migration within the New World creates a singularly global context where the notion of mother/daughter symbiosis is tested and, eventually, overcome.

Salomé and Camila will be the separate points of origin(s) in this study; in order to unpack the relationship from multiple points of view, I will investigate how Alvarez envisions motherhood (the institution). Also, the co-mingling of each narrative style and voice in Alvarez's text poses the following question as the overall subtext of the plot: is there a corresponding institution of childhood? How are the social forces (gender, racial, economic) that shape and effect the institution of motherhood manifested in daughterhood? If mothers are confined within the parameters of this relationship, how does the shared gender between mother and daughter foster resistance or compliance within these social structures?

Critical analyses of the narratives contained in this trend have commonly—perhaps out of convenience and space—limited the scope of their investigations. Psychoanalytic studies of mother/daughter are insightful for their analyses on how gender is a key component of how primary relationships within kinship networks. These studies reveal how the boundaries between public and private (a boundary that was instrumental in the institution of and maintenance of the colonial dynamic that did not end with decolonization) are predicated on Western conceptions of heteronormativity. Postcolonial and radical Black feminist readings of mother/daughter narratives in the New World focus almost exclusively on the significance of race and the interconnecting oppressions of racism and sexism. These writers have explored postcolonial social and political structures and practices within the scope of this relation. Not only does the close kinship tie that bind mothers and daughters together in order to present an opportunity to display the permeability of the boundaries that are meant to separate public and private spheres, but the relationship itself is one of the few kinship or family ties that equally distributes patriarchal control equally between the mother and the daughter. In order to properly investigate how Alvarez uses these conventions in order to critique how race, class, and gender intersect to create multiple levels of oppression and domination of women in a hemispheric migrant context, it is first necessary to briefly outline the conventions of the traditional mother/daughter narrative. There are a limited number of these works that also include the subject of hemispheric migration; by and large their overall scope is focused on how race, gender and class intersect. Alvarez's writings, in theory, should be included in these studies, yet her body of works (poetry, essays, and novels) remain on the fringe of Caribbean literary studies.

Rody asserts that the legacy of colonialism and the advent of political and social decolonization of the New World have allowed New World women writers to investigate the

significance of the mother/daughter historical novel as a means of critiquing the gender and economic similarities between colonialism and globalization/neocolonialism. Rody leaves room to allow the observations of the study to be broadened to include other literatures and writers who do not necessarily fit into the convenient categories of "Afro-Caribbean" and/or "African-American"; it is not racial identity that is at stake in her study, per se, but how race and class are primary component in the hemispheric migrant experience in the New World. The New World frame of the text, at times, seems homogenous because of the shared historical conditions between the Caribbean and the North American mainland, the study does not limit the arguments to the Black diaspora in the New World:

> While the removal of so many writers to foreign shores registers the lamentable conditions of life in many parts of the region, expatriation can also spur to literary development . . . This heterogeneous catalog will suggest why . . . this study presumes that the region's history makes much of such quibbling absurd, that it is in the nature of this literature to describe an exilic, migratory subject, and that many kinds of writers contribute to the polyglot project of Caribbean letters. (Rody 118)

Alvarez's novel adds to Rody's study; in this work symbiosis between mother and daughter is determined by interaction with each character *as* mother and daughter. Though Salomé and Camila's lives take very different paths, their symbiosis is evident *only* to the reader; it is strengthened through the various ways both women subvert and circumvent the patriarchal control that Salomé's husband and Camila's father imposes upon each of them. Rody cites Alvarez as a member of the polyglot Caribbean migrant writer's cohort (15). For this reason I

will rely almost entirely on Rody's theories, but examine the mother/daughter relationship in *Salomé* as an essential inclusion into this contemporary trend in New World women's writings.

With *Salomé* Alvarez balances how the multiplicities of identities are at work in the New World as a result of colonial rule. The novel recognizes that the postcolonial period in the twentieth-century did not create or foster how these identities work within and around each other. Therefore Alvarez's novel unpacks how patriarchy, hemispheric migration, and socio-economic class are all social elements that feed in to this symbiotic structure. However, Alvarez's creates a narrative that challenges this social axiom while working from within it. What makes Alvarez's narrative unique is that the presentation of Salomé and Camila's relationship challenges the axioms that foster the continuation of mother/daughter symbiosis. At the same time, their explicit and implicit resistances to symbiosis do not affect the strength of the bond between mother and daughter.

4.2: Salomé and Camila: Alvarez's Narrative of Mother/Daughter Symbiosis

> **Camila! I'd almost forgotten that as a girl I had promised myself that if I ever had a daughter, I would name her after this brave young woman. Camila it would be . . . I would also give her my own name. *Suddenly, it seemed a good thing that our names would always be together*. "Salomé Camila," I told her when I lay down in my cabin to rest that evening. I felt such happiness saying it. (*Salomé* 306, my emphasis)**

Since Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* critical analyses of mother/daughter narratives have worked within the scope of a simple accepted axiom: all mothers were once daughters, and all daughters can be viewed as potential mothers.[145] Alvarez's entire text works within this

[145] See O'Reilly *Motherhood*, and Hirsch.

assumption as well. The symbiotic nature of the relationship and how social structures feed this assumption become easier to unpack. The blissful, amniotic harmony shared by mother and daughter in literary works has a long tradition; as are testaments (some nostalgic, some traumatic) as to the strength of the bond. Marianne Hirsch's study of the traditional family romance states that the mother/daughter relationship is a literary genre in its own right (carving out its own distinct analytical perspective).

> [T]he mother must be eliminated . The . . . family romance [literary] pattern clearly implies that women need to . . . eliminate their mothers from their lives . . . Yet even eliminating the mother from her plots cannot offer the girl a story to [a] boy's: the drama of father and son, so fundamentally a conflict about authority in the public world, could never translate into a drama between mother and daughter. (Hirsch 56)

Hirsch's analyses are exclusively focused on the role of the daughter in the narratives she examines and privileges the perceptions of the daughter makes of the mother. The daughter's narration of the relationship gives both a voice to the mother while simultaneously marginalizing her on the periphery of the narrative and plot. The daughter's voice and narrative role is to reflect the mother's previous experiences *as* a daughter. Following Hirsch's reasoning, mother/daughter symbiosis can be read as an element that constricts and confines the daughter's psychic potential; Camila's role in the relationship should be characterized as resistant and resentful of the emotional power Salomé's memory has over the other members of the family. Instead, because Alvarez's text actively works to expand and redefine how mother/daughter narratives can be read, Camila's journey toward self-definition is a reversal of this dynamic; she spends her entire life searching for the real Salomé so that her emulation of her mother can be as accurate as

possible. Camila's comfort stems from a yearning for symbiosis instead of the mother being viewed by the daughter as a hindrance to her own development.

Hirsch maintains that the signifying characteristic of mother/daughter literature is the constant sense of loss: "Loss itself provides the occasion for the story's inception . . . Loss is presented as inevitable, part of the natural sequence of growth, but, since time is cyclical, mother-daughter reunion forms a natural part of the cycle" (5). This cycle of loss and return is echoed with specific attention to the New World by Rody: "In these fictions of daughterly return to a mother-of-history, a historicized female identity bears its own temporal difference, its own historical 'relationality' within a metamyth of mother-daughter separation and of imaginatively willed, transhistorical mother-daughter reunion" (8). Postcolonial and globalized writing use the metaphorical combination of the mother with the motherland to highlight the wider public sphere with the personal/familiar dynamic of the family. Concerning late-twentieth century narratives of mother/daughter relations, migration away from the homeland is commonly associated with the *loss of the mother*. This return does not necessarily resolve conflicts perpetuated by migration, but raises new sets of questions revolving around identity. Specifically; if returning to the mother/motherland is viewed as a re-claiming of an identity—and/or identities—*what* is being *lost*, *what* is being *gained* by linking this with the mother? (Suárez 128)

My reason for choosing this particular novel to discuss mother/daughter symbiosis is that Alvarez constructs the narrative in such a manner that the mother and daughter *do not interact with each other in this text*. Alvarez's departure from standard convention of mother-daughter narratives distinguishes this text, and Alvarez, apart from her contemporary peers and their literary displays of mother/daughter symbiotic tension. Alvarez occupies a position in New World literary circles that defies conventional definitions and her novels, likewise, reflect

intentional avoidance to convenient racial, cultural and national descriptions.[146] *Salomé* is a later and lesser known novel from Alvarez's collection of novels and it fits more into the category of historical fiction.[147] *Salomé* is written in a polyphonic style: chapters alternate between first and third person narration and also move backwards and forwards in time simultaneously.

Hirsch's *The Mother-Daughter Plot* states that it is not solely the *relationship* that is central to mother/daughter fictions, but how the *story* is being told. The character of the mother is commonly marginalized to the periphery of the narration in these works because the daughter assumes the responsibility of narrating the relationship (Hirsch 5-10). Salomé's life moves forward in time while the daughter Camila's narrative moves backwards in time.

> This third person narration changes the dynamic of the reader-character-author triad. In the first person stories, the distance between the reader and the character is minimized; the author or implied narrator is distant, absent even. The reader observes or re-lives the memory with the character, closely connected to her, developing a strong empathy with a unified character. With the intervention of the third person narrator/implied author

[146] The Introduction to *Out of the Kumbla* note the growing number of New World women writers—specifically from the Caribbean—who produce and publish their works either from the United States or Canada. Because their works are reflective of the place they are writing from as well as their readers inside and outside of the Caribbean, traditional labels such as "exile" and "diaspora" are becoming unsatisfactory terms to describe their works. Carine Mardorossian's article "From literature of Exile to Migrant Literature" cites Alvarez's texts specifically as late-twentieth century examples of works that intentionally seek to defy previous definitions of identity and subjectivity in national and cultural terms.

[147] While many American readers of Alvarez's works may be unfamiliar with Salomé Henríquez Ureña's work, she remains one of the most beloved poets in the Dominican Republic. In the afterward of the novel Alvarez notes that while Salomé and Camila were, indeed, real people, the characters as they are described in the novel are complete works of fiction.

> . . . the reader is put at a distance, put into the position of observer. (Barak 163)

Symbiosis, in this novel is not just a social assumption that both mother and daughter must navigate throughout their lives, but is a structural component to the narration itself. Rafael Perez-Torres makes note that Alvarez's use of the backwards narration challenges the "normative Euro-American literary tradition" (550). Furthermore, Camila's reliance on the memory of Salomé—memories she herself does not possess—"serves as a reminder of a past that is ever present, reconsidered, and revisioned" (551).The novel ends with Camila's birth and Salomé's death; the end of the novel represents a new beginning. The dual narrations highlight the significance of "historical memory" regarding both the relationship the women have with each other, but also their relationship with their home country. "Historical memory is an active, creative force, not just a receptacle for storing the dead weight of times gone by" (Suárez 119); Alvarez focuses the scope of historical memory into a small, family plot. Camila cannot separate her identification with her mother from her longing for her motherland. Salomé's anxieties of the future are not as broad or generalized as Clare Savage at the end of Abeng; her fears and uncertainty is focused specifically on the lives of her children. Alvarez's novel uses this form of historical memory to inform the narrations of both of her protagonists in their respective national and historical contexts. This narrative style is one of the ways that the novel challenges conventions traditional mother/daughter novel; whereas it is the daughter commonly speaking *of* and *for* the mother, here both characters (and both positions of motherhood and daughterhood) are given equal credence.

The scope of Hirsh's analysis of mother/daughter fictional conventions is limited to the experiences of the daughter and the role of the daughter's narrative agency throughout the course

of the plot. To speak of mothers and daughters is to speak of the institutions of mother*hood* and daughter*hood in tandem*: every mother was once a daughter, within ever daughter is a potential mother. The daughter's narrations of the relationship give both a voice to the mother while simultaneously marginalizing her. Put more simply; the daughter's voice is meant to reflect the mother's previous experiences *as* a daughter. The question of agency or absence of agency, within the institution of motherhood in general and in the mother/daughter relationship in particular is compromised. To this end, the mother's *only* defining characteristic is her role *as a mother*. There is a clear connection between the relationship between mother and daughter linked with the colonial and post-colonial history of the New World. The past shares a symbiotic relationship with the present in the New World. From *The Daughter's Return*: "Asserting daughterhood to history in the form of a feminist family romance . . . writers claim a most intimate, authoritative, relationship to a maternal past, declaring themselves history's legitimate heirs" (6). It is reasonable to assume that the inescapable nature of the strong connection between mother and daughter is as inescapable as the pressure of history in the New World.

What remains is the question of how much of a mother's experiences as a daughter influence her role as a mother? What social influences outside the scope of motherhood affect the *process* of mothering? Rody's acceptance of the daughter's primacy in mother/daughter literature is taken for granted. A key distinction between her text and Hirsch's is the inclusion of the subject of race and its priority in a New World context.

Rody maintains that the surge in writings by New World women is an attempt to counter colonial Eurocentric hegemonic formation of history, a "writing back" to the Empire, and also addressing neo-colonial conditions in the post-imperial period of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The intricacies of the mother-daughter relationship could be viewed to

contain acts of colonial and neo-colonial resistance because the relationship lies outside of male-centered conceptions of history.

> [T]o tell their history in a vocabulary derived solely from female experience is to claim the past as a female realm, owned and made meaningful by the women who lived it . . . [T]he mother-daughter figural mode must be seen to reclaim connections to *maternal origins* . . . [T]he texts that retell . . . women's history in this mother-daughter vocabulary suggest a will to reverse the rupture of these intimate bonds and claim a historical family. (Rody 7)

Hirsch and Rody's texts provide excellent examples of how literary representations of mother/daughter relations are not solely confined within the scope of romantic family literature, however the ranges of their studies are limited in important ways. What I am proposing with this chapter is to fill in this gap in Rody's study; applying all her theories to a New World Caribbean writer who is not Black Caribbean or African-American. Alvarez and, especially, this novel, are a composite part of Rody's arguments of collective identification of New World women and tropes of mother/daughter relations. Alvarez's inclusion in this critical framework challenges the "commodification" of critical diaspora studies.[148] Viewing "Caribbean," "'ethnic' New World," "diaspora" literature as always already under the umbrella of the wider African diaspora is a reactive method to analyze literature from the postcolonial period. However, with the advent of globalization, "a diasporic identification may be a matter of choice rather than necessity": "[There is a racialization at work when diasporic populations . . . are expected to bridge the gap

[148] "[C]ritical diaspora discourse itself has fallen prey to the manipulation and commodification made possible by cultural reification, and it contributes to the foregrounding of ethnicity and race in contemporary political and cultural thinking" (Dirlik 98-9).

between places of arrival and places of origin" (Dirlik 100). Mother daughter social symbiosis is a patriarchal social construction; as such, the development of this social practice can be read throughout colonial and postcolonial New World literature. In the postcolonial/global period at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century Alvarez examines how mothers and daughters used this social structure to resist the gender oppressions social and civic contexts imposed, and continue to impose, upon them. Resistance to separation between the mother and the daughter (psychically, spatially, consciously) seems to combat the notion of binaries that is both incorporated within the larger concept of globalization. Colonial separation between center and periphery, between Old World and New, between the Self and Other, is not present in the mother/daughter relationship. On the one hand this could be viewed as a form of colonial resistance and Western notions of individualism through a collective identity. On the other hand, the mother and the daughter both do not seem to have any agency within this relationship.

The symbiotic bliss described in natural/biological terms is rooted in social constructions that are inherently colonial and patriarchal in nature. Caroline Rody expands the importance of the mother/daughter relationship beyond the scope of two individual women: "the female body is the primary generator of history "(41). Connecting the abstract concept of history within a tangible familial relationship between mother and daughter Rody links history of the New World with the inevitable and inescapable nature of the mother/daughter relationship.

> A girl identifies with her mother in their *communal inferiority* . . . [S]he also prepares through this identification for her future mothering role . . . Children learn their gender *and then identify and are encouraged to identify* with the appropriate parent" (113, my emphasis).

Nancy Chodorow writes that the social elements of both motherhood and daughterhood can be described specifically in terms of oppression, and does not offer any kind of space for the mother and daughter can come of a resolution, or at least a reckoning, with each other that is not always already framed in this way. James C. Scott's analysis of how family units and family relations mirror the outside forces of domination and subordination in the public realm makes the assumption that mother/daughter relations are, indeed, defined by a similar structure of power: that the daughter will always feel oppressed by her mother and, therefore, women writers construct maternal characters are the periphery of the narrative. This is starkly contrasted with Rich's description of mother/daughter relations as blissful and other-worldly. In order to reconcile these polar opposite conceptions of how mothers and daughter do, and/or should, interact with each other Alvarez's novel offers a fictional representation of how mother/daughter relations are not confined or defined by either of these visions. No less fierce in its strength, this mother and her daughter do not oppress or submit to each other, nor is either one central or peripheral in the scope of the novel. This is how Alvarez challenges colonial and Eurocentric literary conventions. At the same time, she is also expanding on the creative New World migrant writers who have come before her (like Marshall and Cliff) who have penned narratives where mothers and children defy social and literary conventions from within and not from outside already existing patriarchal structures. Alvarez's challenge to this assumption is embedded in Salomé's narrative and is also alluded to in Camila's.

Alvarez's symbiotic mother/ daughter novel is a contemporary novel that addresses contemporary anxieties about the postcolonial consciousness and the shift toward a global economy and culture despite the fact that it is historical fiction based on real historical figures. Alvarez's novel could be categorized as a novel of *colonial nostalgia*. Separations between

public and private remained (supposedly) rigid in order to foster a symbiotic relationship between mother and daughter; this symbiosis is manifested through the narrative oscillation between narrative voice and time frames that continues throughout the novel back and forth so that the social assumption of symbiosis is shown to be constantly in flux. Initially it could seem that Alvarez's is critiquing "traditional" Dominican gender expectations for women; that first and foremost women were/are expected to be good wives and mothers (Suárez 125, Johnson 45) through Salomé's literary achievements while succeeding as a both a wife and mother. Likewise, Camila's refusal (conscious or unconscious) to follow in her mother's mothering footsteps while she is in America seemingly supports this. Alvarez, however, does not allow her investigation of gender and duty to fall into such easily defined classifications. Salomé's achievements are all, conspicuously, *prior* to her marriage. I would like to argue that, despite Salomé's dissatisfaction to her relegated place in the home, she uses these traditional duties in order to defy them. Though she has stopped publishing her poetry she does not stop writing, though she does devote herself solely to her children when they arrive, she transforms these traditional womanly duties of mothering into a form of resistance to this social practice. Salomé's disappointment in her life and in her husband is obvious. Pancho separates the Salomé who writes nationalistic poems as separate from the woman who tends to his children. Camila's dissatisfaction with the gendered expectations placed upon her by her family and society at large are very much akin to Salomé's, but the difference is the level of resistance she is able to achieve.

Alvarez's text displays the permeation of the public space in the private realm and heavily influences the relations between the characters. Camila cannot remember her mother—she must rely on her Aunt Ramona and her brother Pedro's stories of her in order to feel some "blissful" connection to Salomé. Instead, Camila's life is a series of struggles; she is forever

preoccupied and full of anxiety that she will not (cannot) live up to the legacy of her mother as a political and literary figure. Salomé is able to sense her own mother's social constraints and, as a result, fosters a new life for herself. Camila acutely feels she cannot live up to the expectations of a mother she has never met, and feels them more because she is the only daughter. Therefore, the novel uses mother-daughter symbiosis as an allegory for the postcolonial/global transition, where the oscillation between social constraint and social freedom for mother and daughter are heavily predicated on their historical political contexts.

4.3: Mother/Daughter Symbiosis: The Reproduction of *Salomé*/ Salomé?

> **Insofar as a girl is identified with her mother, and their relationship retains qualities of . . . symbiosis, what she is doing, in splitting her internal maternal image, is attempting . . . to establish boundaries between herself and her mother . . . Mothers feel ambivalent toward their daughters, and react to their daughters' ambivalence toward them. (Chodorow 124, 135)**

In *Salomé* Alvarez uses Salomé's experiences as a wife and mother—relegated to the home despite her literary fame and notoriety—are similar experiences of subordination to the primary male of the family. Pancho Henríquez's character conjures visions of Boy Savage, specifically in how he conceives of his role as father/patriarch in the family. Regardless of his role as husband or father, he is the embodiment of patriarchy in this novel. Alvarez's dual narratives that go backwards and forwards in time simultaneously harkens back to the overall assertion of my project because this is a primary example of how the anxieties of the transition from a postcolonial to globalized consciousness is underway. The social and literary axiom of mother/daughter symbiosis is a manifestation of Western patriarchy. Alvarez's New World novel of a European literary convention that is determined by European patriarchal norms can then,

also, be described as colonial in origin. At the same time, because Salomé and Camila never interact in the text, it is through their respective relationships with Pancho that their symbiotic relationship is established.

While it may seem strange to establish a mother/daughter symbiotic relationship through their interactions with a third party, Alvarez deftly negotiates the constructions of this with the transitions between the narratives by revealing these subtle forms of resistance only to the reader. Alvarez achieves this connection by describing his relationship with Salomé in paternalistic ways, very obviously describing the husband who views his wife as if she were a frail child.[149] Pancho requires absolute devotion from his daughter, to the point where she sacrifices her own life and lifestyle for the sake of the men in her family. "All her life she has had to think first of her words' effect on the important roles of her father and brothers and uncles and cousins were playing in the world. Her own opinions were reserved for texts, for roundtables on women's contributions to the colonies, for curriculum committees implementing one theory of language learned over another" (Salomé 85).Resistance to Pancho is complex for Camila. It is deliberately conspicuous that Camila has never married and never had children in her own narration. Unlike Salomé's first-person narration where the subjects of male/female relations and the personal

[149] "Pancho had vision, and he could see where I was going. Didn't I see that? And if I didn't see that, then I was proving his point . . . and I should trust him to show me where I was going. When he spoke like this, I would get so tangled up in what he was saying . . . . Finally, I just wanted to free myself of his web of words and I'd let go my end . . . But this is the mystery of love, the more you empty your cup, the more it fills up. Besides, he was right. I wasn't seeing where I was going, for my gaze had fallen on the future right before my eyes" (*Salomé* 170).

introspections of motherhood are displayed with eloquence and emotion, the reader here is left to infer and enquire as to the reason for this.[150]

Chodorow fails to even indicate how Western imperialism in the New World creates a multitude of variations of both the ways in which Western patriarchy is manifested in a social context as well as how women, as a group and as individuals, must negotiate the variations of these forms of social domination. Mother/daughter symbiosis is a social assumption that has been transformed into a psychological condition that carries with it colonial and post-colonial axioms that Alvarez is trying to subvert as well. *The Reproduction of Mothering* is one of the most seminal and well respected analyses that tackle the intricate nature of motherhood.[151] This text reveals the ways that psychology can contextualize and explain social structures of the separation between the genders, but offers no solutions to patriarchal control of these structures. Though it remains one of the foundational texts in the field of mother/child studies in contemporary feminist circles—Rody, O'Reilly, and Hirsch all use Chodorow as the epicenter of their respective arguments— the promotion of Euro-centric constructions of family units and kinship structures are presented as the norm and other forms of family and kinship organization are either ignored or treated as pathological deviations from the norm. If theories of globalization force us challenge heretofore axioms of conceptualizing history and literature by posing the essential question "Whose history" (see Trouillot, Introduction) then the same manner of

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[150] Camila's ambiguous relationship with Marion is written as cryptically as Salomé's appearance. However, it is also made clear that this relationship is unsatisfying for Camila because of her cultural and racial background.

[151] In this analysis motherhood and mothering are freed from their biological connotations and boundaries in order to examine how much of the institution and the practice are predicated on social structures that contextualize the relationship. Chodorow takes the reader step-by-Freudian-step to claim that, ultimately, the psychological conditions that dictate the practice of mothering are social and not biological constructions. However, at the same time, Chodorow's study relies entirely on the Western nuclear family as the frame of reference.

questioning needs to be applied to canonical feminist theories of mother/child relations. When analyzing how and why families and kinship networks are structured the way they are—either deviant or conforming to social norms—then we need to ask whose family and under what conditions are these norms established.

It remains essential to use this text as a starting point to unpack and examine the limits to this assumption in contemporary fictions of mothers and daughters in the New World. Chodorow does not situate her study wholly within the confines of psychoanalytic literary or feminist theory.[152] The (dated) study remains a seminal text in the field of modern analyses of motherhood, mothering, and literary texts on mother/child fictions. Her normalization of Western/Eurocentric constructions of family units and kinship structures developed at the same time and at the same pace as the spread of colonialism throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Psychoanalytic theory examines primary relationships in family units and kinship structures. These relationships are indelibly linked with the social context and social structures that they function within and Chodorow, like others, makes this concession at the beginning of her study. Chodorow's conception of culture that frames her theories is that social practices and cultural ideals are always already contextualized as modes through which the child learns to adapt and function in the world. While she takes it for granted that specificities of culture are irrelevant—specifics such as, for example, European social conventions and postcolonial New World cultural ideals—her axiomatic discussion of European family structure and kinship networks actually goes against this idea. But for her assertion that "[c]ultural school psychoanalysts are right that the outside world affects the inside" (Chodorow 47), one of the

[152] The text begins with a debate between evolutionary psychologists (who suggest that modern mothering is an evolved manifestation of traditional hunter/gatherer societies) and cultural essentialists who deny that there are any conscious or unconscious elements that factor into either the promotion of the institution of motherhood and/or the practices of mothering.

challenges faced when writing formulating my argument is navigating how she works both inside and outside of this idea.

Much of the text, and other feminist studies that attempt to understand the intricate nature between the permeation of patriarchy and culture, patriarchy and social structures, and (in this case) patriarchy and colonialism, still rely on Western forms of family and kinship structures that rely on normalized illustrations of nuclear families. This issue presents a double edged sword for Alvarez's novel and for a study of mother/daughter relations in a globalized New World context. On the one hand it is undeniable to argue that the spread of colonialism in the New World did not, in fact, transfer Eurocentric forms of family structuring across the Atlantic, and by extension the conflation of these family structures with colonial conceptions and constructions of gender was also established and solidified in the New World.

According to Ann McClintock the progression of colonial consciousness in the New World occurred at the same pace and rate as the development of gender and racial social categorizations. The colonial conflation of race and gender, and the connotations of sexuality that were associated with different races, has been well documented. However, what I would like to highlight here is how colonialism was able to conflate culture with biology. Indeed, in the context of family units, kinship structures, and mother/child relations, it was difficult to discern where biology ended and culture began. "[T]he rhetoric of *gender* was used to make increasingly refined distinctions among the different *races* . . . [T]he monogamous patriarchal family, headed by a single, white father, was vaunted as a . . . fact, natural, inevitable and right" (McClintock 55, 56). Replication of European normalized and idealized forms of mother/child relations are the driving force of psychoanalytic justifications for how mothers and daughters navigate the social pressure to maintain symbiosis with each other. Eurocentric forms of family structuring is

replicated despite the myriad of social conditions particular to the New World that do not provide a conducive environment for the replication of these structures.

"Patriarchy would seen to require, not only that women shall assume the major burden of pain and self-denial for the furtherance of the species, but that a majority of that species—women—she remain essentially unquestioning and unenlightened" (Rich 43). Rich speaks of the burden women face as twofold; first, there are the responsibilities themselves that women are socially prescribed to assume, and, secondly, there is the assumption that any endeavor outside of this self-denial is of lesser-value. Salomé, earning her fame as a poet before she married Pancho and became a mother, is acutely aware of the self-denial involved in her socially prescribes place as a woman. The novel does present this, at least in Salomé's narration, not necessarily as an injustice, but merely as a fact of life: what she can and cannot write about, how she can and cannot conduct herself in public, how her individuality is altered after her marriage etc. Just as Rody claims that the history of the New World is inseparable from mother/daughter relations in literary works, Hirsch addresses mother/daughter symbiosis more abstractly: "The lost and remembered realm of mother-daughter connection and the daughter's process of . . . formation are located in specific and historical contexts" (139).

In much of Salomé's narration the stark differences in social expectations, particularly regarding the sexual and financial freedom afforded to men, is discussed at length. While she recognizes the injustice of these double standards, she only criticizes them internally and does not challenge them directly to Pancho. This could be seen as an element of symbiosis: despite these pressures Salomé persists and perseveres regarding her poetry. I consider this part of her identity as a mother because, as mentioned above, it is primarily her children who witness and remember how she was able to balance her domestic duties with artistic enterprises.

One of the binding ties of mother/daughter symbiosis—so the theory goes—is anger on the part of the mother; the unspeakable desire on the part of Salomé to experience this love mixed with anger is one of the hallmarks of mother/daughter fiction (Hirsch 39). There is more opportunity in Camila's narration where the constant pressure to be the symbiotic double of her mother becomes burdensome:

> The talk she has prepared is one she will be delivering countless times this year, the centennial of her mother's birth . . . Other scholars can talk about Salomé's poetry and her pedagogy, but she, Camila, *the only daughter, is supposed to shed a different light on the woman* . . . She has been surprised to receive so many invitations to speak about her mother this year. She is, after all, the anonymous one, the one who has done nothing remarkable . . . [S]he is in demand for sentimental reasons, *the daughter who lost her mother*, the orphan marched out (*Salomé* 69-70, my emphasis)

Camila's narrative is preoccupied with an underlying search for symbiosis with a Salomé she never knew yet the annoyance stems from the assumption that she *must* be like her mother. Camila can never win in the narrative: she want to be like her mother in order to feel closer to her, but in the end, the expectation that she should be like her mother and the result of always being viewed as lacking in that regard frames her whole narrative.

Initially the inspiration for symbiosis is felt by the mother who shares an inexplicable affinity with her daughter that is impossible to experience with sons.[153] For Salomé the

[153] "In a society like ours, in which mothers have exclusive care for infants and are isolated from other adults, in which there is physical and social separation of men/fathers from women/mothers and children, and institutionalized male dominance, a mother may impose her reactions to this

symbiosis, for much of the novel, is a desire, a wish, because it is at the end of her life that she has Camila; throughout much of the novel we only see Salomé as a *mother of sons*. Salomé's desire is not a result of suppressed desires to separate her own identity from her daughter.[T]he desire stems from a frustration borne out of the postcolonial conditions of the New World. Postcolonial representations of mother/daughter symbiosis take issue with this axiom of European normalization of family units and kinship structures. My argument is that in *Salomé* Alvarez acknowledges the extent to which European modes of analysis and readings of mother/daughter relations permeate her novel—and she does go to great lengths to exploit these assumptions and axioms.

4.4: Searching for Symbiosis: Mothers, Daughters, and Race

> **Caribbean women writers have undertaken to reimagine the region's history and . . . have conducted an emerging collective recuperation of the figure of a Caribbean *mother-of-history* . . . For in Caribbean literature the . . . [m]other already had a long and interesting career before the current women's boom: first as a figure for the colonizing power . . . still later for the vexed condition of Caribbeanness itself. (Rody 108)**

How can a woman be a mother to a child whom she does not interact with? How can a daughter identify with a mother she cannot remember? In order to answer these questions the wider scope of the novel must be taken into account. Salomé comes of age in the Dominican Republic during the struggle for independence from Spain. Camila's life is concerned with her multiple migrations within the New World away from the Dominican Republic; first to Cuba,

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situation on her son, and confuse her relationship to him as an infant with a sexualized relationship as a male . . Because they are the same gender as their daughters and have been girls, mothers of daughters tend not to experience these infant daughters as separate from them in the same way as do mothers of sons" (Chodorow 108, 109).

then to the United States. By alternating between narrators and levels of detail in each woman's life Alvarez's novel contains what Gikandi calls a "double inscription." The characters' lives in the way they are related to the reader both operate within the cultural and social parameters that serve to stifle their individuality and subjectivity but also—at the same time—serve as a mode of subversion (Gikandi *Limbo* 23). This novel seeks to subvert literary conventions of the mother/ daughter family romance because the double narration does not privilege the voice of the daughter. Furthermore, this subversion is written in this way in order to highlight how the "traditional" family romance plot where these mother/daughter literary conventions were formed and institutionalized are colonialist in nature.

Alvarez's text relies on mother/daughter symbiosis to work within the Western mother/daughter plot, but the lack of interaction between the mother and the daughter is what makes this novel more in tune with the rise of globalization in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Salomé's narration offers a glimpse of the life of the singular Caribbean mother-of-history. Her life experiences span the birth of la patria to the ravages of postcolonial cultural imperialism with the end of Empire making way for the rise of America as a global power. The political upheavals that occur concurrently in the United States and in the Dominican Republic create an extra layer of cultural symbiosis within the hemisphere that also influences Camila's narrative. In this sense, Alvarez borrows the construction of her characters in the same manner as Michelle Cliff used the relations between Kitty and Boy Savage to represent differing ideas and ideations about the historical past in the Caribbean. Salomé's complicated and complex struggles against her husband and Camila's lingering feeling of rootlessness (as a result of her father's insistence that she live to serve the family) also echoes Clare Savage's ambivalence and generalized anxieties seen in the final scene of *Abeng*.

A primary source that contributes to mother/daughter symbiosis is visage; we have seen in Cliff's works how differences in appearance can have damaging effects in how mothers and daughters understand each other. The significance of this cannot be overstated. The idea of resemblance between mothers and daughters in the New World and commonly marks the starting point for the daughter to insist on separation from the mother; it becomes a desire to change physically, to manifest a physical separation from the mother. In cases of non-resemblance the opposite is true; by not resembling the mother the daughter resists separation and searches for physical evidence of a past symbiotic relationship. "[T]he mother does not recognize . . . the daughter as a separate person, and the daughter herself then comes not to recognize . . . herself as a separate person. She experiences herself, rather, as a *continuation or extension of . . . her mother* in particular" (Chodorow 103, my emphasis). One of the interesting aspects of this component of mother/daughter New World fiction is that, apparently, this *only* affects *the daughter*. The most significant distortion of memory is what Salomé looked like. On the surface, we would like to think, what Salomé looked like should not be relevant in light of her poetic achievements, but Camila conceptualizes Salomé as a mother *before* she regards these achievements. Camila is the only daughter Salomé has and the physical resemblance between mother and daughter takes on added value.

Alvarez challenges this convention through her double narrative style. We see both Camila and Salomé struggle with the subject of physical resemblance and how it affects how the women perceive their relation to each other. One of the ways that mother/daughter symbiosis is strengthened in the social sphere is through resemblance; this expectation of common features and physical traits on the part of both mothers and daughters is meant to strengthen the bond between them. Camila's racial/ethnic ambiguity becomes a constant in her life as the narrative

travels backwards and it is not until the beginning of Salomé's narration begins that it becomes clear that this ambiguity is a result of the colonial condition in the New World. The way the novel is constructed makes it difficult to pick apart how Camila's development and the evolution of her racial consciousness because of its backwards progression. It is not until the beginning of Salomé's narration begins that it becomes clear that this ambiguity is a result of the colonial condition in the New World. The prologue of the novel begins with Camila, a woman in her 60's, preparing to leave the United States for Cuba to join in the revolution. The scene shows Camila alone in her empty attic apartment looking down from the window. The opening lines of the novel describe Camila's stature: "southern Italian? a Mediterranean Jew? a light-skinned negro woman who has been allowed to pass by virtue of her advanced degrees?" (*Salomé* 1).

Throughout her narrative Salomé is preoccupied with her (stereotypical) "African" features.[154] On the surface, Salomé's mixed racial back ground is not a hindrance to Salomé's social prospects in the same way Clare Savage was encouraged to deny her Blackness. Salomé's internalization of her Blackness is always already contextualized in traditional patriarchal gender expectations for women. Her public success as a talented poet does not compensate for her feelings of inadequacy because these "African" features are deemed "undesirable" and unattractive. "I studied my face in the mirror: the same eyes, mouth, big ears (oh, how I hated them!), the nose I wished were a little less broad, the springy hair I couldn't tamp down. . . It's as if I had on a disguise, a famous face, behind which I watched people who just a few months ago would not have said good day to me on the street" (*Salomé* 87).

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[154] "I studied my face in the mirror: the same eyes, mouth, big ears (oh, how I hated them!), the nose I wished were a little less broad, the springy hair I couldn't tamp down—in short, I was the very same Salomé Ureña . . . It's as if I had on a disguise, a famous face, behind which I watched people who just a few months ago would not have said good day to me on the street" (*Salomé* 87).

At the time of her death Salomé was famous in the Dominican Republic; but this fame pre-dates the photographic era. Pancho commissions a portrait to be painted of her so that the children would have a constant reminder of their mother to take with them in to the future. This portrait looks nothing like the real woman. Pancho commissions the portrait in order to re-write a familial history and a history of la patria for his children that contains only the Spanish elements of culture the upper-classes desire. Pancho's decision to commission her portrait in this way is a reversion back to the connection of race and culture. The beauty of the portrait of Salomé is meant to justify her position as the poetess of la patria, and the whiteness justifies her legacy.[155] The correlation between whiteness and civilization was one of the primary components of the colonial mission in the New World. Pancho is aware that Salomé's life will always be linked with his and his alteration of her visage elevates not only Salomé's memory, but also his own importance.

Ramona (described as Camila as the "guardian of Mamá's memory" (*Salomé* 43)) is always reminding Camila that much of what her father tells her of her mother's life is false or exaggerated. "According to Mon, Salomé was a *plain mulatto woman*. In the posthumous portrait her father commissioned, Salomé is pale, pretty, with a black neck band and a full rosebud mouth, a beautifying and whitening of the Great Salomé, another one of her father's campaigns"

[155] From Robert J.C. Young's *Colonial Desire*: "Race was defined through the criterion of civilization, with the cultivated white Western European male at the top, and everyone else on a hierarchical scale either in a chain of being, from mollusc to God, or, in the later model, on an evolutionary scale of development from a feminized state of childhood (savagery) up to full (European) manly adulthood. In other words, race was defined in terms of cultural, particularly gender, difference—carefully gradated and ranked. A racial hierarchy was established on the basis of a cultural pecking order, with those who had most civilization at the top, and those who were considered to have none—'primitives'—at the bottom. Civilization and culture were thus the names for the standard of measurement in the hierarchy of values through which European culture defined itself by placing itself at the top of a scale against which all other societies, or groups within society, were judged. The principle opposition, between civilization and barbarism or savagery, was nothing less than the ordering principle of civilization as such" (94-5).

(*Salomé* 204-5, my emphasis).Nothing remains of the real Salomé with "the sad eyes, the dark oval face, the full-lipped mouth, and the broad nose that the London artist filed down to aquiline, the discernible kink at the hairline in her tightly gathered hair" (*Salomé* 160). On the surface this transformation of Salomé at the hands of her husband serves as an extreme example of how a woman's life—no matter how well documented and accomplished—is ultimately absorbed into the life of her husband.[156] "'[T]hat pretty lady [in the portrait] is *my father's creation . . . He* wanted my mother to look like the legend he was creating . . . *He* wanted her to be prettier, whiter'" (*Salomé* 44, my emphasis).

The trope of the mother in the second wave of hemispheric Caribbean women writers have been exposed to, and continue to revisit, a long literary tradition of how mother/daughter relations are reflective of Caribbean identity and Caribbean culture. When Rody speaks of this tradition and how it continues to feed in to both the migration process and the literary tradition of the North American mainland, she is speaking directly of Afro-Caribbean and African-American women writers. Alvarez, strangely, is not included in this study—other than a brief mention at the beginning of Rody's text to nod to her inclusion in the contemporary canon of Caribbean migrant literature, but not outside of the tradition of mother/daughter literature in the New World (Rody 15). This lack of inclusion speaks volumes to how contemporary New World literature continues to grapple with self-definition that acknowledges the significance of race while attempting to de-emphasize the essentialism it can present when globalization works to unhinge previously stable modes of identification. Rody states more than once that the Caribbean itself and the term "Caribbean women writers" "describes an extremely diverse collection of women:

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[156] "She is supposed to be taller than her mother, more attractive, though she has never known if this compliment is a euphemism for 'whiter, paler, more Caucasian' in her looks. (*Salomé* 204-5).

women of numerous racial and ethnic groups who reside in many nations and write in at least four European languages and many Caribbean creoles" (117). I am proposing to test her theories by including Alvarez's body of work into the analysis of the cultural and literary connection between mother/daughter fictions, migration, and the colonial history of the New World rather than working within the limiting view of reading New World diaspora literature as particular to the African diaspora.

Alvarez's text makes it clear that the significance of racial identity and the socio-cultural structures that impose psychic domination on women; Salomé is forever preoccupied and embarrassed by her distinct "African" features. But this is only evident to the reader who has access to both women's lives simultaneously; Camila cannot empathize or express any kind of symbiotic affiliation with her mother on this level because she has only envisioned her mother as the light-skinned beauty of Pancho's portrait. Alvarez's decision to include a racial critique in this way displays yet another example of how contemporary global racial politics are almost indistinguishable from their colonial counterparts.

The dual narrations highlight the significance of "historical memory" regarding both the relationship the women have with each other, but also their relationship with their home country.[157] Alvarez's novel uses this form of historical memory to inform the narrations of both of her protagonists in their respective national and historical contexts. The dual voices speaking from different time periods in tandem display both the birth of the Dominican Republic as a

[157] Juan Flores attests to the importance of this form of memory in a New World context: "Historical memory is an active, creative force, not just a receptacle for storing the dead weight of times gone by. Memory has been associated since its earliest usages, with the act of . . . recording. It is not so much the record itself as the putting-on-record, the gathering and sorting of materials from the past in accordance with the needs and interests of the present. Remembering thus always involves selecting and shaping, in the imaginary of the present, and in the memory of the future" (Qtd. in Suárez 119).

nation and the aftermath of this independence. The very concept of La Patria contains different means different things to each character: "[A]cts of remembrance translate the . . . personal intimate memories into national patriotic symbols" (Socolovsky 8). The relationship both women have with each other is described as asymptotic[158]: "Alvarez . . . imagines the disjunction of their experience—lives lived apart but connected by family and country" (Johnson 35). The reliance on family memories of Salomé is what perpetuates the misrepresentations of both Salomé's life and the growth of the homeland. In this sense the dual narration—and the mother/daughter relationship by extension—is seen as a union of opposites. Camila's conception of her mother are scattered and full of gaps because she must rely on others, thus making Salomé's narration grounded in a truth that rises about all other members of the family. These misrepresentations and falsehoods are seemingly small and harmless, but for Camila, they are the source of her constant struggle to imagine her mother.

4.5 Conclusion

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of my mother; Salomé . . ." This is the benediction repeated over and over by Camila throughout her narration in *In the Name of Salomé*. This prayer is taught to Camila when she is very young by Ramona after the death of Salomé in 1897; "Mon thought up this way for her to ask for Salomé's blessing. To summon strength from a fading memory that every year became less and less real until all that was left of her mother was the *story* of her mother" (*Salomé* 5, my emphasis). As Camila repeats this

[158] "Alvarez tells the untellable history of those missing from the literature of exile by creating an asymptotic space in her writing to map these territories of experience. Asymptotic pairs, which approach each other but never meet, appear throughout Alvarez's writings as she demonstrates the forced distance between country and self . . . This double displacement contributes to women's inability to become 'hybrid' in their new culture or to adapt to the conflicting expectations, demands, and roles readily assimilated into a new, 'hybridized' identity" (Johnson 29).

throughout the text it can easily be envisioned with the accompanying crossing of herself as the words are spoken. For most Catholics this action is done automatically with little thought between the connection of the words and the corresponding movement of the hands that travel from the head ("in the name of the father") to the heart ("in the name of the son") and finally across the shoulders creating an invisible drawing of a holy cross. The prayer that Mon teaches Camila alters the traditional blessing by supplanting "the Holy Spirit" with Salomé's name and her position as Camila's *mother*. The line between the head and the heart is bisected by the line between the shoulders as Salomé's name is spoken. The link between the father and the son is clear: the head sires the heart and everything in-between these two areas are relational. The face, the mouth to speak, eyes to see, and ears to hear are processed by the head and then internalized and felt by the heart. The line that Salomé's blessing makes is less clear. The space between the shoulders is an expanse of muscle and bone, an integral but abstract part of body.

That Salomé's name in this prayer is the final crossing of the shoulders is actually emblematic of her absence in Camila's life; the absence of Salomé in Camila's life is abstract as she has no first-hand memories of her mother, but this absence is an integral element of Camila's identity. "She herself is worried about the emptiness that lies ahead. *Childless and motherless,* she is a bead unstrung from the necklace of generations" (*Salomé* 2, my emphasis). This repeated prayer throughout the novel expands the nature of motherhood and daughterhood in the novel. Indeed, because of this prayer, Salomé is no longer Camila's mother; she has become a god(dess)-like entity who is ever-present and felt, but never truly known. Can a daughter still be called such if she never knew her mother? How strong is the pull of amniotic bliss if it is not reinforced by a lifetime of relations? These questions apply to Salomé character as well: she is a

mother to her sons, but does she have a relationship with Camila before she is born? By having a daughter after bearing and raising three sons change her self-conception *as a mother*?

The foundation for mother/daughter symbiosis is the cyclical nature of womanhood: from daughter to mother of daughters. With the strong rhetoric of the natural bond between mother and daughter, and the inescapable nature of the relationship hinders any support of an enchanted connection mothers and daughters share. It is undeniable that the Salomé and Camila in Alvarez's text experience a bond unlike any other characters in the text, the consequences of this bond take their toll on both women. Camila's obvious frustration having not matured with the "luxury" of having a mother to turn to in times of trial (*Salomé* 31) combined with the backward motion of her narration justifies her feelings that she has morphed into "the nobody of the family" (*Salomé* 37-8).

CHAPTER 5

I: Mothering a Multitude: from Sycorax to Marie Ursule

I have organized my project chronologically with the intention of concluding with an analysis of Shakespearean colonialist literature and a contemporary novelist. The historical progressions of the twentieth century from anticolonial literature, to postcolonial, to *global* literature have been (re)presented in the works from Marshall to Julia Alvarez, each writer building on the creative and critical works of the one before. I thought it appropriate to end with a comparative reading of two mother/characters in canonical colonial literature and in modern New World literature. Like my readings of the previous authors and their works, I frame my readings of characters from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and from selected chapters of Dionne Brand's multigenerational novel *At the Full and Change of the Moon*. I have chosen to end in this way because this comparative reading of these works puts in to practice Trouillot's assertion that globalization repeats and recreates the same manner of domination and subordination as were experienced in the colonial period.

This ending is appropriate, I believe, because it continues with the same manner of questioning as Alvarez's *Salomé*; mother/daughter symbiosis allows for a complex, but understandable context where Camila and Salomé's lack of interaction in the scope of the novel is compensated with Alvarez's writing style that always already assumes the bond is strong. While looking at Shakespeare's original play, a selection of anti-colonial analyses of the plays influence on New World literatures, and a close "reading" of the 2010 film adaptation of the play, I discuss and examine the trope of the absent mother in postcolonial New World women's literature. The tradition of the absent mother is present in most cultures and a variety of literary narratives from fairy and folk talks of European and African origins to contemporary mother-

child novels and films that present the trauma of the childhood without a mother or mother/figure (including othermothers). Concerning *The Tempest*—and especially Julie Taymor's film adaptation—this trope is creatively reimagined; the dynamic of power between colonizer (Prospero, here a woman named *Prospera*) adds another layer of complexity to the structures of domination and subordination in the action of the play.

Sycorax is the mother of Caliban; Caliban's legacy in New World literature has been solidified in the Caribbean and postcolonial canon, yet very few critical and literary examine Sycorax's absence in any kind of feminist or postcolonial critical lens. Analytical discussions of these mothers as mothers are limited (at best) or dismissive (at worst). Critical discussions of Shakespeare's last play—and its many literary revisions—are prevalent; from the mid-twentieth century onward discussions of the continued relevance of the play in the field of postcolonial studies have moved past analysis of just the colonizer/colonized subtext of the play. My investigation into feminist criticism of literary discussions of the role *The Tempest* continues to play in the canon of postcolonial literature is evidence of the transition taking place between postcolonial and global studies. If globalization, at first glance, seeks to undermine colonial and neo-colonial patterns of domination and subordination in the same way that matriarchy seeks to undermine patriarchy (see 3:2) then the same patterns of ambiguity will complicate my reading in this ways. New World women have been reluctant to adopt Sycorax as a model for New World female subjectivity: "Sycorax is . . . an always-already dead and absent woman, a mother whose bequest to her child has been violated, and . . . a holder of defamed and eternally oppositional knowledge. To recover such a mother is to reclaim a subversive identity and mission" (Rody 116).

My comparison of *The Tempest* with Brand's 1999 novel will be structured along these same lines. Indeed, the text itself marginalizes the primary mother—Marie Ursule—to the periphery of the action of the novel; like Sycorax, she is the mother of the protagonist, Bola, whose progeny throughout the generations between the late seventeenth century and the end of the twentieth century are the subject of each individual chapter. Before the novel begins there is an intricate and, at times, confusing family tree that guide the reader through the novel and organizes the relations and relationships between the characters. The single root of this family tree is Marie Ursule, the mother of this multitude. Brand's novel is polyphonic like *Salomé*; each chapter reveals the experiences of a particular time and place within the Black Atlantic during the colonial, postcolonial, and, now, global present. The genealogical plot "comprehends identity as it is situated within a continuous familial system" and, as such, Marie Ursule's function of giving birth to this continuum deviates from Rody's insistence that the hallmark of New World women's writings from African America and the Caribbean are marked by the recurring trope of the daughter (child's) return to the mother (metaphorical or literal). Instead, genealogical plot—favoring an ensemble cast of characters—is able to emphasize the context of each individual, while not letting any one character overshadow the other, or any one specific experience to be emblematic of the entire whole of the narrative.

"[I]n Brand's novel, moments in which circumstances or memories of traumatic content occur are presented as considered pauses in time rather than jarring, possessive intrusions" (Grandison 765-6). In the small body of criticism that reference and analyze Brand's works, most of the literature available concentrates on the neo-slave and migrant narrative genre, cultural effects of globalization in a literary context, and the continuing culturally significant trauma of the Middle Passage and plantation slavery. Very few of the articles and studies devote much

attention to the novel's opening and commonly mention her significance as the mother of Bola, the actual matriarch/matrifocal figure of the generations presented in the narrative. On the one hand, the polyvocal and multigenerational structure of the narrative addresses Brand's larger critique of how colonialism and contemporary globalization are almost equal in power when it comes to creating contexts where the descendants of Marie Ursule battle the same forms of domination and subordination regardless of what decade or century they are in. Marie Ursule's experiences as a slave represents the represents the reproduction of racism and classism that each consequent character must confront.

5.2: Searching for Sycorax

> ***The Tempest*** **establishes the paradigm . . . In the tempest of storms generated by the literary and sociopolitical interpretations of this play, the still point remains that of an imperial patriarchal control dramatized as conquest—conquest over race and territorial space—while, subsumed beneath these two violations, inscribed in various ways as an inexorable will to power and manifesting itself as the conquest over . . . female "space," lies the violence of masculine sexuality. (Busia 84-5)**

Almost more than any other writer Shakespeare represents the epitome of the European literary canon. Framing anti-colonial arguments using a strong cultural figure as a reference point allowed colonial intellectuals to challenge this system on its own terms. This mode of anti-colonial activism was directly focused on the paternalistic nature of the colonial system. In modern postcolonial literary works and analyses Caliban remains a powerful figure as the proto-typical colonized subject; the continued popularity of examining how the struggle for power in the New World between the colonizer (Prospero) and the colonized (Caliban) has allowed New

World literature to write back to the empire in the same way that Caliban uses his master's language to curse him. "[T]he insinuation that Caliban was incapable of surviving on his own and did not even aspire to such independence in the first place . . . helped spur Third Worlders to mount adversarial interpretations of the play which rehabilitated Caliban into a heroic figure, inspired by noble rage to oust the interloping Prospero from his island" (Nixon 564).

After the success of the post WWII decolonization movements a small, but significant, interest in the role gender plays, and continues to play, in the colonial and postcolonial readings of Caliban has emerged. Some feminist critics have been eager to adopt Caliban as the figure who can speak for the oppressive nature colonialism had on women in particular. "If postcolonial theory and literature offer a counter-discourse to Western hegemony in that postcolonial texts confront the assumption of the West's supremacy and primacy, then it is possible to revisit and revise canonical texts as a means of manifesting this discursive encounter" (Almquist 591). This same manner of argumentation has been discussed before in Chapter 3 regarding the distinction between matriarchy and matrifocality: matriarchy offers a counter solution to the social structures of domination and subordination inherent in a Eurocentric patriarchal context.

These anti-colonial interpretations and creative re-inventions of Shakespeare's play and relations between characters have inspired New World women writers and intellectuals, but in the wake of decolonization and with the rise of globalization, many of these writers have begun to challenge the primacy of viewing Caliban as the proto-typical colonial subject. Can Caliban speak—albeit in the master's language—for all New World colonial experiences? Are his experiences and relations with Prospero independent of the connection of patriarchy and domination in the colonial era? The debates between an adoption of Caliban as representative of

the male *and* female experience and those who claim that there the female colonial and postcolonial experience cannot be fully represented with a male example is currently underway in the field of postcolonial literary studies.

On the one side, there are those critics who make a case for the specificity of a New World/Caribbean zonal identity; "[t]he Caribbean is . . . site of permeable boundaries and multiple identities, offering continuous redefinition of the self and one's relationship to society" and, because of this, all "Caribbean women are 'daughters of Caliban'" (López-Springfield xi). The structuring of this argument is interesting to me. At first glance, the claim that contemporary New World women writers are the inheritors of their male predecessors from the anti-colonial period of the mid-twentieth century is attractive because it continues the paradigm of center/periphery dynamics. Just as George Lamming wrote of his metaphorical mixed ancestry that includes both Caliban and Prospero,[159] the contributors of *Daughters of Caliban* base their metaphorical adoption of Caliban within the same framework of colonialist gender oppression.

This way of thinking and reading New World literature is locked into postcolonial theories of hybridity; the dual ancestry of the colonizer and the colonized create a consciousness of inbetween-ness.[160] What remains unexamined and un-spoken of in this line of thinking is how the contemporary transition from postcolonialism to global consciousness operates beyond heretofore theories of hybridity in culture. In the New World—and other social contexts where diaspora and migration are foundational elements of how cultures are structured—the ambiguities of theories of hybridity need to be treated as suspect because they do, indeed, often reproduce the same structures of domination and subordination in more complicated ways.

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[159] See *Pleasures of Exile*.

[160] See Bhabha's outline of the Third Space in *The Location of Culture.*

> While there is little question about the desirability of such projects where they seek to overcome debilitating (and worse) divisions between ethnicities, genders, and so on, it also is important to note that they may also serve as ideological covers for proliferating divisions in the contemporary world, especially the new forms of class divisions that accompany the unprecedented concentrations of wealth within nations and globally. It is important, in any case, not to take such projects at face value but to distinguish progressive efforts to overcome divisions from their manipulation in the service of new forms of power. (Dirlik 95)

The distinguishing between matrifocality and matriarchy, between motherhood and mothering, and between the feminist stakes of choosing to adopt an inverted colonialist approach to reading these texts over a conscious decision to deny the significance of Caliban as a contemporary model of resistance to globalization. How can these critics advocate for a New World female subjectivity and identity if the literary root of that metaphorical family tree is inherently male with no female counterpart? When López-Springfield describes writers such as the ones I have been writing about as "Daughters of Caliban" that too become subjects identified by their absent mothers.

Irene Lara also directly addresses this problem of the continual dismissal of Sycorax:

> If it is so important to tell and rewrite our mother's stories, why not position ourselves as "Daughters of Sycorax"? The pull toward taking up a Caliban(a) positionality, instead of positioning oneself with Sycorax, is unwittingly problematic . . . There is discomfort and perhaps fear in taking on a symbol that is documented as voiceless, speechless. Indeed, one may not even *see* Sycorax . . . Remembering Sycorax, a woman without an

> audible voice, an exile without a nation, and an accused witch on top of it, is a threat to the patriarchal social imaginary. (90)

Sycorax's absence from the play allows for a continued silence and silencing that remains long after the end of colonial rule in the New World. My investigation and resurrection of Sycorax is influenced by Lara's claim that her significance is a direct threat to colonial forms of patriarchal control that survived the end of imperialism in the New World. I do not propose to promote Sycorax's importance in the scope of a pre-contact past. Instead I believe that Sycorax deserves to experience the same transformation of meaning that Caliban has experienced over the years.

Little acknowledgement has been made throughout the twentieth century (in both anti-colonial and postcolonial readings of *The Tempest*) of Caliban's identity as a motherless child affects and is affected by his relationship with Prospero. Alone an isolated until "discovered" by Prospero, Sycorax cannot be conceived as a mother because she is not there; therefore the social element of Caliban's loyalty to her is marginalized. Furthermore, because there is only *after Prospero* for Caliban he must rely on the colonizer's portrait of his mother. Prospero only conceives of Sycorax as a promiscuous, foul witch (Lamming 115), but never acknowledges her simply as Caliban's mother. It would seem limiting and (possibly) offensive to examine New World women's subjectivity through their positions as mothers. "[Sycorax] is actually *constructed as being absent* from any locus of dramatic action or power" (Busia 86, my emphasis) because she is a doubly marginalized woman: because of her status as a Black woman, she is only spoken *of* instead of spoken *for*. This marginalization can be conveniently explained in a center/periphery postcolonial theoretical lens, but contemporary theories of globalization offer new insights into how Sycorax's importance as a mother and a woman overcome the limitations of her absence in regards to her metaphorical power.

Julie Taymor's 2010 film adaptation of *The Tempest* is an interesting text through which to critically read how these differing feminist world views revolve around each other. This cinematic version of the play offers an interesting opportunity to examine how the structures of patriarchal power and authority in a colonial context continue to be re-imagined in order to highlight the growing significance of domestic relationships and local concerns in the global era. Mary Louise Pratt claims that globalization, rather than homogenizing culture into a monolithic structure, produces a multiplicity of identities are entirely local, yet simultaneously global. More importantly, becoming increasingly concerned with linking domestic concerns—interpersonal relationships like, the mother/child relationship as an example—are imagined as emblematic of this phenomena in creative works by New World women writers ("Global" 31). Taymor—a stage and firm director—established her distinct feminist point of view with the release of her biographic film of Frida Khalo where the focus on the domestic concerns of the artist are revealed to be the source of all Khalo's inspirations. Therefore the theme of the movie embodies Pratt's observations about how in the modern world—despite the dated nature of the source material for Taymor's film—it clearly is a representation of the significance of the domestic space, and how this space is can be a site of empowerment for women, is replacing/displacing the public sphere as the primary site of political and social concerns.

Taymor's surrealistic interpretation of the play offers a unique reading to the function of gender in this rendering of the colonial encounter. In the movie, instead of Prospero the colonizer imposes his domination on Caliban, the colonizer is a woman; here named Prospera played by Helen Mirren. Caliban is played by Djamon Hounsou, a former model whose film career has been almost exclusively been devoted to portraying enslaved characters.[161] Very little has been

[161] See *Stargate*, *Amistad*, and *Gladiator*.

changed from the original language. Unlike Césaire's *Une Tempête* where the action of the play, the identity of the characters, and the adapted dialogue make the anti-colonialist direction of the play hard to ignore, Taymor's film optimizes the visual medium of film to creatively expand on Shakespeare's original drama of power and subordination. The small change in the visualization rather than the articulation of the dynamic of power and subordination shows that postcolonial conceptions of binaries are fluid and subject to change in the global era; this example of diversification of how literature is conceived by New World women artists challenges these seemingly static conceptions when, in reality, they are becoming increasingly fluid (Mudimbe-Boyi xvii).

Changing the gender of the colonizer also changes the scope of how the struggle for power between colonizer and colonized does have an impact on the domestic/private sphere. On the one hand the choice to switch the gender of the colonized seems to advocate for a re-thinking of women's role in the colonial enterprise. Mirren and Taymor's Prospera offers a counter-visual; that of the all-powerful and protective mother-colonizer thus challenging the colonial woman as marginalized through the systematic economic and social mercy of a male relation or a husbands.[162] This slight change has a simultaneous effect on how the viewer/reader perceives Caliban; as a woman/mother Prospera's domination over Caliban has less to do with the appropriation of Caliban's homeland and shifts the focus of the cause of the struggle for power to a metaphoric battle of the sexes. This alteration does not, however, challenge or even obscure how Caliban's character does not change at all. Still an imposing figure of the inherently violent

[162] See Introduction of *Imperial Leather* by McClintock for a comparative analysis of the degrees of social and economic oppression of Black and White women in the era of colonialism.

slave who poses a sexual threat to the sanctity of White virtue[163], Mirren's Prospera expands the feminist potential of readings of the play, but keeps in place the original racial dynamics of power and subordination. In addition to this, Taymor's decision to downplay any mention of Sycorax only makes the continuation of racial visual stereotypes all the more uncomfortable.

What argument is this film adaptation making about the continuing topical interest in Shakespeare's last play regarding gender and the role of mothers in the colonial dynamic of power and subordination? Taymor succeeds in carving out a space where maternal identity can be read as a site of power, but this extends only to European conceptions of maternity and definitions of motherhood. Without the presence of Sycorax (absent even from cinematic flashbacks in the film) to offer differing (oppositional?) vision of maternal power in a colonial context actually perpetuates colonialist readings of the play. Caliban's character is still framed through his anger toward, and opposition to, Prospera; he has no other conception of maternal power. Taymor's film is emblematic of how the transition from a consciousness of postcolonialism to a consciousness of globalization challenges the construction of gender in literature; no longer tied to the confines of patriarchy yielding power by its own authority, it offers a fresh look at how maternity can be a source of power in a colonial context.

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[163] One of the major justifications that Prospero/a gives for despising Caliban is that s/he is still incensed with anger over Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda. In the film Caliban's introductory scene, where he curses Prospero/a in the master's own language, shows Mirren and Felicity Jones (playing Miranda) are filmed at such an angle that they appear shrunken and small in Caliban's shadow. Mirren shield's Jones's body with her own, guarding her from harm; the bond between mother and daughter, just as in *Salomé*, is unspoken but understood. The threat of the fate worse than death I do not need to go into detail about the racial symbolism of this scene where the scantily clad, tall and imposing, angry Black man discussing his desire for the demure and frail white woman, what I would like to call attention to is that this is also the scene where Caliban first makes mention of his absent mother. The contrast is then presented in the film: Prospera protecting her daughter and Caliban, motherless, cursing his existence as a slave. The movie does nothing with this contrast; no flashback in the film to Sycorax on the island, even as Ariel recounts his imprisonment in the tree.

The continued absence of Sycorax in this film is where I take particular issue. Caliban's static character as the stereotypical angry-Black-man invites an unwelcome discomfort in his role as the literary father of New World literature. In this reading of the film/play, there is no closure with Sycorax's absence and she is still denied her identity as the mother of the multitude in the New World. In this sense, Sycorax is exiled in the purest sense of the word; she remains on the periphery of the action of the film and therefore the power inherent in her identity as a mother also remains marginal despite Prospera's added sense of power because she is a woman/mother. Sycorax is also exiled from the generations of metaphorical children who claim Caliban as their symbolic father.

The condition of exile in a globalized context is very different from previous postcolonial discussions of exile where it is a condition imposed from the center onto the peripheral colonial artist—Lamming's *Pleasures* are the most obvious example applicable here.

> The state of exile . . . is one in which exiled persons have the *privilege* of looking forward *and* backward—forward to a state of equilibrium wherein alienation from the self and the past will be brought to an end and backward to an understanding of where we have come from and how past generations have sought to prevent the struggled with which we are faced in the present. (Chancy 214, my emphasis)

Contemporary New World women writers, having matured in a decolonial period and have witnessed the rise of hemispheric migrant globalization make the most of this privileged and unique world-view where the past and the present continue to play and re-play in these narratives. My reading of Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon* was borne out of my frustrations with Taymor's film. My reading of Marie Ursule as the mother of the generations of characters who populate the novel is as how I imagine Sycorax should have been represented; a

marginalized woman/mother, yes, but a woman who fought against the forces that marginalized her. Likewise, Marie Ursule's daughter Bola becomes a female version of Caliban; the epicenter of the ripples of generations who populate the rest of the novel.

5.3: " . . . But a Drink of Water"

Dionne Brand was born in Trinidad, but her entire literary career has been spent in Toronto, Ontario; a city whose immigrant/migrant population is larger, by percentage, than that of all of Canada. Her migrant status in North America but not in the United States creates for Brand a precarious designation in the scope of this project. Black diaspora culture in Canada is very different from African-American culture in the United States specifically because of the differences in colonial histories of the two regions. Canada was granted its official independence from the British Empire in 1931 but did not completely sever its political or civil ties to the United Kingdom until 1982. Unlike the United States, Canada does not have its own distinct history of plantation slavery. Caribbean diaspora communities in Canada are thus constructed along differing social structures than diaspora communities in the United States; the racial homogenization by mainstream Canadian civil society creates a context where ethnic and national identification is promoted and fostered in a way that does not occur in the United States. Canadian black communities are shaped by "differences of ethnicity, religion, [and] politics" that are distinct and difference from the general (Anglo) Canadian populations and these "distinctions [are] deeply rooted in and reflective of the historical legacy of British colonialism in the western hemisphere" (Toney 79). Regarding the significance of her place in the scope of my project, Brand's voice, like Alvarez's, adds weight to my discussion of how in the global era New World diaspora culture is breaking through boundaries of analysis that are defined by race and cultural affiliation. Put another way, I have included Brand in this project because, like Alvarez, analyses

of New World women's literature needs to separate itself further from the automatic assumption that New World Black culture is dictated by the specificities of the African-American experience.

Viewing Marie Ursule's character in this light, her function as a modern literary manifestation of Sycorax becomes increasingly clear. In this way, Caroline Rody's analyses of mother/daughter fiction as a feminist literary tradition in the New World, Brand's genealogical novel signifies the next step in women's migrant narratives. "[I]n Brand's novel, moments in which circumstances or memories of traumatic content occur are presented as considered pauses in time rather than jarring, possessive intrusions. As such, her textual representations of traumatic memory support revisionist and agential models of trauma that reject the dissociative view of traumatic memory" (Grandison 765-6). The lasting impacts of this traumatic memory operates differently for writers of the global period than writers from the decolonial mid-twentieth century., Take, for example, Lamming's *Pleasures* where his relationship to the colonial past is conceived in linear terms: "We are made to see a sense of exile by our inadequacy and our irrelevance of function in a society whose past we can't alter, and whose future is always beyond us" (24). To be victimized by the past, and to be continuously haunted by it, prevents a colonial subject (in his opinion) from achieving full acceptance in the metropolitan's society. Indeed, his reading of *The Tempest* is colored by this linear view of the relationship between colonialism and postcolonialism; Sycorax is absent from his discussion because the past only informs, but does not necessarily influence, the present. Brand's construction of the ancestral mother who is the source of all maternal power draws inspiration from a globalized perspective where the distinctions between the past and the present are not as clear. If the globalized present contains repeated and re-shaped structures of colonialism, then

the subject of historical memory of the mother of the multitude becomes the historical re-memory of the ancestral mother. "'Rememory' transforms 'memory' into a property of consciousness with the . . . imaginative power sufficient to the ethnic historical novel's claim to retell the story of the past" (Rody 28). I propose that Brand's first chapter—concerned exclusively with the maternal origins of the multitude of characters—is a symbolic acquisition of Sycorax as the legitimate source of maternal power in the New World. Though still relegated to the periphery of the text, it is in the spirit of her refusal to be defined by the master's language, or the master's master plan for the colonized woman, the spirit of Marie Ursule's rebellion against the master is unconsciously and sub-consciously remembered by her ancestors throughout the colonial, postcolonial, and global periods in the historical span of the novel.

At the beginning of the novel—before the beginning of the narrative—there is an intricate and, at times, confusing family tree that guide the reader through the novel and organizes the relations and relationships between the characters. The single root of this family tree is Marie Ursule. The genealogical progression through each character who can trace their personal histories back to this common maternal source is Brand's way of comprehending identity "as it is situated within a continuous familial system" and, as such, Marie Ursule's function of giving birth to this continuum deviates from Rody's insistence that the hallmark of New World women's writings from African America and the Caribbean are marked by the recurring trope of the daughter (child's) return to the mother (metaphorical or literal). The genealogical plot—favoring an ensemble cast of characters—is able to emphasize the context of each individual, while not letting any one character overshadow the other, or any one specific experience to be emblematic of the entire whole of the narrative. Brand's larger critique of how colonialism and contemporary globalization are almost equal in power when it comes to creating

contexts where the descendants of Marie Ursule battle the same forms of domination and subordination regardless of what decade or century they are in. In the small body of criticism that reference and analyze Brand's works, most of the literature available concentrates on the neo-slave and migrant narrative genre, cultural effects of globalization in a literary context, and the continuing culturally significant trauma of the Middle Passage and plantation slavery.

In order to unpack Marie Ursule's place as a mother of the multitude, first a discussion of the conditions of her relationship with Bola; as discussions of Caliban's significance often downplay the significance of his absent mother, so to do discussions of *ATFACOTM* marginalize the significance of Marie Ursule's suicide and instead focus exclusively on Bola's life after being separated from her mother. Unlike the Caliban/Sycorax pattern of marginalization of the significance of the mother, Marie Ursule is not defined by her silence. Consider for a moment that Caliban's anger stems from the absence of his mother. It stands to reason then, in this way of thinking, that the generations of literary inheritors of Caliban's anger situate their works in the same manner; the mother is continuously lost and the repeating of this traumatic metaphor is a way to categorize this kind of literature.

Brand's text alters the nature of this trauma in the same way Taymor's film alters the original dynamics of the function of gender in colonial structures of power; Marie Ursule's suicide, rather than tragic or traumatic, is narrated as an example of female agency and rebellion. Marie Ursule's character channels the spirit of maternal origins in the same way Caliban remembers his mother, but the similarities in the lasting impact of her actions on the generations that follow is very different. The reason for this is Brand's intentional subversion of the trope of the absent mother; Sycorax's absence, as I mention above, is constructed by forces (patriarchal, colonial) outside of her control. In *ATFACOTM* Marie Ursule's absence is actively constructed

on her own; she is not spoken of, she speaks for herself. This underlying element of rebellion is the legacy that gets passed down to the generations unlike Caliban who must always already base his memories of his absent mother through the colored lens of Prospero/a's classification of her as an evil Other.

At the beginning of the first chapter the reader is informed of Marie Ursule's intention to kill herself and the entire collective of slaves on her plantation. As she goes through her morning routine of waking and dressing, Marie Ursule also collects the ingredients of the poison that the working population of the estate of Mon Chagrin. The recipe for the poison was not concocted in the slave quarters of the island's plantations, instead, this recipe was passed on to Marie Ursule from the, now extinct, Carib Indians who were the original inhabitants of the New World, and they were also the original victims of colonialism on this side of the Atlantic.

> She had listened to whispers from the Caribs and had made dealings with those of them left alive on the island after their own great and long devastation by the Europeans; their six-thousand-year-old trek over the Andes was close to ending here in Trinidad after four hundred years of war with the invaders . . . She had thought of other ways, bitter cassava, manchineel apples, but their agonies could last for days. *Woorara*, the Caribs had told her, was simple and quick, though it had taken her years to collect. And wait. (Brand 2)

Marie Ursule's rebellion against her master legitimates her position as the mother of the multitude in the New World in a way that Sycorax never could. Hailing originally from Africa, metaphorical adoption of Sycorax as the literary mother of New World women's experiences implies a psychological re-crossing of the Atlantic to claim an ancestral mother whose own

origins lie outside of the historical trauma of the Middle Passage and the ensuing colonial domination of the western hemisphere.

While this resolves the complications of Taymor's peripheral interest in the maternal origins of the colonial Caliban, Brand's portrait of maternal anger and rebellion does not resolve all issues. Indeed, recovering and promoting an original maternal ancestor in this way creates a separate set of feminist and cultural complications. This shift represents a major turning point in New World women's literature.

> The figuration of the lingering effects of Caribbean history in images of an insufficiently mothery mother, a "hostile," . . . or a birth that is a harvest of death, recalls the use of . . . distorted metaphors to render traumatic history in works by . . . ethnic American women writers. Notably, male and female writers alike use this trope in Caribbean literature, rejecting the search for mothers elsewhere and self-consciously attempting to "take root" in the inhospitable soil of an inadequate, historically compromised mother-island. (Rody 115)

Writers of George Lamming's generation always sought to frame their colonial/postcolonial identities either as a hybrid construction of equal European and African parts—think of Merle Kinbona's clothing and jewelry. Brand's internalization of globalizations decentralizing of cultural power away from Europe is evidenced by her display of a maternal origin in and of the New World (rather than a combination of Old World and Mother Africa in the same manner as *CPTP*).

As the narrative follows Marie Ursule's actions brief flashes of memory—akin to the flashbacks in *Abeng*—highlight not only her own experiences as a slave (lashed 39 times, chained to a ten-pound weight as punished for an attempted escape) but also the nature of the

collective resistance she is orchestrating. Brand describes Marie Ursule as the "queen" of the rebels, a surrogate and spiritual mother to the enslaves: Mother Earth meets Moses. With the introduction of Bola in the narrative, however, Marie Ursule's identity is made all the more complex:

Marie Ursule is the "queen" of the Convoi Sans Peur and, likewise, she has no fear of death; but in addition to assuming the role of metaphorical mother, she is also a mother in reality, and it is this fact that complicates readings of Marie Ursule in a comparative way with Sycorax. Sycorax's constructed absence in the play denies the significance of how she acted *as a mother* and how her relationship and interactions with her son were incorporated with other elements of her identity. The bonds of love are strong, familial responsibility is passionate and political, but these ties that bind people together can also restrict and constrict their individuality and identity. Indeed, Marie Ursule is uncomfortable in her role as actual mother and much more comfortable as the mother/comrade/leader of the rebel slaves.

> *The one vanity she'd had was that child*. Like Marcelle Dauphine and Marie Bastien and Marie Rose, she had washed out many from between her legs . . [S]he had vowed never to bring a child into the world, and so to impoverish de Lambert with barrenness as well as disobedience. Not one child born in that place for years . . . Until one day, Marie Ursule made one will all itself intact. *Her one curiosity and her one vanity . . . It's* mouth was full of milk, grey drooling milk. *It* came as if already feeding *itself*, and if Marie Ursule would not help *it, it* was ready to survive on *its* own. She laughed as the child tumbled out of her like an ocean and a torrent between her legs. (Brand 7-8)

The rebellions that Marie Ursule organizes and participates in include active resistance in a particularly female context: the refusal to give birth. The narrative, in calling Marie Ursule the queen (mother) of the rebels metaphorically challenges the colonialist ideal of quiet and servile maternity.

The contrast between Marie Ursule's almost physical connection to her daughter and her (seemingly) callous description of Bola as ***it*** is very interesting in this quote. This could partially be explained by the context of the thought itself: Marie Ursule, on the edge of her own suicide could be constructing a linguistic distance as a way to temper her grief. At the same time, this active depersonalization of her daughter (not thought of as a person but as a thing—another possession of her de Lambert) could indicate that Marie Ursule has unconsciously adopted the material value plantation slavery placed on familial relations. Put another way, Marie Ursule recognizes that, ultimately, her condition as a slave does not allow her to have dominion over her own body[164] and its capacity to reproduce, but she also recognizes that her identity as a mother is also the only way she can rebel against de Lambert by actively choosing not to give birth or become pregnant.

> [S]elf-mutilation and suicide—acts whereby hostility to oppression is turned against the victim's own person—may be construed as resistance, as can the high incidence among women, acting alone or with the help of slave midwives, of what has been called "gynecological resistance": infanticide or abortion. . . . The whole

[164] "The loss of the indigenous name/land marks a metaphor of displacement for other human and cultural features and relations, including the displacement of the genitalia, the female's and the male's desire that engenders the future. The fact that the enslaved person's access to the issue of his/her own body is not entirely clear in this historic period throws in crisis all aspects of the blood relations, as captors apparently felt no obligation to acknowledge them. Actually trying to understand how the confusions of consanguinity worked is part of the project, because the outcome goes far to explain the rule of gender and its application to African females in captivity" (Spillers 216).

> point of psychological resistance was to show and not show nonacceptance of the system and above all not to be caught in the act of maneuver, deception, or defiance . . . All these actions had, it is argued, two objectives and effects. First, they enabled slaves, usually without great risk to themselves, concretely to impeded and impair the smooth functioning of the plantation and so his Massa where it hurt him the most: in his pocketbook. Second, they permitted the slaves to assert, in a concealed and roundabout way, their subjectivity in the face of uniquely objectifying character of slavery. (Burton 45)

This kind of gynecological resistance is borne out of an internalization of how capitalism is a predicating component of colonialism. With this in mind, there is not a huge intellectual leap required to see how, with the advent of globalization which is defined by the expansion of global markets, how Marie Ursule's actions display how she has been assimilated to the master's way of thinking.

One of the ways globalization (as a socio-cultural event) is replacing—yet imitating—postcolonial patterns of domination and subordination can be seen in this process of assimilation and rebellion. This creates a kind of identity crisis for Marie Ursule: in order to challenge the institution of slavery she must first internalize false definitions of self-hood in order resist from within (Pratt "Global 34). Her only error in the full completion of this task is that she cannot bring herself to surrender Bola—her most the vainest of her possessions—to the same fate. Indeed, Marie Ursule's visions of the future foretell the cultural and historical evolution of the New World after European contact; the generations that run throughout the rest of the text are the heirs and descendants of her generations and of the generations of her master.

> De Lambert turned in his sleep now, drinking in the same air as Marie Ursule but not tasting the same breaths that she tasted and hesitated at. His blood would run the same through him to his generations. Generations needing a new language, because de Lambert turned in his bed to get the rest of his sleep before waking up to kill Marie Ursule. His generations would melt into his secrets. They would take other names. They would even forget de Lambert, the man in their faces and in the faces of the photographs that would speak of a great family. (Brand 19)

By sending Bola off into the wilderness (a scene that conjures images of Moses in the reeds being abandoned to lead a people to freedom) she is establishing her own place as the rightful mother of the multitude of characters who are the subject of the chapters that follow.

According to the family tree at the beginning of the text, Bola is described as the original maternal figure of the generations; Marie Ursule is ultimately relegated to the periphery of the text in the same way that Sycorax is all but ignored in analyses of *The Tempest* and its many revisions and re-imaginings. Marie Ursule's place in the kinship network of this novel does not display a double oppression in the manner that Black feminist critics consistently reference when discussing the condition of Black and "ethnic" women in the New World.[165] Instead, her character undergoes a kind of doubling or tripling of an exiled consciousness that is global in nature.

> [T]he question of exile needs to be reviewed with awareness of an alienation that occurs not only as a dimension from ancestral . . . Caribbean cultures, which are left behind in the search for economic or other freedoms, but as a component of

[165] I am speaking specifically of the multiple ways racism and classism work in tandem to create construction of zonal and gender identity in the New World.

> everyday life for women within the islands themselves. Exile, seen in this light, is an insidious part of the marginalization of women at "home" as well. (Chancy 167)

Marier Ursule surrenders her rightful place at home in the context of this extended family. On one level Marie Ursule's remembered migrations that lead her to her last morning and her fateful decision to spare her daughter from death display how the basic working structures of colonialism and globalization are similar in trajectory and in their psychological results. In addition, the continuous movement of her imagined progeny in the quote above, as they undergo their own migrations (which mirror the migrations of de Lambert's ancestors, the twisting of histories and generations never ends) suggests an allegorical representation of contemporary patterns of migration; the neo-colonial historical period is displayed as almost identical to its historical predecessor.

Ultimately, Brand's novel—and the others discussed in the previous chapters—is an artistic rendering of Trouillot's claim that the New World is at once a historical construction brought about by the accident of discovery, and the original site of a constantly repeating consciousness of global culture. What remains significant, I believe, is how the literature by these women as they creatively (re)engage with their literary predecessors who, for whatever reason, had assimilated (to varying degrees) a colonial consciousness when it came to gender constructions and the creation of the institution of motherhood accomplishes the task of balancing the pleasures and the demons of the exilic condition in a context where the center/periphery dynamic no longer applies.

> [Literature expresses the historical moment—and the new forms of imperialism that replace formal European colonialism after independence—just as the earlier

> fiction gave voice to the sociopolitical realities of the period of national liberation. They very economic and social conditions that form the backdrop of the literature are themselves shaped and exacerbated by new global forces. Even where there is no explicit engagement with foreign domination, these dynamics emerge nonetheless in the 'fissures and dissonances' of fictional works ostensibly rooted in the 'personal' realm of relationships and individual growth; often even the most personal issues are shown to be embedded in broader social structures. These texts are not *less* political, but rather expressive of a *changed* political context. (Scott *Globalization* 20-1)

Such are the creative possibilities of women who possess a particular zonal identity that is at once global in nature and particular in practice. After having read these texts and explored the way each of these writers critically and creatively (re)explore the political possibilities in the domestic, the mundane, (perhaps) the natural performance of motherhood and mothering I have come to the conclusion that, like the double helix of patterns of domination and subordination within these literatures, motherhood as an institution is becoming more and more ambiguous with the diffusion of culture in the global period. As such, an interesting counter-development of collective internal monitoring of mothering practices means that women, as women and mothers, will need to continue to reinvent themselves and how they view themselves as daughters and mothers despite these conditions and complications, not in spite of them.

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