ABSENT MOTHERS, REBEL DAUGHTERS, AND MOTHERLANDS: THE POLITICS OF HOME

by

Ane Caroline Ribeiro Costa

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

West Lafayette, Indiana

May 2022

THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Dr. Shaun Hughes, Chair

Department of English

Dr. Jennifer Lynn Freeman Marshall

Department of English

Dr. Robert Marzec

Department of English

Dr. Venetria K. Patton

Dean, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences,

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Approved by:

Dr. S. Dorsey Armstrong

For my mother, for accepting that I didn't want to be like her,
allowing me to be whom I wanted to be,
and helping me become who I am.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank God first and foremost and the strength He grants me every morning, mainly because this Ph.D. path has not been easy.

I am grateful to Shaun Hughes, whose encouragement, positivity, and general guidance throughout my Ph.D. at Purdue have sustained me these past five years. I always felt more confident after our conversations. I thank him for that.

I also thank the other members of my committee, Jennifer Lynn Freeman Marshall, Robert Marzec, and Venetria Patton, for their support, mentorship, and advice.

I also thank Nush Powell for her support as Graduate director. Her mentorship during these five years has been valuable in both academic and personal matters, and this Ph.D. would not have been the same without her guidance.

As an international student of color, I have faced many challenges during this process. I would not be able to complete this Ph.D. without some very important people in my life. My parents and siblings who have always listened to me say I would study abroad and supported every crazy decision I took to fulfill this goal. I thank my husband, Moises Costa, who abdicated his career and goals to come with me to the United States and has always supported me. I am immensely grateful for his support and understanding during this process, for putting up with my grumpy self, my absence over weekends, and his constant reminders of my abilities.

I am also very thankful for the Brazilian community in West Lafayette, especially my dear friends Daleth Asab, Debora Borba, and Thiago Dimmi, for their friendship and companionship during these years. My writing group friends Erin, Jason, Tayrine, and Cleu, I really appreciate your company throughout this process. I also thank the Graduate community of the English Department at Purdue and everyone who has at least once offered empathy during moments of struggle and doubt.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT 8
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION 9
1.1. From Travel writing to Travel Fiction — A Historical Overview.....16
1.2. Black Feminist Literature and the Mother-Daughter Dyad — A Literature Review 29
1.3. A Revision of Terminology — Theory and Research Methods 38
1.4. Final considerations.....44
CHAPTER 2. LANGUAGE AND MEMORY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MOTHERS AND MOTHERLANDS IN *HOMEGOING* AND *ÁGUA DE BARRELA* 46
2.1 Mothers and Motherlands in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* — An Introduction.....47
2.2 The Politics of Home and the Necessity of Revisiting History in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela*.....52
2.3. Language and naming role in identity reconstruction in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela*.....64
2.4. Memory, Storytelling, and Female Authorship in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela*. ...73
CHAPTER 3. SOLO TRAVELERS: IDENTITY AND DISPLACEMENT IN *LUCY*, *AMERICANAH*, AND *THE UNBELONGING*.....90
3.1 Identity and Displacement in the Solo Woman Traveler's Trope—an Introduction.....91
3.2 "A real Americanah" — Migration and the Legacy of Colonialism. 99
3.3 "I am not like her at all" — The Cultural Ambivalence of Hybrid Identities 107
3.4 Like a mother to me" — Othermothers and Alienation in the Adopted Country.....117
3.5 "Go back whe you come fram" — The journey back and the identity problem. 130
CHAPTER 4. MIGRATION, DISLOCATIONS, AND THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER DYAD IN *BROWN GIRL, BROWNSTONES*, *DREAMING IN CUBAN*, AND *BREATH, EYES, MEMORY*.....142
4.1 Surviving Racism and Sexism: The Mother-Daughter Dyad. 143
4.2 "Everything gon be white" — Generational Conflicts and Diaspora 153

4.3 “You got to take yuh mouth and make a gun” — Language and Identity in the Diaspora 168
4.4 “You call it home?” — The Journey “Home.” 181
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION 193
5.1 Migration 196
5.2 Identity 198
5.3 Language 200
5.4 Storytelling and Memory 201
5.5 A Note on Genre 203
APPENDIX A. 208
APPENDIX B. 209
APPENDIX C. 210
APPENDIX D. 211
APPENDIX E. 212
WORKS CITED 213
VITA 228
PUBLICATION 229

"But the things I could not see about myself, the things I could not put my hands on—those things had changed, and I did not yet know them well. I understood that I was inventing myself, and that I was doing this more in the way of a painter than in the way of a scientist."

Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy*.

ABSTRACT

A key aspect of postcoloniality and works that deal with migration is the forever-present questioning of home and belonging. Migration frequently involves a negotiation between adapting to a place where policymaking often represses, oppresses, and/or colonizes the country migrants come from and often have left family behind. It may also involve returning to the motherland—a decision associated with the level of participation or belonging to the adopted country. Calling attention to the suffix "mother" appertaining to "native" land and its connotation to familial relations shows the intrinsic relationship between motherhood, familial bonds, and the construction of a hybrid identity. In the context of the diaspora and its feelings of absence, developing a sense of kinship might be the difference between establishing or not strong associations with the geographical space. This dissertation aims to unveil how migration affects mother-daughter affairs, highlighting how maintaining healthy mother-daughter relationships assists in constructing diasporic black identities. This process, experienced mainly by second-generational migrants and solo travelers, involves dislocations, displacement, and the acceptance of a transversal hybridity pivotal to empowerment. By discussing mother-daughter relationships in light of migration, this dissertation reveals how language, storytelling, and memory in contemporary post-colonial novels from Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America perform double resistance and contribute to a new decolonized literary tradition.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

"We can't go back to something we ain't never been to in the first place."
— Yaa Gyasi, *Homegoing*

The Mother-daughter dyad has become a common theme in feminist literature. Literary works written by women often depict mothers and daughters in complex relationships, primarily rooted in patriarchal values that dictate women's behavior. Conflicts grounded on gender roles expectations, sexual behavior, and generational and educational gaps—always permeating patriarchy—are also present in transnational works. However, these mother-daughter tumultuous relationships in diasporic contexts mirror another intricate relationship between women and their dual geographical spaces and identities. Authors like Yaa Gyasi, Eliana Alves Cruz, Christina García, Edwidge Danticat, Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, Jamaica Kincaid, Paul Marshall, Joan Riley, among many others, express in their works and biographies an in-betweenness that profoundly affects their relationships with their families, especially their mothers. This dissertation argues that migration affects mother-daughter relationships, presenting a duality in perspectives regarding the adopted country and the motherland, rooted versus unrooted living situations, and a feeling of displacement concerning the geographical and temporal spaces these women occupy personally, and in postcolonial fictional works at large.

Migration involves a negotiation between dwelling in a place where politics often repress the country migrants come from and, most of the time, have left family behind or returning to the motherland. More specifically, migration involves swapping a homeland for an imaginary "motherland" in the hopes of mending a life rendered "difficult in great part by the exploration of that 'Motherland' itself" and the displacement suffered by those who feel rejected by the adopted country (Suárez, "Absent" 300). This ambivalence concerning migration shows the unsettling condition of living in the diaspora, particularly the experience of first-generation[1] migrants, who

[1] According to the United States Census, the foreign-born population includes "naturalized U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents (immigrants), temporary migrants (such as foreign students), humanitarian migrants (such as refugees and asylees), and unauthorized migrants" ("About"). According to the Census, we use first, second, third-and-higher generation categories to identity place of origin of people. Foreign-born people are considered first

have left the motherland by choice in search of a more prosperous life. Nevertheless, individuals born or brought to the adopted country as infants face other issues, often experiencing conflicting feelings regarding mothers and motherlands. These experiences of voluntary and involuntary migration both involve acceptance and resistance, in which mothers tend to accept more and resist less. In contrast, daughters resist more than accept certain conditions.

This dissertation will make no distinction between a migrant and an immigrant for two specific reasons. Firstly, there are both types of migration and immigration in the traditional sense happening within families in these novels. Characters move inside and outside their motherlands and adopted countries and may experience xenophobia in both contexts. Secondly, the concept of borders involves many elements, which this dissertation challenges. Borders create the very system that treats the "immigrant" as the racialized Other, a threat that must be stopped by walls and strict anti-immigration laws. Considering this issue, the historian Robin D. G. Kelly said, "nationalism, capitalism, and its neoliberal push for privatization, and the concomitant demonization of the Other—the stranger, the minority, the migrant—constitute the real security threat" (xvii). Thus, I use the word migrant in the lack of vocabulary to identify individuals who remove themselves from a place of origin, transverse a certain distance, endure a journey, and encounter a new set of conditions that might be or not hospitable to differences. Adopted countries most often are not hospitable to such movements.

Nevertheless, the idea that borders mean a somewhat homogenous community is usually part of people's imagination—locals and migrants alike. Being a migrant, therefore, often creates an identity crisis and a sense of absence, a constant feeling of not being at "home," as shown continuously in the transnational literary texts highlighted here. Regarding this issue, Rosemary Marangoly George argues that "homes are not neutral places. Imagining a home is as political an act as imagining a nation" (6). In this sense, it involves a belief that a group of people is the same, thinks the same, and therefore belongs to an imaginary community. In reality, cultures are never

---

generation, while second-generation would be people who have at least one foreign-born parent. However, these people are US-born. Third generation would people with two US-born parents, whose grandparents migrated. In this study, not all daughters are second-generation according to this categorization. Therefore, they are simply considered here "daughters."

homogenous. Still, we face a great paradox when it comes to migration in our society—at the same time some people are looking for roots and going back to the towns, countries, continents their relatives came from a long time ago, others are journeying to other lands in search of a prosperous life. When we think about works such as Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, we can see this paradox at work—while the former "could be categorized as a prime example of … nationalist literature," the latter is "redefining the very concept of nation" (George 117; 118). A similar irony can be observed in Adiche's *Americanah* and Gyasi's *Homegoing*. The title *Americanah* refers to an identity affected by migration, even though the protagonist in *Americanah* returns to her motherland after thirteen years abroad. On the other hand, the title *Homegoing* evokes the experience of returning to the motherland, although the characters never do.

Although the meanings of home and nation need a re-signification, the migrant still faces barriers such as "language, nostalgia, loss, [and] search for identity" (Sarup 97). In many ways, the struggle of the migrant is similar to women's battle for gender equality, as the difference identifies them, a process of Otherness, or "the reduction of a 'person' to a 'nobody' to the position of 'other'— the inexorable plot of racism" (Cixous 71). As Hélène Cixous confirms, from her location as a Jewish woman, there are no masters without slaves, "no economic power without exploitation" (71). In other words, there is always an *Other*. Migrants, through their movements, see themselves in the condition of the Other. When we think of the idea of home, the place where we "belong," this feeling is accompanied by a variation similar to the dichotomies of gender/sexuality, race, and class (George 2). Differences are not the issue at stake but the structures of normative power that define differences as dangerous and, ultimately, a threat. This system makes the woman migrants suffer double jeopardy; if we add to that the question of blackness (such as Ifemelu in *Americanah*, Selina in *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, among many other characters to be discussed in this work), we observe a layering of oppression that determine these characters' marginalization.

Because many of the characters I will discuss suffer marginalization due to migration, race, class, and gender, it is pivotal to define diaspora, specifically the black diaspora. Kim D. Butler affirms that diaspora represents a dynamic group unit in the molds of family, including groups that live dispersed (Kim and Domingues 2). Still, they share an ancestry and, therefore, feel connected because of a common origin discourse (2). That does not mean diasporic people share an essential

identity or do not face divergence in values and objectives, on the contrary. Like any family unit, a diaspora has a great diversity, and the black diaspora is one of the most diverse ones, in which individuals might or not share a political concept of "blackness" (9). Still, diasporas create a collective identity formed from an imagined community narrative, a process that is decisive for the survival of many diasporic groups against oppression (9).

Regarding the idea of collective identity, Stuart Hall reminds us that the black diaspora involves the forced dispersion of people across the globe, in which Africa—purposefully used in a general way here—becomes a common point of convergence ("Cultural" 224). Healing from the violence of rupture—metaphorically similar to separating mothers from children—might involve finding a way to reconnect to the past. Any attempt to restore this connection, for instance, in social and political movements such as Pan-Africanism, represents power and resistance, for it relocates Africa from margin to center and speaks from that location. However, to use Hall's term, cultural identity should not be understood as an unproblematic stable status to categorize people who share historical and ancestral backgrounds, but as a concept inserted in a cultural and historical context and therefore always in transformation (223-225). Understanding the complexity of the black colonial experience implicates considering cultural identities as "points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made within discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning" (226). Even the idea of going back to "Africa" and establishing a connection with the motherland is not necessarily accurate, for it generalizes Africa as a location without multiple ethnicities and disregards the fact that Natives and people from Asian countries were also enslaved (227). Considering Africa in such a way is to concord with the European imaginary, in which Africa was seen as the "Dark Continent" (227). Therefore, it is necessary to recognize that when we discuss the representation of black identity in literature, there is always a political perspective at play. What we must question now is the purpose of said representation, whether contemporary works wish to unbury what colonization destroyed in order to search for a fixed and unchangeable identity or produce a new kind of identity, one that retells the past and keeps wide-open eyes into the future (227).

Certainly, the answer is multidimensional, and this dissertation deliberates it through all its chapters. Still, I wish to highlight that gender is an important aspect to consider when analyzing contemporary works by black female authors. Rose Sackeyfio has argued that "female authors

have moved beyond the margins of male-authored texts to command new spaces of prominence in the African literary canon" (1). These spaces include the fluidity of new African identities, especially with migrant experiences that intersect class, race, and gender struggles (1). In this dissertation, I emphasize these particularities of transnational works as I investigate the nuances of mother-daughter relationships in the diaspora, which simultaneously values schooling opportunities in adopted countries and despises the inevitable experiences of Otherness. Moreover, black diasporic works written by women dwell in another pattern of in-betweenness—they can be inserted in both a black feminist and postcolonial tradition since black women's writings redefine stereotypical images of black women in male-centered African novels and present transnational perspectives that explore a diasporic experience of blackness (2).

The dominance of women's voices in contemporary anglophone literature has also influenced a shift in literary content, with narratives moving from nation-state cultural and identity formation themes toward more universal, cosmopolitan society struggles of people in movement (Sackeyfio 3). These themes revolve around the intersection of race, class, and gender in the diaspora and the paradox of living or leaving adopted countries. Here, I highlight the complex relationship between mothers and daughters in the diaspora to show how this dyad mirrors another struggle—one concerning the dichotomy between assimilating as much as possible into the adopted country or returning to the motherland. Not only do most authors to be discussed here experience some paradoxical in-betweenness concerning their present situation, the past connection to the motherland, and the tension of the future, but characters also dwell in this non-space, which usually causes familial disruptions. Three kinds of works are considered here to grasp such dichotomy and its consequences. In the second chapter, two works can be considered neo-slave narratives. Their processes of composition and chosen themes highlight the importance of female authorship and the value of oral traditions to the formation of black women writers. In chapter three, the works discussed bring black women solo travelers whose struggles position themselves in-between two worlds while showing the significance of female bonding for identity formation. In my final analytical chapter, I focus more directly on mother-daughter relationships, and the necessity daughters feel to reconnect to their motherlands. All these works, despite their differences, are concerned with investigating black women's diasporic identity formations and their complexity, which may involve assimilating into the adopted country or returning to the

motherland. Such diversity led me to choose these works to compose my study, considering that post-colonial literature tends to symbolize identity through mother-daughter relationships (Nasta, *Motherlands* xix). Mothers often transfer their understandings of female identity to their daughters, frequently enforcing a kind of exchange that mirrors the power relations perceived in the contact between colonizer and colonized (xix). Because being mothers, sisters, and daughters are female experiences dominated by patriarchy as much as the act of colonialism. Only through reconnecting to both their mothers and motherlands can characters start a journey of self-discovery, which involves their embracing a transversal hybrid identity that allows them to live a fulfilled life, despite the tensions of hybridity.[2]

In most of the novels I analyze in this dissertation, mothers and daughters are in discordance, culminating in daughters' search for an invented "home" that equates to searching for a fixed identity. What can be described as a form of empowerment to accept the past, as in *Breath, Eyes and Memory,* or simply a nostalgic and often essentialist feeling that the motherland will bring a fixed sense of identity, as in *Dreaming in Cuban* and *The Unbelonging,* daughters often crave and fantasize about the motherland. These women, who have either been born in the diaspora or taken there as infants—in other words, involuntary migrants—usually show contradictory feelings compared to their mother's feelings about the adopted country. Mothers in these novels frequently value the adopted country's capitalist educational standards by encouraging their children to become doctors or acquire property and status. On the other hand, daughters focus on self-discovery and tend to overlook material acquisition. Daughters also usually struggle more with an in-betweenness, attempting to connect with their mothers and motherlands, and sometimes returning "home." We can notice this dichotomy of thinking in the relationship between mother and daughter Silla and Selina from *Brown Girl, Brownstones.* Selina longs for the Caribbean

[2] In our society, services considered "domestic" in all its instances—be that being a Nurse, an au pair, or simply performing domestic work at home—are often related to women, while socially they are performed by a great number of women. There are of course men who perform these activities, and there is a movement of naturalization regarding males performing these works. Still, it is undeniable that the weight of motherhood performance is on women's shoulders, and the works here emphasize this weight, while also criticizing the lack of participation of males in their families. If we analyze that through a psychological (Jung) or religious (Paganism) perspective, these activities are related to the "female" side both women and men possess. This dissertation follows a social-philosophical approach, in which gender is considered socially constructed, and the role of the "mother" —characterized here by a presence that contributes to the construction of identity and preservation of culture—and it is performed by women, in fiction written by women authors.

despite her mother's account of her terrible living conditions there. Selina's necessity of knowing the Caribbean might be read as a consequence of her lack of bonding with her mother and resistance to Silla's domineering position at home, especially regarding Selina's sister and father. The same dichotomy is perceived in mother and daughter Lourdes and Pilar in *Dreaming in Cuban*. Whereas Lourdes celebrates the United States capitalism, Pilar resists it bluntly and dreams about Cuba, telecommunicating with her grandmother Celina, a strong supporter of the Cuban revolution. However, the "home" Selina and Pilar, along with other female characters, wish to return to is not only geographical but also temporal. As Srilata Ravi puts it, "while transnationalism dissolves social distances between homeland and host land into a single hybrid arena of interactions, most migrants still operate within the affective framework of home" (65), which involves place and time. In other words, the migrant, diasporic body fantasizes the motherland as a place where there is no displacement, a space before migration, without recognizing how living in diaspora affects their identities. As the quote that opened this introduction shows, novels here show there is no returning to a place one has never been. They show there is only movement, traveling, assimilating, and frequently living with the tensions that arise from this flow.

Recurrently, authors share a diasporic ambiguity with their main characters. Authors like Christina García and Yaa Gyasi moved to the United States as infants, while writers who have not moved abroad, such as Eliana Alves Cruz, have transgressed state barriers and therefore integrate the same wish to return to a "home-state" in their works. As Annie Gagiano claims, contemporary female diasporic authors have commonly emphasized the importance of nationhood in their fiction (47). The nation in these types of fiction "is neither romanticized nor sentimentalized, but it is nevertheless acknowledged as an ongoing emotional and a cultural-political presence in the authorial imagination" (Gagiano 47). Framed in another way, these imaginary motherlands—imaginary in the sense that these authors are not living in their nations anymore—emphasize the importance of reconnection not only with the nation but with familial bonds, especially with other female figures, in an attempt to comprehend black female struggles more thoroughly. For instance, Jamaica Kincaid's fiction is filled with mother-daughter dwellings that illustrate her relationship with her mother. Works like *Lucy*, *Annie John*, and the short story "Girl" have many autobiographical nuances. In an interview with Susan Kenney, Kincaid states, "The way I became a writer was that my mother wrote my life for me and told it to me" ("Paradise"), confirming the

significant influence her complex relationship with her mother has on her fiction. Another Caribbean author whose fiction resembles her relationship with her mother is Paule Marshall, and their relationship is quite visible in *Brown Girl, Brownstones.* At the same time, however, their works challenge fixed interpretations of homes and motherlands since they show how the migrant experience affects women's identities and their interpersonal and familial dwellings.

The feelings of absence intrinsic in the experience of many migrants call attention to the suffix "mother" appertaining to native land and its connection to familial relations. According to Simone Alexander, "the mother in motherland is symbolic of the land, the body, the connecting bridge" (*Mother Imagery* 7). The strongest the bond with family relations, especially the mother figure, the most solid the bond with the geographical space, be that either the motherland or the adopted country. Therefore, examining how positive relations with family—especially mothers—construct strong associations with the geographical space help understand how migration affects people's identities. Whenever migration represents a positive experience, characters experience a state that, although not wholly devoided of tension, allows them to practice a diasporic political identity and speak from both locations—a state recognized here as transversal hybridity. This state grants characters the possibility to develop a fluidity in their social interactions, even if they do not resolve their in-betweenness. Being a transversal hybrid is an uncomfortable state but positive in that it represents a fresh approach to understanding cultural identities in a world in which communication and exchange are made easier with technological advances. Although these characters and authors might never be genuinely and entirely home ever again, their existence challenges traditional ways of understanding wholeness and belonging—the actual thing that makes these characters so memorable and relatable in today's society. Migration, therefore, makes mother-daughter relationships more complicated because migrants are multifaceted people, embracing the mutability of our postmodern world and presenting fluid, entangled relationships with their bodies, identities, geographical spaces, and maternal bonds.

1.1. From Travel writing to Travel Fiction — A Historical Overview

When in 1992, Mary Louise Pratt published *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, her ground-breaking study became an immediate must-read. Pratt analyzes many travel writings

from the period of the discovery to the late twentieth century, confirming that these writings (written by Europeans and to Europeans) reveal the perspective of the empire toward the developing world. According to Pratt, travel writing happens in "contact zones," meaning that travel represents "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (4). Contact zones, therefore, are spaces "of colonial encounters," where people "geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (6). Pratt offers, for instance, an excellent discussion of the myths these types of narratives bring to the developing world. One example is the literature on the *bon-sauvage* during Romanticism. This type of literature—still popular and disseminated in literature classes in Brazil—shows a European imaginary of natives under colonial power in a sentimental setting, in which they are rarely portrayed as "pure non-whites" or "real slaves," but usually mulattoes or mestizos who are affiliated and supportive of European endeavors (100)[3]. However, Pratt says little about what we should understand as travel narratives, and her focus on Western travel accounts suggests that travel narratives only engage euro-centric perspectives on developing worlds. I wish to focus on the exact opposite movement, and for that, I question what perspectives and changes in narratives the once called "third world" can offer us concerning the new ways of understanding the West and its discourses of power, primarily through black female migrant' perspectives.

In *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement,* Robertson et al. bring many different articles about traveling to expand the notion of travel narratives. In their words, travel narratives not only involve "a movement from one place to another... but [also] metaphorically… on Imaginary trajectories of here and there" (Robertson et al. 2). In "Territories of Desire," a simple photograph is sufficient to understand how displacement can occur without an actual movement abroad. By examining an old photograph of her South African family at the beach, Griselda Pollock unpacks the cultural and political layers enclosing the frame, especially the positions of

[3] The English equivalent of "le bon sauvage" is "the noble savage," a term first used by John Dryden (1631-1700) in *Conquest of Granada* (1672). The noble savage image was glorified during Romanticism, especially in the work by the Swiss-French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778).

her white mother and her black nanny. She notices how the photograph shows "within one frame both white woman and dark lady, although syntactically and politically, they are rigidly separated" (Pollock 77). Pollock's article highlights how the legacy of colonialism and separatist policies still affects people even after generations. Her perspective confirms a necessity to continue discussing travel narratives in light of postmodern colonial legacy and imperialism, at the same time that we address new perspectives of postcoloniality.

In *Culture and Imperialism,* Edward Said argues that the "age of empire" mostly ended after World War II, with most colonies becoming independent; however, imperialism persists. Its domain remains through cultural influence, aggravated by neoliberal policies of free commerce. Culture and consumption become a mechanism of control imposed upon developing countries. The presence of white dominant group endeavors is usually met with resistance, but such resistance cannot avoid the myths created by colonization. Nations are also a type of narrative, and stories are used to justify exploration (*Culture* xii-xiii). To illustrate this point further, the *bon-sauvage* stereotype was used during Romanticism literary movement in Brazil to create a myth of nationhood and identity. Novels like *O Guarani* (1857) and *Iracema* (1865) by José de Alencar (1829-1877) were meant to recreate the Brazilian society formation myth in the mold of Pocahontas, erasing black Brazilian voices from the construction of "Brazilian" national identity. Not surprisingly, during the time these novels were published, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the abolition of slavery was already in progress—achieved fully in 1888. Narratives of exclusion enhanced the feelings of Otherness concerning black Brazilians and, for a long time, helped silence their literary production.

As put by Eduardo Galeano, Latin America (and more and more Asian countries) have become "the region of open veins. Everything, from the discovery until our times, has always been transmuted into European—or later United States— capital, and as such has accumulated in distant centers of power" (2). As Aidoo's short story "No Sweetness Here" shows, there are very few changes in terms of quality of life for developing countries after independence. Poor people's lives remain the same because the system reproduces colonial thought, "Independence did not reward them; it betrayed the hopes of those who had shed their blood" (Aidoo 115). When we think of African and Latin American exploitation, we can see how imperialism created a culture of

devaluation among residents of these areas and the sustaining of a type of capitalism that serves to maintain Western dominance.

In *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Travel Writing,* Clarke attempts to broaden the notion of Travel writing and include new perspectives on postcoloniality. Although Clarke dates the beginning of postcolonial travel writing to the publication of *Heart of Darkness* in 1902, he believes 1988 was a good year for the field (2). According to him, postcolonial travel writing "describes an eclectic and expansive corpus of journey literature, and transnational collection of authors and readers attuned to the legacy and persistence of past forms of colonialism and imperialism, as well as the emergence of new modes of cultural, economic, and political dominance in the era of globalization" (1). These new perspectives include, for instance, a rejection of meta-narratives and an investment in travel fiction, such as Adiche's *Americanah* and Gyasi's *Homegoing*. He believes this shift relates to the authors' attempts to avoid the tourist or otherness gaze. In his words, "whatever textual strategy is employed, the postcolonial travel writer highlights his or her presence within the construction of the text and actively negotiates the multivalence of their lives" (27). Although I agree that transnational authors participate in constructing the text and even expand traditional notions of genres—be that travel writing fiction, bildungsroman, or science fiction—most authors cannot avoid the tourist gaze, both inserted in the diaspora and their motherlands.

Concerning the issue of the returnee-tourist, Srilata Ravi states that "diasporic subjects who return are traveling to visit, observe, and collect as 'foreigners' either because they possess different passports or because of their financial advantages as visitors from rich countries: returnees, therefore, can never altogether be considered outside the framework of tourism" (66). Once the body has experienced life abroad—be that out-of-country or out-of-state—their perspectives are transformed; they become transversal hybrids if they learn how to negotiate their existence in this space of tension, of not belonging here or there. Not every returnee can dwell in multiple locations, but it is undoubtedly the case for some of the characters I will discuss in this work—Ifemelu (*Americanah*), Pilar (*Dreaming in Cuban*), and Marjorie (*Homegoing*), to cite a few. For example, Ifemelu stayed for thirteen years in the United States before deciding to return to Lagos. When she arrives, she faces some challenging situations related to her "foreignness." Ifemelu confronts her acquaintances when she criticizes economic and gender relations, causing

her to notice many dissimilarities between herself and her old friends, and reluctantly accept that she feels more comfortable around other returnees. Another example is Pilar from *Dreaming in Cuban*. Pilar's trip back to the island she was forced to leave as an infant becomes an object of voyeurism as she notices the "billboards advertising the revolution," the shades of blue, her grandmother Celia's movements, the women's apparel on the streets, among other matters (García 217). Unlike Lourdes, who always looked for something to criticize Cuba, Pilar looks for ways to study the country, imagining "the voyages to old colonies. Ocean liners gliding toward Africa and India" (219). Pilar decides she belongs more to New York than to Cuba by the end of her stay and goes back to the United States. In this sense, Adichie and García, along with their characters, simultaneously construct discourses and negotiate the multivalence of their identities, becoming able to speak from both locations without entirely belonging to any.

However, these women differ from traditional tourists that travel for fun and excitement in the Caribbean islands. Jamaica Kincaid's "A Small Place" exposes the neocolonial endeavors behind the tourism industry on the island of Antigua. Accusing a tourist of being "an ugly, empty thing, a stupid thing, a piece of rubbish pausing here and there to gaze at this and taste that" (Kincaid, *A Small* 17), Kincaid calls attention to the superficiality of the tourist gaze, romanticizing colonialism and the postcolonial condition of people from places as Antigua. The tourism industry sells the idea of paradisiac islands for Western consumption, and very wealthy (usually white and Western) tourists go to these islands to have an *exotic* experience. Meanwhile, "most natives in the world cannot go anywhere" because they have no means to do it (19). Kincaid states yet that the poor cannot "escape the reality of their lives; and they are too poor to live properly in the place where they live" (19). In other words, traditional tourists travel to enjoy their free time, often turning the natives' hardships into a leisure activity. Although I want to escape an essentialist analysis, traditional tourism is most commonly observed in the vertical relations between the North and the South, the previously called first and third world, since the exploration of third world people often sustains Western life.

Since Paul Gilroy has suggested that the black Atlantic could be interpreted as "one single, complex unit of analysis" (15), much has been said about the challenges of doing that without essentializing the black experience in the diaspora. Even though strategic essentialism, as Spivak has suggested, "could be useful ... to see where that discourse meets its limits and its challenge

within that field" (11), I stand with Stuart Hall's notion that "identities are never completed, never finished… they are always, as subjectivity itself… in process" (*Essential, vol.2* 69). In this way, identities are formed from splitting, ambivalence, in the encounter with the other, for "the notion that identity has to do with people who look the same, feel the same, call themselves the same, is nonsense. As a process, as a narrative, as a discourse, it is always told from the position of the Other" (70). From recognizing this position of difference, I argue that characters' hybrid identities are formed by recognizing a black political identity that englobes the black Atlantic, and it is constructed because of the existence of racist discourses. I use discourse here in Foucault's sense, the kind of discourse that has the power to shape voices and ideologies. When we discuss *discourses*, we must recognize that "in every society, the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and distributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality" (Foucault 52). Therefore, discourse is both the thing that creates and challenges systems of power and domination (52-53). Discourses that challenge systems of domination are ever more needed in the fluidity of the new world order, a reason why it is pivotal to highlight and categorize the discourse produced by transnational, postcolonial authors. We must consider how said discourse challenges established conceptions of the once called "third world" while they set on creating something new, considering boh transversalism and hybridity.

Foner et al.'s "Introduction: Immigration and Changing Identities" discusses how identities are not "mere labels... [but possess] content and meaning, have evaluative connotations, and are affirmed with varying degrees of importance. Moreover, they link individuals to social groups, shape interactions..., and provide viable links to past histories and future goals" (2-3). In other words, identities have a political function. They are not an equitably decided category but a development, a construction, reflecting a specific set of beliefs (3). Additionally, white identity has gained recognition as an important racial and ethnic identity category in the current political context in the United States, providing yet another reason to assume that identities are political now more than they have ever been (4). Lastly, Foner et al.'s findings show that people can "easily shift from one identity to another in shorter, more situationally dependent circumstances" (5). About the Hispanic Latino identity, they state that:

> The creation of this new identity label in the 1970s and 1980s involved a combination of activists seeking political clout, government funds, and philanthropic support by uniting under the Hispanic banner; Spanish-language television broadcasters seeking a larger national market; and activists and politicians successfully campaigning to have the census adopt the Hispanic category. (Foner et al. 10).

The Hispanic identity is embodied in the activism of people from South America living in the United States, despite the misplacement of the term since not every country in South America speaks Spanish, and Spain can hardly be considered under the Hispanic category. It is also interesting to mention that black identities have shown little change in the face of migration due to the unique aspect of anti-black racism (12). If, so far, contemporary black migration has brought no significant change in the meaning of the racial categories of black or African American, there still may be shifts ahead to incorporate the large and growing populations of West Indian and African origin (13). Therefore, black identities are a political stance because of the persistence of racism against black people. In contrast, the idea of "blackness" as an intrinsic trait to people born in black diasporas across the globe is imaginary. It supposes an essence that diminishes different community relations, individual choices and desires, and the different cultural and historical backgrounds.

For example, when considering the Caribbean peoples' ancestry, we should think of an Africa that "has since been joined by the East Indians and the Chinese: indenture enters alongside slavery. The distinctiveness of our culture is manifestly the outcome of the most complex interweaving and fusion in the furnace of colonial society, of different African, Asian, and European cultural elements" (Hall, *Essential, vol.2* 211). This does not mean that the Caribbean cultural identity is simply an imitation of cultural ideas from diverse places since "transculturation is a phenomenon of the contact zone" (Pratt 6). Although Pratt primarily considers Europeans' contact with cultures from the new world, the same can be attested in neocolonialism—as observed in the United States international policy. Because of that, migration complicates identities, with migrants being expected to acculturate; that is, abandon their cultures, customs, and languages to achieve economic prosperity in the "land of opportunities," the United States.

When discussing migration, the question of nationalism stands out for its significant influence on people's beliefs and attitudes towards the Other. Bill Schwarz claims that nations are

“one form in which modern cultures have been articulated” (355). In other words, modern societies create nations based on a handful of standard features noticed among people that inhabit certain locals. Some of these features vary from place to place, but it is possible to identify common beliefs most “nations” gather: language, ethnicity, territory, religion, and values. The list can vary, but certainly, these are one of the essential features to characterize nations. The United States, for instance, regards language, territory, and values as one of the most important features to establish a nation. To become a United States citizen at a governmental level, one can have any ethnicity or religion. These should not be held against them to be considered eligible to become a citizen. It is, however, non-negotiable that this citizen candidate speaks English. For an individual to go from permanent resident to a citizen of the United States, this person must pass a naturalization interview to show knowledge of the country’s history and swear loyalty to the United States’ flag. On a social level, being a citizen does not guarantee full participation in the nation because of institutional and social power systems that discriminate based on ethnicity, gender, religion, and others.

Still, what is observed in nation-states is a discourse on identification based on criteria of language, ethnicity, territory, religion, values, and others to sustain an idea of community that is, overall, homogenous, even though the way people understand their participation in a community or nation is complex (Brinker-Gabler and Smith 3). My point here is to stress that nations are imaginary, constructed through a discourse of identity and difference. These differences are acceptable to a certain point and may be seen as dangerous and a threat if they transgress specific expectations.

In the twentieth century, the exponential growth of international politics may promote a somewhat utopic idea of a global community joined with a social purpose to improve life independently of territorial, ethnic, and cultural boundaries. We can see that in the discourse behind the European Union. However, recent actions like Brexit show the growth of nationalist thought in European countries. Moreover, the peaceful and the violent recent separatist movements around the globe also show the latest turn of territorial, ethnic, and cultural nationalism. When analyzing such separatist movements, it is pivotal to analyze the conditions of exchange between the nations. Many nations are inserted in imperialist affairs, as is the case of Puerto Rico and the United States. It is a fact that current capitalist modes encourage nations to employ the international

union discourse, while, paradoxically, the social context indicates that separation might be favorable to people, even though they benefit from the advantages of international politics. Nevertheless, the threat to an imaginary national identity may lead people to vote against the system that sustains their nations' economic power.

With the influx of people from African countries and the Caribbean to the United States and Europe, as well as political refugees that seek asylum in metropolitan centers, we notice an enforcement of new anti-immigration laws, similar to those that happened in the 1980s (Brinker-Gabler and Smith 7). Consistent with Brinker-Gabler and Smith, "restrictions are seen as means to curb… violent outbreaks. But the containment of violence functions also as a screen for the containment of the "foreign" within, since restrictions establish categories of the included and the excluded" (7). In other words, violent outbreaks are the ultimate consequence of the nationalist narrative and social structures that exclude certain groups of people based on these beliefs. Therefore, the paradox arises—the nation can only strive by the force of the "foreign" labor, while institutional forces, for example segragation, censorship, and police brutality, impose an us-versus-them narrative. The new postcolonial world now includes the city center of the metropolis, where nationalist narratives clash with the image of the Other and the feelings of threat. In other words, we notice a "re-enactment of the primal colonial encounter between black and white, on the territory of the metropolitan homeland itself, [forcing] the members of the declining nation to imagine themselves, in a new way, as white" (Schwarz 357). In this sense, Schwarz affirms that identities are still understood as they were in colonial times, based on the idea that identities are fixed, unchangeable, and immune to influence from other encounters prior to the ones happening now.

It is pivotal to state that the migrants to be discussed here migrate with a sense of home and identity that is also fixed. Moreover, the clash with systems that diminish their identities will make them reinforce their voices and claim a political identity to fight for their civil rights. Through discussing mothers and daughters' relationships in the diaspora, I examine how nationalist narratives influence migrants and can be the difference between assimilating or not into the adopted country's culture. Assimilation, however, should not be understood as a one-way experience, in a process that leads the migrant to suffer a transformation that eradicates their differences once they "assimilate" into a different culture. In fact, communities are influenced by

migration in a bilateral way, and migrants influence people and locations around them as much as they are influenced by those. This phenomenon is not always acknowledged by the dominant cultural group, which sometimes attempts to eradicate entire groups from the "official" nationalist narrative, as it happened in Brazil in the nineteenth century literary movement known as romanticism. Travel writing often only focuses on one-sided discussions, which produce the tourist gaze and often imperialist perceptions of the Other. The novels in this study challenge this notion and often present characters who are learning to negotiate their bicultural identities.

According to Justin Edwards, "Understanding transnationalism in terms of cultural transversalism rather than vertical relations between center and margin is fruitful for analyzing contemporary travel writing because it complicates the dated notions of hybridity central to the construction of North Atlantic locales as privileged sites of plurality" (30). Edwards refers to the tendency of reading travel writing as undisclosed from a colonial heritage that reproduces systems of power (19). He believes that some travel writings can subvert these narratives and become sites of decolonization, which would "enable us to rethink the nature of the genre" (19). Edwards concludes that "transversalism" can be a way of reading travel writing by examining Edward Said's *Out of Place,* in which Said details different kinds of traveling, for instance, traveling for pleasure, work, and even political exile. In *Out of Place,* Said writes that he considers himself "a cluster of flowing currents" (295), using the water metaphor as opposed to someone who is rooted, solid as a tree. Concerning Said's statement, Edwards believes that Said—as a person who traveled consistently throughout his life, not to mention that he was born in-between cultures—was "an embodied form of diversity, and the celebration of a heterogeneous sense of self" (Edwards 21). Edwards also comments that Said does not present the rhetoric of empire in *Out of Place* because he "strives to represent a multivalence of identity" that does not reproduce the "powerful gaze of the traveler" (21). In other words, Said can reconcile the tensions of unbelonging because he does not belong anywhere and therefore does not reproduce the binary discourse of home versus abroad.

Edwards uses Said's *Out of Place* and other works to recommend that postcolonial travel writing be read through the lenses of "transnationalism in terms of cultural transversalism" (30). As he argues, "transnationalism is appropriate for reading postcolonial travel texts" because it offers a chance to reshape what we understand as national borders in modernity (20). The transversalism part of his argument indicates new movements of cultures in post-modern societies,

as opposed to vertical relations between what is in the center and the margin. Transversalism, as he mentions, "allow[s] for the emergence of networks that circumvent the North Atlantic centers of European imperialism" (30). Transversalism, more specifically, indicates that cultural movements can happen without diffusing social, racial, and cultural differences between nation-states while not disregarding diversity and difference.

However, Edwards proposes a reading that resists acknowledging the anti-immigration policies we have been experiencing in the United States and other European countries currently. His usage of the term "plurality" is also problematic because it often accompanies a liberal political view used to maintain developing nations dependent on Western countries. It is a term that might undervalue group representation when we still experience group marginalization. Moreover, I should highlight that liberal humanism "retards the process of enlarged and enlarging meaning through which true understanding can be attained" (Said, *Orientalism* 255). I agree with Edwards when he proposes that new travel writing can be "multiple, collective, and disruptive" (30), as well as the importance of highlighting how the traveling subject understands cultural mobility and borders (31). As this dissertation shows, contemporary writers, especially transnational, postcolonial writers, are committed to discussing ways of integrating rather than separating people. Nevertheless, most authors and the works they produce diverge from Said's *Out of Place* and still operate on the belief that the issue of in-betweenness is unresolved. These works show a predominance of the discourse of home and family, belonging versus unbelonging, and the characters who can transverse these beliefs show difficulty in accepting this new location.

Claiming that migrants construct plural identities in the sense that they become able to adapt to two or more cultures without tension is unrealistic. Therefore, hybridity persists even when considering these postcolonial "transnational" works. These works still deal with the conflictual unbelonging feeling of being between two cultures, and characters often consider a permanent return to their motherlands, as the above examples of Ifemelu and Pilar. These postcolonial transnational works show that "cultural identity is not a fixed essence..., lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark" (Hall, "Cultural" 226). They simultaneously show similar and opposing experiences of race, gender, and class, highlighting the diasporic experience's complexity. Works like *Americanah* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* represent non-essentialist

identities and communities by presenting the free-spirit Ifemelu compared to repressed and shy Sophie, among many other characters, who help multiply the black diasporic experience. Therefore, I consider that these works operate in a multivalent space that will be referred to here as transversal hybridity.

The first term, transversal, highlights that migrants can dwell in their non-space successfully, especially if they avoid what Salman Rushdie called "ghetto mentality." As Rushdie puts it, "To forget that there is a world beyond the community to which we belong, to confine ourselves with narrowly defined cultural frontiers," is to create "imaginary homelands"—or motherlands—a very limiting and unhelpful endeavor, when we must deal with many other real challenges currently imposed on minority groups (*Imaginary* 19). Similarly, in 1994, Homi Bhabha argued in his acclaimed *The Location of Culture*, "The very concepts of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or 'organic' ethnic communities—as the grounds of cultural comparativism—are in a profound process of redefinition" (Bhabha 5). As stated before, this dissertation takes identity as construction and considers the idea of a fixed and stable cultural identity something to be challenged. Over two decades since the publication of *The Location of Culture*, we see a redefinition process of identity, with the establishment of survey disciplines such as World Literature in the curriculum of major US institutions. We also see the growth of identity-related concerns, whose political aspect will not be ignored here.

The hybridity part of this term comes from the political and social aspects in which the novels to be discussed here are inserted and how characters that experience geographical, social, and racial dislocations face unresolved problems of finding themselves between two cultures. Hybridity has botanical and biological origins, usually referred to as the combination of two different species, while miscegenation—or amalgamation—among human beings was believed to be advantageous or a threat to society (Young 17). The term hybridity acquired social meanings during the twentieth century (5). According to Homi Bhabha, hybridity is "not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures" but instead creates "a crisis for any concept of authority based on a system of recognition" (113-114). In this sense, hybridity becomes a term that challenges the colonial discourse, and the Other, who has suffered silencing through colonization, can access the linguistic barriers of the colonial text and reverse the power structure (Young 21). Hybridity becomes neither this nor that but something else that challenges definitions. Through

my analysis, it is possible to affirm that some migrants operate on negotiation rather than adaptation, for they are perceived as "foreigners" in the adopted country and after returning to their motherlands. Framed another way, analyzing these texts shows that identity and spaces in postcolonial literature bring the persistent problem of "questioning of the frame, the space of representation, where the image… is confronted with its difference, its other" (Bhabha 46). They are inserted in a transnational perspective that challenges ideas of borders and treats migration as transversal rather than vertical movements, but at the same time keeps questioning the characters belonging and identities. In this complex location, the works analyzed here also question their genres, and it is sometimes difficult to assign a single literary tradition to them.

Furthermore, my conclusions and assessments derive from transversal politics, which according to Nira Yuval-Davis, suggests a combination of "rooting" (in one's situatedness) and "shifting" (to the perspective of others) as a means of creating difference—and diversity—sensitive feminist solidarity across national and regional borders (88). Yuval-Davis argues that transversal politics should be rooted in dialogue, resulting in different projects targeting different groups based on a collective system. While in traditional politics, there is no time for continuous dialogue, in transversal politics, there should be advocates rather than representatives, as to avoid hierarchical structures that impose their decisions (88-90). As proposed by Yuval-Davis, transversal politics is about cooperation and solidarity among feminists from different groups and communities (125).

Therefore, I consider here both transversal movements and the tensions of being in-between while reading contemporary novels on migration. Should I only consider these texts' new locales sights for plurality, I might mistakenly disregard the conflictual process most characters still dwell in, especially when they experience multiple layers of oppression. The black body experience is generally connected to displacement, either by migration, the slave trade, or colonization. There is a ceaseless search for "home" and identity reconstruction that is highly recognizable in postcolonial literary works written by black authors. This search for "home" and a stable identity is not only perceived in first-generation migrants. It is, in fact, a conflict that can extend itself for hundreds of years. Recently, works such as Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* and Eliana Alvez Cruz's *Água de Barrela* have focused on the legacy of the slave trade, with these authors undergoing extensive research to reconnect and disclose the legacy of slavery in their own experiences. This glance at

the past shows these authors' willingness to understand their diasporic bodies, even generations later after slavery and voluntary migration. Analyzing issues of diaspora, identity, hybridity, and their influence on familial bonds and relationships is pivotal to understanding the diasporic black body experience today.

This dissertation broadens the notion of travel narratives to include fiction produced by migrants and/or fiction highlighting the legacy of colonialism and imperialism. Only by offering a more inclusive notion of postcoloniality and an interdisciplinary approach to racial and feminist studies can we grasp what it means to be a migrant in the twenty-first century and analyze the impact of such status on familial bonds. The characters and works highlighted in this study are neither simply living in eternal conflictual hybridity nor passively dwelling in plurality. As they accept a more fluid identity, they become transversal hybrids. Moreover, fictional works that focus on travel and migration seem to negotiate within resisting oppressing discourses about migration while creating spaces for new narratives and new genres in which identities can be reinvented and re-examined.

1.2. Black Feminist Literature and the Mother-Daughter Dyad — A Literature Review

Unquestionably, the mother-daughter dyad affects family relations with the world and—more specifically in this study—within the diaspora. In *Mother Outlaw,* Andrea O'Reilly affirms that stories based on mother-daughter relationships are "narrated by the larger patriarchal culture that scripted the role mothers and daughters were expected to play" (O'Reilly 343). O'Reilly suggests that mothers and daughters often play antagonist roles in these stories because of the patriarchal culture that encircles them. When we factor migration and life on diaspora into this dynamic, mother-daughter relationships demonstrate a generational and educational disparity and conflicts involving fundamental communication mismatches due to language constraints and identity crises. Migration and cultural orientations affect mothers and daughters and provoke a lack of female bonding, bonding that is necessary to endure sexism, classism, and racism, contributing to the alienation of daughters toward their mothers.

Criticism on the mother-daughter dyad is vast, and it should come as no surprise that Western literature emphasizes the love/hate relationship between mothers and daughters. From Electra and

her unwillingness to fall into a female role of marriage and childbearing while hating her mother for neglecting her, Western literature is filled with a love/hate dynamic between mothers and daughters. Psychoanalysis identifies the woman who plays the omnipotent male-female role—since the father figure is not present or simply not participative enough—as a "phallic mother" (Halberstadt-Freud 2). I do not wish to get into much psychoanalysis since this discipline has shown little applicability when dealing with the relationship between black mothers and daughters. Still, it is undeniable how this discipline has influenced the study of mother-daughter relationships, as Marianne Hirsch's *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism,* and Adalgisa Giorgio's *Mothers and Daughters in Western Europe* propose. I wish to emphasize patriarchy's role in mother-daughter relationships since daughters in the works chosen are mostly in discordance with many of their mother's practices and perspectives rooted in patriarchy, which leads me into a black feminist approach.

Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* reveals how motherhood becomes an instrument of patriarchy, with the mother figure imposing its power by maintaining patriarchal authority over the daughter figure. Mothers impose their power especially in everything concerning sexuality. According to Nancy Friday in *My mother/My Self*, "The girl wants to feel that mother acknowledges and approves whatever signs of sexuality she may show. If she can react to her experience, life, and body without guilt, she can learn to enjoy and be proud of her sexual self" (72). However, if the opposite occurs, then daughters "would mark [themselves] as different from mother" (72). When mothers perpetuate patriarchal values that dictate daughters should be "neater, quieter, better behaved" than boys, sexuality becomes a taboo (74). Not surprisingly, sexuality is one of the major themes in the novels discussed in this work.

Nevertheless, Giorgio makes a clear distinction between the discourses of white feminists on motherhood and patriarchy and black feminist discourses such as Alice Walker's in "In Search of our Mother's Gardens," stating that middle-class feminists presented "a maternal figure lacking in social value and authority and excluded from discourse, whom daughter needed to 'murder' in order to access the symbolic structures" (Giorgio 12). In her classic critique of black women's resistance to oppression through Art, Walker questions "what did it mean for a black woman to be an artist" when they were being enslaved and treated as breeders (Walker 233). While the only recognizable womanhood was white womanhood, who claimed she needed a room of her own and

financial independence to write, black American women had to find another way to express their creativity. Walker emphasizes that black women writers today should search for these examples to empower themselves. Instead of breaking with mothers—as white daughters do—black daughters search for their mothers and build bridges. This distinction is one I wish to enforce in the following paragraphs.

In the Preface to *Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers and Daughters,* Johnetta B. Cole writes that "there is a sense in which Black mothers and daughters share a collective history" (xviii). In this passage, Cole refers to a collective memory of slavery (in some contexts), oppression, and racism that pertains to black mother-daughter relationships despite their diversity. Not only are mother-daughter interactions expressed by sexism issues, but it is also ingrained in experiences of racial oppression. Therefore, similarly to Walker's text, daughters should seek their mothers' stories to understand and embrace their identities.

Patricia Hill Collins strengthens the separation between white and black feminist views on motherhood and mother-daughter relationships in her essay "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother-Daughter Relationships." Collins claims that the three pillars that sustain white feminists' complaints on the institution of motherhood—firstly that motherhood is a private matter, secondly that it is rooted in stringent sex roles, and thirdly that motherhood is a "full-time occupation"—do not apply to Black families. These have been profoundly affected by racial segregation, therefore present no such strict sex roles, and have always shown a prevalence of working mothers ("The Meaning" 43-44). This perspective partially corresponds with the non-white families from the novels I will discuss, although these pillars can be problematized due to migration.

Furthermore, Collins calls attention to the centrality of the mother image in African Culture. The binary male-female sex division in white Western households is not perceived in some West African traditions, where they preserved a more collaborative child-raising culture (Collins, "The Meaning" 45). In her words, "for African women, emotional care for children and providing for their physical survival were interwoven as interdependent, complementary dimensions of motherhood" (45). In the diaspora, this practice comes in the image of the othermother, a woman who assisted in child development. Therefore, black motherhood (independently of bearing

children or not) might represent the survival of the black community itself, a space of power and resistance (51).

I should take a paragraph to talk about affection and how mothers in black women's writing are often portrayed as domineering but not very affectionate. When I think of characters such as Eva Peace (Morrison's *Sula*) and her response to whether or not she loved her children, I see the mother-daughter dyad and white and black motherhood unconditional-love myth. Eva says she did not love her children, "not the way you thinkin'" (*Sula* 68). For Hannah, motherly love would imply playing and spending quality time together, a Western idea of love and motherhood. Whereas for Eva, the question itself resembles an insult, "You settin' here with your healthy-ass self and ax me did I love you? Them big old eyes in your head would have been two holes full of maggots if I hadn't" (68). As put by Collins, "for far too many Black mothers, the responsibilities of providing for children are so demanding that affection often must wait until the basic needs of physical survival are satisfied" ("The Meaning" 55). Concerning Eva Peace's response to the motherly-love inquiry, it is clear she considers Hannah's healthy existence in adulthood an unquestionable proof of love.

Still, white motherhood struggles to accept that motherly love is not immediate and as strong as white patriarchy suggests. Nancy Friday carried out various investigations into this theme, concluding that "we are raised to believe that mother love is different from other kinds of love. It is not open to error, doubt, or to the ambivalence of ordinary affections. This is an illusion" (3). Furthermore, she bluntly states that "mothers may love their children, but they sometimes do not like them" (3). Although such conclusions might fit black motherhood, they are not grounded under the same circumstances. Whereas white motherhood is often based upon an idea of love imposed by white patriarchy—as much as black motherhood—many variables are ignored by white feminism regarding black motherhood and motherly love. Black mothers and daughters—on top of white capitalist patriarchal ideas of love—must understand and come to terms with other issues that influence motherly love, such as the very struggle against racial and social oppression.

Whereas Friday states that "the maternal instinct says we are all born mothers, that once we are mothers we will automatically and naturally love our children and always do what is best for them" (15), she attempts to deconstruct a very Westernized idea of womanhood which is exclusionary of black American womanhood. It disregards, for instance, that during slavery in the

United States, black women were denied the role of motherhood, treated as breeders instead of mothers. They could do nothing when their children were sold to other plantations. Later on, they were labeled mammies for their roles in raising white children—then "matriarchs," "Superwomen," and "Mean and Evil Bitches." Not to mention "Castrates" and "Sapphire's Mama" (Walker 237). It is unsettling to realize that many stereotypes that have been used to control black women's bodies and sexualities are related to childbearing and raising. One essay by Glenda Dickerson conceptualizes black womanhood by arguing that "The depiction and perception of the African-American woman in this country through stereotypes has garbled her voice and distorted her image. The real tragedy is that the African-American woman herself has too frequently bought that distortion" (194). At first glance, it might seem that women internalize stereotypes surrounding them, which intensify the conflicting roles of mothers and daughters. However, the invisible lines separating mothers and daughters become blurry upon close inspection. The diversity of mother and daughter roles is one of the issues this work is set out to discuss.

This dissertation emphasizes many types of mother-daughter relationships. They might be based on blood and soul ties, like in *Homegoing* and *Agua de Barrela*. They might also represent transnational motherhood and conflicts between first and second-generation migrants, such as *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Brown Girl, Brownstones,* respectively. More often than not, while mothers are struggling to survive in a racialized United States and achieve monetary stability, daughters are "faced with the task of finding self, of becoming and creating a space where [they are] at home with [themselves]. The search for self is "complete" when one has a sense of "home," when one has made peace with the mother and mother's land" (Alexander 25). Although Alexander notices that some characters, such as Annie John (from Kincaid's *Annie John*), suffer "matrophobia," that is, the fear of becoming her mother (Rich 236), and therefore seeks to create a space for herself away from the motherland and the mother, Alexander believes empowerment comes when daughters find a nurturing mother figure (Alexander 25). In most novels to be discussed here, reconciliation between mothers and daughters—however minor—happens upon reconnection with the imaginary motherland. Consistent with Simone Alexander, "wholeness is achieved only with the help and nurturing presence of a mother who is defined by her spiritual mooring" while the absence of a mother "sends a daughter in search of another mother(land)" (25). While the word "wholeness" must be scrutinized, Alexander highlights the vital connection this

study wishes to make—the connection between motherhood and motherland. Upon migration, women—usually fulfilling the daughter role—exchange both mother and motherland for an "othermother" and adopted land.

Simone Alexander identifies motherland as "specific locales—the Caribbean and Africa—and black aesthetics and cultures, namely black diasporan cultures and practices" (4). I employ it here with this exact definition, but I wish to emphasize how this notion is constructed by characters who believe their motherlands present a fixed idea of identity and home, a notion that their trajectories in the novels also challenge. Still, I use it here because the term motherland symbolizes the role of the mother, as opposed to the term "adopted country," which I use to identify the United States and England, who often bring feelings of "foreignness" and unblonging. Alexander also argues that the "complex relationships with ... mothers, biological as well as surrogate … [and] complex, ambiguous relationships with ... various "home" spaces: the Caribbean, Africa, France, England, or the United States" represent a "triangular relationship among the mother, the motherland(s) to include both Africa and the Caribbean, and the mother country" (3). In other words, Alexander considers it impossible to discuss motherhood in the diaspora without considering its complex connection to migration, home, and identity, and I use the following paragraphs to discuss this connection more thoroughly.

Moreover, as Alexander states, "the term mother encompasses mother as biological and as "other." The "othermother" … is the substitute mother who takes on and takes over the nurturing role from the biological in times of need or crisis" (7). While other writers refer to the othermother as a positive influence, Alexander "extends 'otherness' to the biological mother, meaning she is often seen as an 'other' mother, an enemy to the daughter, particularly when she appears to advocate colonial habits" (7). In other words, Alexander's use of "othermother" means both a positive and a negative influence in daughters' lives, a nurturing and suffocating figure. In this study, I refer to biological mothers as simply 'mothers,' whereas other women who play similar roles in characters' lives are referred to as 'othermothers.' Still, the ambivalence Alexander notices in the role of "othermothers" is present in both biological and surrogate/host mothers. This ambivalence happens because the mother and the othermother play the role of "passing on the generational narratives to her daughter" (Alexander 8). This role is both important to the maintenance of history to heal collective traumas of the past and create a female precursor image.

However, this precursor female image is not always positive, and many characters feel the necessity of reinventing themselves to create positive identifications with their spaces and bodies.

In order to discuss the effects of migration on familial bonds, it is important to highlight some feminist criticism perspectives pertinent to this project. When Adrienne Rich published her *Of Woman Born*, there was very little feminist research on motherhood and mother-daughter relationships. Nowadays, most fields in the humanities engage with this topic on some level. The field of Literature could not be different, and the research on motherhood and the mother-daughter dyad has a considerable impact on current literary criticism. In 2007, an anthology titled *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings* was published, establishing the significance of the field for literary and psychology studies. Although the selection includes central texts on the experience, institution, and subjectivity of motherhood, such as Alice Walker's "In Search of Our Mothers' Garden," Patricia Hill Collins' "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture," and bell hooks' "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance," the anthology does not much more than scratch the surface of maternal theory, presenting little on the issue of motherhood and migration.

Apart from Shu-Ju Ada Cheng's article on undocumented migration and motherhood, there is not much to say about feminist theories of motherhood and its connection with migration, as far as the anthology *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings* is concerned. Cheng's 2004 article raises awareness around the issue of migration and motherhood, disclosing the story of June, an undocumented migrant from Taiwan, to whom "working overseas and not seeing her children grow up was the only way she, as a mother, could raise and support them" (640). June's struggle is a portrait of our contemporary, liberal, globalized, socially, and racially unequal labor system, in which women—primarily women of color—serve as nurses or nannies to wealthy families (mostly white families) in developed countries. Not only an issue of class and geography but also a question of race, these (in its majority) undocumented migrants are ignored, perceived as women without families, histories, identities, whose goal in life is to care for others—resembling the controlling image of the mammy in the Antebellum South. Cheng highlights the necessity of including migrant mothers in feminist theories of motherhood, which mostly have dismissed them. Since so much feminist theory is focused on Western Women's experiences, including migrant women is quite significant since the study of motherhood and migration unveils the sustaining American and European imperialism in developing countries.

I should highlight a few works that intersect migration, race, and mother-daughter relationships, which have influenced the language to be used in this study. One of them is Ksenia Robbe's "Performances of motherhood and Migration," in which she discusses women and migration in two South African plays, unveiling the alienation between mothers and daughters regarding their "positionalities, knowledge, memories, reactions, and traumas" (500). While both pairs of mothers and daughters disagree with one another at first, they overcome this dispute through storytelling, as the characters of the play use dialogue to decrease the distance between them. They also use objects and cultural expressions such as music to heal their fractured associations. Another work is Lynda Spencer Gichanda's analysis of the maternal bond in Doreen Baingana's *Tropical Fish*, a novel that tells the story of Christine Mugisha and her migration experience from Uganda to the United States. Gichanda notices that Baingana's work focuses on the "gendered experiences of travel," highlighting themes of unbelonging and displacement connected with the maternal bond (190). Following Davies' point that the home can be a site of conflict and struggle, Spencer argues that mother-daughter relationships can mirror that experience. While discussing *Tropical Fish*, she argues that "while the mother is a sign of home, [the] migrant condition is a space and place in which [one] forges boundaries and establishes a sense of self" while "returning home suggests reconnecting with the mother and the country and re-negotiating a new self" (193). This renegotiation and reassociation are closely related to the transversal hybridity discussed in the previous section since these characters cannot directly go back to a previous-migration self; they must create something new.

Still, as put by Ksenia Robbe, "interlinking motherhood and migration experiences has been daunting due to the lack of a critical language in which to address migration and motherhood together, as such language would inevitably challenge the gendered imaginations of voice and mobility" (498). Although vocabulary is indeed a challenge to this analysis, Simone Alexander's *Mother Imagery in the Novels of Afro-Caribbean Women* has impacted this dissertation immensely, primarily regarding language for criticism. Alexander argues that one of the most intricate legacies of colonialism in Caribbean black women's literature is the erasure of a pre-colonial narrative, a history not based on colonization's aggression and barbary (2). An important concept from Alexander's work that I employ here is the term "motherland," which for her "is grounded in specific locales—the Caribbean and Africa—and black aesthetics and cultures, namely, black

diasporan cultures and practices" (4). Like Alexander, I, too, use the term motherland to refer to the Caribbean and Africa. I have also employed it to refer to Latin America when discussing Cuba (in the analysis of *Dreaming in Cuba*). In order to refer to the United States and England, or any other countries characters migrate to, I prefer the term "adopted country," differently from Alexander, who employs "mother country," for I consider adopted country more in line with the displacement and detachment feelings characters portrayed in the novels to be discussed here.

These perspectives are pertinent for this analysis because of the conflicts perceived in the transnational, postcolonial works analyzed in this study. For instance, some characters must deal with cultural orientations, that is, how much individuals assimilate the new culture to which they migrate. Perhaps to diminish the displacement felt in the countries they have chosen as their new homes (the United States in most of the chosen novels), women try to find mechanisms for coping with their hybridity. In this sense, characters like Ifemelu and Aunty Uju in *Americanah* adopt American accents and change their hairstyles to be more readily accepted in their settings. In *Dreaming in Cuban*, Pilar's mother, Lourdes, feels comfortable in her new location and does not understand why Pilar would consider moving "back to that island-prison" (García 173). This assimilation comes with a high price, as it widens the conflicting relationship between mother and daughters, fractures family bonds, and ruptures with the motherland, which leads some daughters to return to their motherlands in search of an imaginary home.

Concerning this return, I argue that characters do not entirely achieve a connection with their motherlands after migration and remain in an unresolved in-betweenness. Believing that this reconnection can happen simply by changing locations is not different from believing identities are unchangeable. This belief is "primordially in touch with an unchanging essential core, which is timeless, binding future and present to past in an unbroken line," and therefore not different from the idea of fixed cultural identities (Hall, *Essential vol. 2* 209). It is, in fact, a myth that shapes people's imaginaries and influences their actions, an illusion created to help them make sense of their past, their histories, and dwellings (209). It is a myth, but a dangerous one; it is undeniable that these myths and the promise of homeland—or motherland—have caused many ethnic conflicts, such as territory wars in the Middle East (210). Since our identities are not static, we must accept that our experiences, especially the experiences that involve mobility and the geographical and social spaces we occupy in society, all impact our identities. The more these

characters acculturate, the more complicated their relationship with family and motherland will become. Therefore, the same way a migrant experiences "unbelongingness" in the adopted country, the hope to return "home" and immediately feel belongingness is an illusion because the migration has affected identity, making them transversal hybrids.

This dissertation argues that adverse experiences with the motherland echo the conflicting experiences observed in the mother-daughter dyad. At the same time, it shows that an unresolved in-betweenness persists in all returnees. The more they assimilate into the foreign culture, the more difficult it is for them to return to their motherlands. They become transversal hybrids, dwelling in displacement without feeling damaged or unfulfilled. Migrants who become transversal hybrids free themselves from a "ghetto mentality" and learn how to negotiate within and outside their communities. Their new perspectives help them see the complexity of social and racial relations, which might lead them to impact their communities positively.[4]

1.3. A Revision of Terminology — Theory and Research Methods

The field of postcolonial literature has emerged as an opposition to colonial thought and literary works that served to construct an understanding of "the Other" as inferior and uncivilized. Works such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children,* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, among many others, offer an oppositional gaze toward the postcolonial subject and its fluid identity. Nowadays, however, with the emergence of literature that deals with more diverse issues, such as migration, exile, and refugee concerns, among other issues, the question of whether postcolonial theory remains relevant as a lens for analysis is worth asking.

In 1985, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak first published a version of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and brought an important critique to Postcolonial studies. She shows that Said's theory did not apply equally to all postcolonial subjects, putting race, class, and gender at the center of the subaltern's question. In her own words, "Can the subaltern speak? What must the elite do to watch out for the continuing construction of the subaltern? The question of 'woman' seems most

[4] In the article "Negotiating Race, Identity & Homecoming in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* & Pede Hollist's *So the Path Does Not Die*," Okolocha claims that this type of migration involves "a trade of ideas and [these characters] return home enlarged and ready to invest their learning and experience for the benefit of the homeland" (146). I also believe this exchange is beneficial not only to the motherland but also to the adopted country since migrants might provoke significant changes while living in diaspora.

problematic in this context. Clearly, if you are poor, black and female you get it in the three ways" (Spivak 266). Mainstream narratives of colonial power disregard the subaltern, further silencing them, and black women are one of the most marginalized voices in this process.

In 1994, Carole Boyce Davies asked, "where are the women in the theorizing of post-coloniality?" (80). In her *Black Women Writing and Identity,* Davies offers a still highly significant critique of postcoloniality. According to her perception, the "post" in postcolonial studies suggests a moving on, which does not happen for many nations, such as Puerto Rico and Palestine, which still experience colonialism. By proposing a deconstruction of postcoloniality, Davies focuses on how the field has ignored gender and racial issues, the reason why she believes black diasporic women writers are doing something outside the dominant narrative of postcoloniality. Citing Jamaica Kincaid's "On Seeing England for the First Time," she comments that "Kincaid's work cannot be located primarily within the post-colonial for her work is, among other things, a literature of resistance on issues of race, gender, class, location, and so on" (Davies 89). It is undeniable that Davies' critique has a foundation, and there is a necessity to rethink perspectives around postcoloniality. As much as we discuss the necessity of multiple feminist theories, we also need to expand our understanding of postcoloniality, which this study attempts to do by including the works analyzed here in a postcolonial black feminist framework. Davies' perspective, however, seems to regard postcoloniality as being forever stuck in a space that does not allow growth. By showing Kincaid's short story and emphasizing her relationship with England was one of opposition and denial, Davies seems to claim that Kincaid was not in a hybrid position in Bhabha's sense of the word. However, when we analyze works such as Kincaid's *Lucy,* in which opposition and denial mark the protagonist's relationship with her mother and motherland, we notice that Kincaid's work is filled with the paradoxes of being in-between cultures—one of the major characteristics of transnational, postcolonial works.

In 1994, Bhabha would explain the "post" controversy in *The Location of Culture.* In his words, "the 'beyond' is neither a new horizon nor a leaving behind of the past" (Bhabha 1). Bhabha clarifies that postcolonialism is the study of the ideas and legacy of colonial power. Responding to Said's *Orientalism,* Bhabha believes that we must go beyond a simple analysis of European attitudes towards the "other," stating that neither colonizer nor colonized have stable identities. Framed another way, identities change in the contact zones, to use Pratt's term, created in the—

often violent—clash of cultures. *The Location of Culture* also acknowledges that the Postcolonial field is not static; there is not only one narrative (9). In his own words, "the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (9). In this theoretical displacement, postcolonial studies are as hybrid as postcolonial subjects.

The problem with naming also arises when the term African American and/or Literature appears. Recently, Stephanie Li has published an article called "What Is Twenty-First-Century African American Literature?"—part of an ongoing discussion among African American scholars about the future of African American Literature. Li's article attempts to determine and categorize the aesthetic shift happening in African American studies. Building from other scholars, such as Marc Anthony Neal, Li argues that since "the 1980s calls for a new black aesthetic to celebrate and empower the African American community had given way to other ways of identifying and expressing blackness" (Li 631). This decade, which has started with horror and anxiety caused by "the shock of 9/11 to two costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, … [and] Hurricane Katrina as well as the inequalities made manifest by the Great Recession" (632), made a new kind of African American writing to emerge. According to Li, this writing is affected by "a generation of African-born or -identified authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Teju Cole, and Mfoniso Udofia, who all bring a contemporary diasporic perspective to US race relations" (632). Although Li correctly identifies the shift in the field of African American Literature, there is no reference to the issue of naming in her article.

For instance, Li asks, "What then will we call the current era of African American literature?" (Li 632), without considering that what is called "African American literature and culture" has always been multiple, transnational, and not particularly only produced by US-born authors. Even though literature produced before the 1940s was focused on nationalism (Gene and Jarrett xxi), it is unquestionable that a transnational aspect was ever-present in the field, primarily because of writers like Claude Mckay, who transgressed the barriers of black identity in the United States. However, this transnational aspect becomes shadowed by the Harlem Renaissance, which evolved into the Civil Rights movement and the literature on militancy in the 60s (xxii). Although there was a mixture of cultures in Harlem at the time, the idea of blackness as something that goes beyond the boundaries of the United States became less prominent in the literature that gained

visibility in the black community, consequently turning African American Literature into a field of study focused primarily on English-speaking black American writers.

According to Marc Anthony Neal, the term "newblackness" represents a more inclusive term since it "embodies a radical fluidity within the spheres of blackness that allow for powerful conceptualizations across black genders, sexualities, ethnicities, generations, socioeconomic positions, and socially constructed performances of 'black' identity" (Neal 122). Neal's concern coincides with other writers discussed in this dissertation. It is the same concern of the Bajan association in Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, in which one of the proposals is to "Strike out the word *Barbadian* and put *Negro*" (Marshall, *Brown* 190). It is also the concern behind Ifemelu's blog, in Adiche's *Americanah,* in which Ifemelu urges that non-American blacks should accept they are black in America (Adichie 273). It is also in Gyasi's *Homegoing* when Marjorie's teacher says, "black is black is black" (Gyasi, *Homegoing* 273). Transnational novels like *Brown Girl Brownstones, Americanah,* and *Homegoing* claim for a recognition of the diasporic trait of black identities, both in fiction and social interactions.

Africana Studies and Postcoloniality are only some examples of attempting to name transnational works, especially those that employ a non-centralized North American voice. Paul Gilroy also attempts to highlight transnationalism in *The Black Atlantic.* According to Gilroy, "stereophonic, bilingual, or bifocal cultural forms originated by, but no longer the exclusive property of, blacks dispersed within the structures of feeling, producing, communicating, and remembering that I have heuristically called the black Atlantic world" (Gilroy 3). Gilroy's terminology emphasizes the convergence among African, Caribbean, Latina, and American black cultures connected by the Atlantic slave trade. Far from essentializing this convergence, Gilroy proposes that black individuals often produce cultural expressions that transcend nationality and ethnicity, which can rise above our understanding of blackness as centered in the United States' theoretical and literary productions.

Moreover, Carole Boyce Davies discusses the issue of naming, especially concerning the transnationality of black women's literature. In her own words,

> The terms that we use to name ourselves (Black, African, African-American, Black British, Minority, Latina/o, West Indian, Caribbean, Hispanic, People of Color, Women of Color, Afro-Caribbean, Third World, and so on) carry their strings of echoes and inscriptions. Each represents an original misnaming and the simultaneous

> constant striving of the dispossessed for full representation. Each, therefore, must be used provisionally; each must be subject to new analyses, new questions and new understandings if we are to unlock some of the narrow terms of the discourses in which we are inscribed. In other words, at each arrival at a definition, we begin a new analysis, a new departure, a new interrogation of meaning, new contradictions. (Davies 5).

As Davies suggests, scholars should always question terminologies, as names carry strong ties to colonialism and imperialism. The term "African American" is tightly connected to US-born black citizens. Furthermore, in the United States, the term Black "does not include other "Third World" black peoples (Asians, Arabs, Latino/as) as it does in the United Kingdom. For in the United States, the historical convergence between "race" and "nationality" has kept separate" (Davies 9). For the term "African American" to become more inclusive, the understanding of the term "American" should refer to all peoples in America; however, the term "has become synonymous with the United States imperialistic identity, "making reference to white Americans only (9).

In addition, in the 1989 article "But Who do You Really Belong to—Black Studies or Women's Studies?" Barbara Christian discusses the problem of racism and sexism in Academia and the misplacing of people of color from the developing world. According to her, "Third World Women often fall between the cracks, between the two categories, minorities and women" in Academic departments (Christian 86). It is interesting to highlight how even marginalized university programs, such as Africana and Women Studies, also marginalize *others*. Davies points out the "exclusionary nature of US constructions of Black feminisms," disregarding black women from other countries also marked by the slave trade and structural racism, which "forces Black women from other parts of the world to locate their identities within the context of US hegemony" (Davies 31). I feel particularly obligated to highlight the importance of reading black women's writings with a cross-cultural approach to advance our understanding of black studies and black women's writings (33).

Africana Studies, for example, deals with the multiple layers of oppression suffered by people of African descent spread throughout the globe. Reiland Rabaka considers Du Bois one of the fathers of Africana studies, mainly because he developed the idea of double-consciousness and how black peoples worldwide are connected in a community-like sense (735). It is important to acknowledge that Africana studies and Africana Womanism also raise issues regarding naming.

Nikol Alexander-Floyd and Evelyn Simien discuss Africana Womanist Thought and Black Feminism, highlighting the controversy in the terminology. According to them, "the uncertainty and controversy surrounding naming practices reflect a concern with differences among individual Black women who wish to emphasize the primacy of their racial identity, particularly nationalists, and others who do not" (92). In other words, it is necessary to revise and resignify names as barriers and borders lose their stage to the willingness of creating a more unified world. Yet, to "strike out the word *Barbadian* and put *Negro"* is not so simply done either (Marshall, *Brown* 190). When we add the issue of diaspora and migration to the discussion of race, class, and gender, as this dissertation attempts to do, we must reconsider boundaries, terminologies, and fields of studies. As Davies suggests, we cannot only use one theoretical approach to read black women's writings, since their experiences are multifaceted and should be understood in relation to one another, as they involve "fluidity, multiple identities, repetition which must be multiply articulated" (48). The characters I analyze in this study move across barriers of identity, nationhood, gender, and social roles. Without multiple approaches, we are bound to continue employing imperialist theories that—albeit part of a minority—recreates the same excluding game European-centered theories have always played.

Hence, I tend to avoid "American" to mean people born in the United States, preferring the term "North American," as I understand the term "American" to be exclusionary of Latin American citizens. With that, I use the term "black" over "African American," including nationality whenever needed, i.e., "black American" or "black Brazilian." Currently, the term "black" has become more popular among scholars because the term gives us the possibility of approaching the African diaspora more broadly, as well as the themes of hybridity, collective identity, and displacement—essential themes to discuss blackness beyond the borders of the United States. It is pivotal to broaden the concept of blackness for this dissertation since "Non-Westernized African peoples negotiate in terms of their identities in ways other than only 'representing' Blackness, even within the umbrella of a homogeneous 'African' identity" (Davies 8). The literature of non-American blacks—to borrow a term from *Americanah*—deals with more issues that go beyond blackness, such as identity, the legacy of colonialism, home and exile, and imperialism, which the United States often imposes. Still, the choices of vocabulary I make here

hopefully will be contested in the future as more and more diasporic intellectuals enter the academy and challenge these terminologies in their fictions, theoretical essays, and transnational identities.

1.4. Final considerations

This dissertation investigates how migration influences mother-daughter relationships and these women's relationships with their motherlands, creating diasporic identities. The authors and texts I have chosen to discuss manifest concern regarding identities as fixed and, thus, intend to construct a black diasporic identity while expanding on themes and theories of postcoloniality and black feminism. Chapter One demonstrates that: 1) this research engages in an ongoing conversation, and 2) it offers a unique lens and collection of works for analysis. Not only the women in the novels I chose are poor, black, and female, but they are also all migrants. The women's experiences discussed in this dissertation are distinguished and multiple. Therefore, this work intersects diverse literary theories, such as postcolonial, black feminism, and race studies.

In the second chapter, "Language and Memory in the Construction of Mothers and Motherlands in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela,*" I show how the colonial past influences postmodern subjects and the literature they produce. This chapter illustrates how forced dislocations and persistent racist systems continue to impact people even after generations. *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* show, in the extensive research both authors went through, the necessity of storytelling in rebuilding memories destroyed by slavery and colonialism and the necessity of maintaining maternal bonds with the mothers, both biological and othermothers, and motherlands.

In the third chapter, "Solo travelers: Identity and displacement in *Lucy, Americanah,* and *The Unbelonging,*" I analyze the issue of migration causing dislocation and "homelessness" in Lucy, Ifemelu, Hyacinth before and after they become solo travelers. The chapter shows how the characters' disconnections with their temporal and geographical spaces reflect their relationships with their mothers and othermothers, emphasizing that the end of the novels does not always resolve these disconnections.

In the fourth chapter, "Migration, Dislocations, and the Mother-daughter Dyad in *Brown Girl Brownstones, Dreaming in Cuban,* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory,*" I investigate the mother-

daughter dyad in the relationships between Silla and Selina, Lourdes and Pilar, and Martine and Sophie. Daughters at first establish a relationship of resistance to their mothers but soon notice that they must accept and embrace the part in themselves that are similar to their mothers to positively dwell in their transversal hybridity.

This study includes a conclusion that connects the discussion of the previous chapters, showing how the selected works enrich the field of postcolonial studies, bringing to the front questions of race, class, gender, and the unresolved displacement caused by migration. It also discusses how the same hybridity observed in the female characters of all the novels mirrors the hybridity of the texts themselves, which may lead to new concepts of black women's writings in a diasporic context.

CHAPTER 2. LANGUAGE AND MEMORY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MOTHERS AND MOTHERLANDS IN *HOMEGOING* AND *ÁGUA DE BARRELA*

This is the problem of history. We cannot know that which we were not there to see and hear and experience for ourselves.
Gyasi, *Homegoing*

This chapter argues that Gyasi and Cruz connect migration with family dwellings, as family unit members recreate and re-signify perceptions of history, language, and memory to construct their diasporic identities and reclaim their past. In the following sections, I analyze how *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* enhance the elements of historical revision, language, memory, and family connections through storytelling, assisting in the constructing of political and hybrid identities that resist racism and the preservation of colonial power. The first section, "Home and the necessity of revisiting history in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela*," provides a theoretical framework to discuss *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* in light of migration and feminist studies.

The second section, "Language and naming in the process of recognition and identity reconstruction in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela*," explores the role of language and naming in identity construction through their importance in building family and geographical bonds. Both works reveal the complexity of racial and social relations and how characters dwell in spaces of oppression, dealing with the loss of name and the mother tongue due to enslavement. Characters also resist language imposition by refusing to speak the colonizer/enslaver language, insist on their descendants to preserve the mother tongue, or contribute to the linguistic exchange that naturally happens upon forced and voluntary migration. This section's primary aim is to show how Gyasi and Cruz distinguish language as an essential part of identity construction, showing how the black population struggled to preserve their connection to the motherlands Ghana and Mozambique through language and naming while dwelling in the spaces of racial segregation and violence in the adopted country.

Section three, "Memory, Storytelling, and Female Authorship in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela*," discusses how Gyasi and Cruz have used memory through fiction and autobiography to recover and retell stories that reshape mainstream narratives, attempting to claim a shift from center to margin. Gyasi and Cruz arranged their works using a similar approach, resembling what Cruz calls "small pieces of life" ("pedaços miúdos de vida," *Água,* 305). In addition, they consider an obfuscated and silenced part of history in the act of restoring, uncovering, and investigating that is pivotal to giving voice to once shadowed groups and narratives. The third part of this chapter also highlights women's role in sharing these stories and preserving collective memory through generations, which mostly relates to the mother-daughter dyad and motherland themes that join all the novels analyzed in this dissertation.

2.1 Mothers and Motherlands in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* — An Introduction

Writing against exclusionary official historical narratives has long been a practice of black women writers. From Harriet Jacobs to Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, throughout the black Atlantic, black women's writings often resist historical approaches that diminish black culture, highlighting the importance of storytelling and memory in the construction of black diasporic identities. Alice Walker goes searching for her mother's gardens, Paule Marshall writes about the importance of Bajan women's "first lessons in narrative art" ("From the Poets" 633), while Eliana Alves Cruz and Yaa Gyasi collect fragments of stories long forgotten to recuperate something lost—something essential for their formation as black women and writers. In different ways, these black women's fictions become sites for retelling and rewriting history, from margin to center, emphasizing voices and stories commonly ignored and erased from dominant discourses.

Furthermore, during "The Renaissance of Black Women Writers," characterized by plots focused on collective histories of black women to reconstruct a heritage of black women's writings, "the predominant element ... [was] the creation and maintenance of images of black women that are based upon black women's constructions, history, and real-life experiences" (Bobo et al., *Black Studies* 179). It was black women writers' interest to change "the way black women are represented in literature," showing them as mothers, daughters, college students, workers, among other roles, along with intentionally making them commit mistakes, learn from them, and express their

struggles (Washington, *Black-Eyed* 5). In this chapter, I argue that through the act of remembering, sharing, and reclaiming stories long erased from public discourses, Cruz and Gyasi highlight the legacy of slavery, marginalization, and resistance of black women. At the same time, their characters—Marcus and Marjorie in *Homegoing* and Eliana[5] herself in *Água de Barrela*—use writing to recreate and/or strengthen bonds with each other and construct their black diasporic identities, transforming the text into a site for double resistance.

I have chosen *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* for this chapter's analysis because they highlight the importance of storytelling in healing and recovering the past, celebrating African oral tradition. They primarily focus on the role of women in transmitting stories to the next generation as an act of resistance against historical narratives that intended to suppress black people's history. Works as *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* should be identified within "a series of boundary crossings and not as a fixed, geographical, ethnically or nationally bound category of writing. In cross-cultural, transnational, translocal, diasporic perspectives, this reworking of the grounds of "Black Women's Writing" redefines identity away from exclusion and marginality" (Davies 3). *Homegoing* and *Água de Barela* represent encounters in colonial and postcolonial contexts, showing how migrations involve bilateral transformations of individuals and groups. The fact that Davies recognizes this characteristic of black women writers over thirty years ago is the answer as to why, respectively, in 2016 and 2018, two novels share many cross-cultural diasporic perspectives. The conception of these works derives from a necessity to extol and recover a past that remains suppressed.

Most literary criticism on *Homegoing* deals with questions of memory, home, and identity[6], and in the following paragraphs, I highlight a few that have been important for this chapter. Portia Owusu's book *Spectres from the Past* is one of the most important works that influenced this chapter. Owusu makes an interesting connection between Effia's motherlessness and Esi's rupture with the motherland that I expand on. Her study on Akan culture has also informed this chapter

[5] Throughout the text, Cruz establishes an unlimited third person narration, only changing in the last pages of the novel, in which she shifts to first person narration, inserting herself in the narrative, while retelling her trip to Caichoeirinha in Bahia during her research for the book. In order to separate character from author, I address the author as "Cruz" and the character as "Eliana."

[6] For memory, see Sackeyfio (2021) and Owusu (2020). For home, see Heinz (2020). For identity, see Landry (2018) and Motahne (2021).

concerning the issue of motherhood and motherland. Moreover, Owusu notices how Gyasi de-essentializes and de-romanticizes "going back to Africa" as a political act, noticing that this is not the reason why Marjorie and Marcus return, emphasizing a search for "home" and "belonging" as a human characteristic of searching for a closer understanding of ourselves and others (Owusu 110).

Another important article for this study is Mar Gallego's "Sexuality and Healing in African Diaspora: A transnational Approach to Toni Morrison and Gyasi." This article examines Morrison's *Mercy* and Gyasi's *Homegoing* and identifies them as counter-narratives interested in a political act of promoting historical revision. Referring to *Mercy* and *Homegoing*, Gallego states that "Their works offer powerful counter-narratives that defy the "official" historiography of enslavement times in order to set the records straight, as it were" (183). Gallego focuses on how one generation of women helps heal the other through these counter-narratives, and this perspective supports my argument that historical revision contributes to the formation of political identities.

Nonki Motahane et al.'s "Rooting Routes to Trans-Atlantic African Identities: The Metaphor of Female Descendancy in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*" seeks to expand the notion of African identities outside Africa, using *Homegoing* as bases for analysis and its focus on female authorship. The authors highlight how the topic of slavery has been little discussed in African literature and criticism, which focuses more on colonialism and its legacy. On top of that, works on slavery, since Olaudah Equiano, are male-centered narratives. *Homegoing*, on the other hand, as stated by Motanhe et al., "centres femininity and female experiences in ways that refresh sites and ways of knowing slavery and its relationship with factors and forces impacting African and African American identities" (20). Moreover, they notice how the book highlights the reconstruction of black political identity in the light of slavery's aftermath.

Cruz's *Água de Barrela* has received very little critical attention. The most prominent one is Maria Cristina Batalha's work, which acknowledges how *Água de Barrela* unveils and resists the myth of racial democracy. This piece mostly points out major novel themes without engaging with them or providing a reading of Cruz's work within a black diasporic postcolonial framework. Nonetheless, Batalha indicates many instances in which Cruz's unveiling of the myth of racial democracy is present in the narrative, starting with the title of the novel *Água de Barrela* (Water

of Barrela). Batalha notices how the novel's title denounces the cyclical legacy of slavery and colonialism in Brazil, where most of the black population remains in serving positions (250).

Rewriting history is an act of defiance against the circles of oppression that afflict black families throughout generations. This act involves breaking up the relationship between knowledge and power, which—as suggested by Foucault and Said—has been used as one of the possibly most effective systems of colonial oppression. Therefore, mainstream historical narratives create an illusion that black people have not participated in constructing the world as we know it, affecting black people's identities and self-esteem, not to mention other economic and social problems. To reconstruct history, it is first necessary to remember and accept the past, and such an act "is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present" (Bhabha 63). Consistent with Bhabha, resignifying the past is pivotal to disclosing the violence of the colonial past and using collective memory as a form of healing (63).

Nevertheless, remembering and resignifying the past is not enough to break long-standing colonial systems. Through the act of writing, resistance and transformation bring marginalized stories to the center and voice once shadowed histories. Eliana Alves Cruz and Yaa Gyasi undergo anthropological[7] and fictional processes to re-claim histories long ignored and considered taboo both in Brazil and Ghana, centralizing narratives that denounce slavery, demystify the Brazilian myth of racial democracy, problematize the issue of miscegenation, highlight the Africans' compliance with the slave trade, among other challenging topics which help reformulate history through the lenses of marginalized voices. For this reason, *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* perform a double resistance—at the same time, these novels can be read as acts of decolonization and resistance, the way their characters recover and transmit memory to the next generation and the unique role of women in this movement, represent a means to resist the imposed assimilation

[7] Both authors use historical events and research to compose their narratives. Gyasi's work is mostly fictional, although the final stories—Marcus' and Marjorie's—have many autobiographical nuances. Cruz, on the other hand, openly bases her work on her ancestors' life, relying on accounts of her grandmothers and aunts. In this regard, it is important to consider that "anthropological writings have been equated with fiction" in a sense that they require some imagining (Minh Ha70). In her own words, "The dilemma lies in the fact that descriptions…, although not necessarily false or unfactual, are "actor-oriented," that is to say, reconstructed or fashioned according to an individual's imagination" (70). Because Cruz is both relying on archival research and memory (from her female relatives mostly), she, as an author, must undertake some degree of (re)constructing to assemble the pieces together.

by the dominant white group that reproduces the systems of colonial oppression. Moreover, storytelling creates a bond between women from different generations, necessary for bonding and political identity construction.

Contemporary novels preoccupied with remembering and criticizing slavery and reclaiming shadowed voices—such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Sherley Anne William's *Dessa Rose*—have been called neo-slave narratives. In the highly-quoted review "Fiction and Slavery's Archive: Memory, Agency, and Finding Home," Lisa Ze Winters situates *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi—and *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead—within this new genre, claiming that African diasporic writers have always been concerned with telling stories that are against mainstream narratives (Winters 338). Similarly, Kalenda Eaton, in the article "Diasporic Dialogues: The Role of Gender, Language, and Revision in the Neo-slave Narrative," argues that neo-slave narratives can promote historical revisions and give voice and recognition to black authorship. Both authors recognize *Homegoing* as part of this new genre; still, black Brazilian women authors are left out of these deliberations, despite the fact they have been producing neo-slave narratives for over a decade[8]. Black and postcolonial scholars often overlook black Brazilian literary production, with few exceptions, such as Paulo Lins' *Cidade de Deus (City of God)* and Carolina Maria de Jesus' *Quarto de Despejo: Diário de uma Favelada* (*Child of the Dark: The Diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus).*

As Adichie has warned us in the popular TED "The Danger of a Single Story," many of the single stories we hear about African countries (among other colonized nations) come from travel writings since they usually translate Western ideologies toward colonized countries, reduced to the imperial eye's perspectives. Meanwhile, their real stories go unknown, and silence and historical erasing keep causing deep wounds in black American and Latino identities. These silences represent one more act of violence—one that is inflicted on people's bodies from the lack of representation and their souls for the lack of healing that remembering might bring. Because these issues have been obfuscated and suppressed, restoring, uncovering, and investigating narratives

[8] An example is Ana Maria Gonçalves' *Um Defeito de Cor (A Defect of Color)* from 2006. The book tells the story of Kehinde, an elderly woman who travels from Africa to Brazil in the 19th century with the purpose of finding her son. The fact that this book is only available in Portuguese already shows how shadowed Afro-Latino women voices have been in comparison to books which have been written in English, an irrefutable sign of linguistic bias in the literary field. The opposite—translated books from English to Portuguese—are highly consumed and studied in Brazil.

that bring the marginal to the center is pivotal for a re-construction of history that does not obliterate certain voices and groups. This study seeks to contribute to research around identity and displacement while highlighting how slavery continues to have a profound impact on current family relations.

I aim to demonstrate how preserving family bonds is pivotal to characters' political identity construction since it is a way to firstly re-establish a bond with the motherland and secondly resist the attempts by the dominant groups to erase their historical past. Both Gyasi and Cruz show their connection with their past and willingness to recover and retell their story. For that, they feel the necessity to revisit the past—both physical and psychological—and reshape their narratives to construct their political identities as black women writers. This chapter examines how Gyasi and Cruz unveil the preservation of language, memory, and family bonds within the black community, despite colonialism and slavery's attempt to erase them. At the same time, they demonstrate the generational trauma and the sense of displacement that affect certain characters who are denied these three pillars. In what follows, I discuss how Gyasi and Cruz use historical revision, language and naming, memory and storytelling to highlight the significance of family and ancestry in constructing collective political identities.

2.2 The Politics of Home and the Necessity of Revisiting History in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela*

In *Homegoing*, Gyasi directly addresses the necessity of revisiting history through the character of Yaw. Effia's descendent, Marjorie's father, teaches a lesson on history and interpretations when he asks his students if they know the story of his scar. The children have many theories: "you were lit by fire... they say your mother was fighting evil spirits" (*Homegoing* 226). Yaw asks them, "whose story is correct?" (226). As no one answers, he states, "We cannot know which story is correct because we were not there" (226). In Yaw's words,

> This is the problem of history. We cannot know that which we were not there to see and hear and experience for ourselves. We must rely upon the words of others. Those who were there in the olden days, they told stories to the children so that the children would know, so that the children could tell stories to their children. And so on, and so on. But now we come upon the problem of conflicting stories... Whose story do we believe? (226).

Yaw's metaphor about historical narratives illustrates Gyasi's and Cruz's use of individual stories to re-signify history's mainstream narratives. Since the black community and its collective memory have been removed from history, in a deliberate racist process of erasing black people's participation in constructing the world, their individual and collective stories went unheard and disregarded in formal education. To make sense of the past, it is first necessary to recover it, and both authors and their characters undertake such a process.

There are many similarities between Yaa Gyasi and Eliana Alves Cruz regarding their formation as black writers, and this section highlights a few to show these authors' commitment to telling a story that resembles their personal journeys to the past. Yaa Gyasi was born in Ghana and moved to the United States as an infant. As she mentions in an interview with Olga Segura, "any immigrant probably knows the experiences of trying to straddle two different worlds: the world of their home country and the world of the country that they have emigrated to" (Gyasi, "A Conversation"). Gyasi's displacement mirrors her characters'; it is embedded in the novels' representation of experiences of post and neo-colonial systems and its forgetting and erasing of cultural marginal discourses and peoples. Like many diasporic people, especially members of the black diaspora, Yaa Gyasi experiences a lack of information about her cultures and countries. In the interview mentioned above, Gyasi comments how struck she was by the information she gathered from her trip to Ghana, questioning the silence around the involvement of Africans in the slave trade and how this kind of information should not be only available to those able to visit Ghana ("A Conversation"). With a writing grant from the University of Standford, Gyasi travels to Ghana and experiences the dungeons herself. She learns about the Ghanian women offered to the British males and decides to start her novel with two characters representing both sides of the Cape Coast Castle, the women who lived outside and inside the dungeons ("A conversation"). Therefore, Gyasi undertakes a re-imagining and re-construction that mirrors her migrant condition and the necessity to rediscover the past to compose her novel.

Eliana Alves Cruz goes through a similar re-construction and re-imagining process to write *Água de Barrela*. Cruz intersects her schizophrenic aunt's and grandparents' accounts with historical and academic research, composing a distinct piece of work that is difficult to categorize. Whereas it is unrealistic to state that Cruz writes a biography without any hint of fiction, it is not accurate to call it a novel either. Cruz's narrative resembles assembling a puzzle,

and she obtains dispersed pieces to create something consistent and coherent. Although many of the events can be traced back through her family accounts, and the artifacts she includes in the text, Cruz must rely on fiction to fill in the gaps and re-construct discrepant parts of her history. *Água de Barrela* is a historical and fictional work that gives readers a portrait of Brazil from slavery to contemporary times and an intimate family picture. As a black Brazilian, Cruz has had no formal education on black Brazilian culture and history as a child, which makes her process of recuperating her family story a process of recuperating a shadowed black Brazilian history altogether. Cruz laments this fact in an interview with Carolina Freitas da Cunha, in which she states that the worst thing that could have ever happened to Brazilians as a society is the erasing of part of its history and the emphasis and promotion of everything that is European, precisely what she tries to resist in *Água de Barrela* (Cruz, "Entrevista").

Cruz was born in Rio de Janeiro, but her story starts in the state of Bahia, Brazil. Although most of her text is written in third-person narration, towards the final pages, it becomes an intimate travel text of her trip to Cachoeirinha, Bahia, where she goes while writing *Água de Barrela*. In a first-person account of her visit to *Engenho Natividade,*[9] the plantation her ancestors lived for generations before migrating to Rio de Janeiro, Cruz states, "In the same land rises, majestic and beautiful in the calm landscape, the cashew tree that sprouts from inside the *terreiros* ... where my old grandmothers must have been many times. It is impossible not to think of the concept that says that the material ends, but the spirit is eternalized" ("na mesma terra ergue-se, majestoso e lindo na paisagem calma, o pé de cajá que brota de dentro do terreiro ... por onde devem ter passado muitas vezes as minhas velhas avós. É impossível não pensar no conceito que diz que a matéria se acaba, mas o que é do espírito se eterniza" 304-05). Cruz's trip to *Engenho Natividade* shows the power of heritage and the importance of knowing and remembering the past as much as Gyasi's trip to Cape Coast Castle in Ghana. These authors' physical and psychological journeys to the past with the purpose of writing works that retell these stories is what establishes their double resistance.

[9] The plantation does not exist anymore, but Cruz includes a picture of it in her work, one of the many artifacts she shares with her readers. See Appendix A.

Gyasi's and Cruz's fictional works share other connections beyond the ones I emphasized. Besides *Homegoing*, published in 2016, Gyasi has published *Transcendent Kingdom* in 2020, which tells the story of a Ghanian family in Alabama. While her family is ravaged by depression and grief, Gifty relies on science and religion to understand her family's misery. Eliana has published four individual works throughout her career, which started with the publication of *Água de Barrela* in 2016, besides short fiction and poems in *Cadernos Negros (Black Notebooks).*[10] As much as Gyasi's, Cruz's fiction focuses on reclaiming black cultural memory. Cruz's second novel, *O Crime do Cais do Valongo* (2018),[11] is a historical crime novel that starts in Mozambique and finishes in Rio de Janeiro. It tells the story of the murder of Bernardo Lourenço Viana, a wealthy white slave trader, around the Valongo wharf—used during slavery—showing the atrocities of the slave trade and the middle passage, but also the richness of Mozambique. Thus, both Gyasi and Cruz dedicate themselves to portraying a black diasporic perspective in their works.

In addition, Gyasi and Cruz speak of the necessity to remember the past to understand and change the future without disregarding the importance of constructing a black political identity, which is only possible by establishing a black consciousness that is not essentialist, but it considers mutual black diasporic struggles. Cruz argues that black consciousness refers to "the consciousness of where we came from, at what moment we are, and where we want to go. The consciousness that tells us we need to change the axis of our Eurocentered thinking" ("a consciência de onde você veio, em que momento você está e para onde você quer ir. A consciência de que a gente precisa mudar o eixo do nosso pensamento que é todo eurocentrado" Cruz, "Entrevista"). This coincides with Gyasi's endeavor to voice Ghanian's perspectives towards the slave trade period, the women who "married"[12] English soldiers and never become the protagonists of history books. As she tells Olga Segura, "I wanted to, through fiction, give them an opportunity to tell their stories" (Gyasi, "A Conversation"). Gyasi's and Cruz's efforts allow the reader the possibility of rewriting history through a marginal perspective, contributing to the emergence

[10] *Cadernos Negros* is in its 40th volume, and it has been circulating yearly since 1978. It is one of the most important publications focused on black Brazilian writers.
[11] *The Crime of Valongo Wharf*, my translation. Valongo Wharf in Rio de Janiero was once the main receiving dock for enslaved Africans 1811-1831. It was excavated in 2011 and became a World Heritage site in 2017.
[12] It is important to recognize that Effia was not a civil wife, but rather a "wench" (*Homegoing* 19), since most of the European men who "married" women in colonial settings were already married in Europe.

of a non-imperialist literary culture, one that is free from the "peculiar Western style and thinking" about the other—the same Western narrative that has erased entire cultures and histories doomed inferior while enhancing everything European-related as "real" knowledge (Ghandi 68).

Furthermore, according to Leela Gandhi, "the emergence of anti-colonial and 'independent' nation-States after colonialism is frequently accompanied by a desire to forget the colonial past. This 'will-to-forget' takes a number of historical forms, and is impelled by a variety of cultural and political motivations" (4). Notably, there is a willingness to conceive a culture and an identity that might unify the new state, which is deeply rooted in preserving the past colonial systems of oppression. We can observe that in the shading of Africans' involvement in the slave trade, as exposed in *Homegoing*, accompanied by the preservation of colonial oppression. Gyasi accomplishes this by highlighting the paradoxical feelings of Ghanaian characters like Effia and her grandson James, both black and involved in the slave trade due to Effia's "marriage" to an English trader. As shown in more detail later on, James' way to resist colonialism and its systems of oppression is to re-establish a connection with his motherland, Ghana—or in a more generalized notion, Africa itself.

The importance of books like *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* is precisely how they allow us the possibility of a historical revision through the eyes of post-colonial subjects, centralizing marginal narratives and contributing to the emergence of a non-imperialist literary culture. Both *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* take history "as a source of truths and untruths; history as a source of inspiration as well as anxiety [in which] writing memory serves as a supplement to history (Clarke 50-54). Referring to Jacques Derrida's idea of supplement, Clarke challenges the notion of history as something self-sufficient. Still consistent with Derrida, this supplement can be dangerous since it "intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence" (Derrida 145). Therefore, Clarke suggests that history, or mainstream history, is deficient, lacks something, and requires a supplement because mainstream historical narratives have erased every piece of knowledge that did not favor a Euro-centered narrative that for a long time has been taught as if it is sufficient. When Gyasi and Cruz propose this dislocation, this more inclusive way of

understanding and reading the past, they rely on stories that evoke a collective black identity that is both political and diasporic—as it is to be addressed in this chapter.

One of the reasons I chose to analyze these novels is their focus on female authorship in reclaiming the past—or, more precisely, the motherland—to identify and change operant racist systems. *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* do this in multiple ways, and in the following paragraphs, I want to highlight two of them. Firstly, they promote female authorship in establishing a connection with the motherland through their titles and narrative structures. Secondly, they do that by challenging past narratives and breaking the silences of events and ideas of Western literature. For example, *Homegoing* unveils the shading of Africans' involvement in the slave trade, while *Água de Barrela* breaks with the disseminated idea of racial democracy in the Brazilian mainstream discourse.

Considering titles, *Homegoing* instigates the reader to question *Where is home and who is going there?* Straightforwardly, there is not only *one* answer to this question, and the very structure of Gyasi's novel reflects this trait. Gyasi gives the reader eight generations of a family, showing the complexity of the traditional concept of family and how each character's social and racial backgrounds determine a specific experience. Some characters experience parent alienation, while others are forced to grow up without a single blood relative. Though all characters are black, the very racial relations surrounding them change as the story progresses through time and space, and they experience living in what W. E. B. Du Bois called "double consciousness"—or, as he identifies, "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (3). The only issue that remains the same throughout the sixteen stories from *Homegoing* is the necessity of finding a place to call "home," a sense of belonging, and the paradoxical trait of this search that leads characters to places they did not expect. It is, for instance, the case of Marjorie and Marcus, the last two descendants of the sisters Effia and Esi. By the end of the narrative, they have become transversal hybrid subjects and must face the tension of not fitting into single conceptualizations of identity and the impossibility of finding "home." They become friends and travel to Ghana, only to find out there is no returning "home" for them. Hence, the novel's title and its irony—there is no homegoing, these characters cannot know where "home" is. Their sense of belonging only arises in their connection with one another.

In *Água de Barrela—Water of Barrela*—the title refers to the women in Cruz family who, brought in to work in Brazilian plantations, survived by washing clothes for the white dominant class from slavery to contemporary times. The word "Barrela" refers to the mixture of water and wood ash from burning plant species, and it was used to bleach clothes (Batalha 250). It is also important to mention that "barrela" has a negative connotation, especially in contemporary times, referring to purposeless or bad quality things. Other meanings would include rape and having a bad reputation.[13] These all relate to the novel, in which characters suffer physical, social, mental, and sexual violence and are kept in servitude positions. Moreover, the word alludes to the inequality that encircles Cruz's characters, in which working in the *barrela* became the major occupation for women, even if they acquired an education. Nevertheless, we can observe these women's resistance through their struggle to raise their children despite all odds and find ways to improve their living conditions. The question of "home" is not as strong as in *Homegoing*, but Cruz's personal journey to compose the text, visiting what remains from the plantation where her story starts, demonstrates the relationship between motherland and adopted country and the relationship between past and present. These connections and intersections shape identities and influence social and racial interactions in both works.

In terms of structure, *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* share similarities from the first pages, both starting with a family tree.[14] Each branch of the figures connects characters in the text and their narratives, resembling how memories are connected. At the top of the family tree, *Homegoing* features a matriarchal figure, Maame, and her two daughters, Effia and Esi, which emphasizes the importance of female authorship in this novel. Maame is raped and gives birth to Effia, Marjorie's ancestor. After running away, she marries Big Man Asare and gives birth to Esi, Marcus' ancestor. These half-sisters represent two sides of Ghana's history—Effia's side, which profited from the slave trade, and Esi's, which suffered enslavement in the U.S. In contrast, Cruz's *Água de Barrela* shows Firmino and Gowon's parents at the top of the family tree, emphasizing this family's

[13] These and other definitions are available in online dictionaries, such as micaelis.uol.com.br and dicionarioinformal.com.br. Popularly, the word "barrela" is used today, especially in countryside regions of Bahia and Minas Gerais, to mean something dirty and purposeless. Certainly, the title of Cruz's work refers to social position and oppression of black Brazilians around plantations in the country. The word's spelling and pronunciation is very similar to "mud" in Portuguese ("barro").
[14] See Appendix B and C.

connection with the motherland, Mozambique. The novel is based on Cruz's family story, and she starts her telling with the kidnapping of Akin (Firmino's name before the kidnapping), his brother Gowon, who dies before the passage, and Gowon's pregnant fiancé, Ewa (who later becomes Helena). Although Ewa/Helena dies shortly after childbirth, her daughter, Anolina, is Cruz's ancestor. The story is mainly told from the perspective of Anolina and her daughter and granddaughter, Martha and Damiana, respectively. The text focuses on the female family members' struggles, while most males are absent. This emphasis on female characters makes *Água de Barrela* centered on female authorship as much as Gyasi's *Homegoing*.

The stories progress on a similar note, with each chapter or section detailing different family members' lives and crucial historical events, such as the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 (*Homegoing*), Brazil's independence (*Água de Barrela)*, among many others. Due to the unique structure of these narratives, I would like to highlight two effects these texts produce. Firstly, stories are connected, but pieces are missing, and the reader never receives the complete picture. This is especially true for *Homegoing*, in which the gaps in the text are more predominant than in *Água de Barrela*. Resembling the novel's characters, who are often left without answers about their ancestors, readers experience the same void. In *Água de Barrela*, although there are gaps, the narrative manages to pinpoint what happens to the individuals as the story progresses through time and space.[15] Still, both texts mix historical and personal events in the narrative, emphasizing how particular historical events negatively affect the black community and are sometimes responsible for personal narratives, as this chapter addresses.

In addition, *Homegoing* starts with an Akan proverb that goes, "The family is like the forest: if you are outside it is dense; if you are inside you see that each tree has its own position." Heinz rightly points out that "the 'family as forest' metaphor ... focuses on how 'the family' does not simply exist. It is a matter of perspective: it seems to be a unified whole when seen from outside, but seen from inside, it ... consists of a whole number of individual trees and their different

[15] An example of a gap in *Homegoing* is what happens to characters such as H. Without any knowledge of his family, when his mother is captured due to the Slave Act of 1815, H grows up alone and his story emphasizes his displacement. He manages to reconcile with his first girlfriend, and they stay together at the end of the narrative. However, the reader does not learn much more about him after that. I believe the reader is supposed to feel similarly to H while reading *Homegoing*, knowing that some of the answers they seek will not come. Meanwhile, in *Água de Barrela*, readers learn what happens to Akin/Firmino from the time he is captured until his death, but they do not know what happens to his son, Roberto.

relations to each other" (126). In other words, the proverb refers to the novel's structure, with its many stories interconnected and building from one another like the roots in a tree. Although each chapter can be read as a short story, something connects them, making the structure reinforce both proximity and disparities, closeness and ruptures (126). This metaphor highlights the focus on transnationalism and movements the novel show, at the same time that it highlights how people remain connected through a perspective, a narrative of the past that help them heal their traumas.

Gyasi and Cruz also discuss the role of the slave trade and migration in family relations in the diaspora by exposing taboo topics in their works. Gyasi breaks with "the taboo surrounding the discussion of the slave trade... [in which] many prominent families that hold powerful positions stem from a lineage that can be traced back to slave traders" (Okudzeto 356). Attempting to highlight what had become an unmentionable topic, Gyasi tells the story of two half-sisters, Effia and Esi, and their descendants amid class and racial issues in Ghana and the United States. Whereas Effia is "married" to an English man and her family becomes wealthy with the slave trade, Esi is enslaved and forced to go to a plantation in the United States. Besides the violence of captivity, Esi is raped by one of the English slave traders, and her descendants struggle with slavery in the South, followed by segregation and poverty. The trauma of slavery in the novel becomes explicit when the remaining two family members meet. Marjorie and Marcus never know they are related; most of their history is lost, especially Marcus' history, whose ancestors were enslaved.

Gyasi makes a clear distinction between physical and spiritual belonging in *Homegoing*. While the slave trade physically detaches people from their motherlands and changes their identities as they live in the diaspora, the involvement with the slave trade spiritually detaches people from their motherland. Effia and her descendants, especially her son, must live with the burden of the slave trade on their shoulders, knowing that they are part of England's plan to instigate tribe rivalry that culminates in the enslavement of the losing side. Breaking with this reality involves breaking with the family unit, as Effia's grandson James does. James ruptures with his family because he does not want any involvement with the slave trade. In his search "to be [his] own nation"[16] (*Homegoing* 107), James joins Akosua and disconnects from his powerful family

[16] The word nation here can be almost understood as a synonym for family, which coincides with the theme of the novel of familial connections as the true motherland.

and their burden of participating in the slave trade. As he tells his daughter years later, "My father was a slaver, a very wealthy man. When I decided to leave Fanteland, it was because I did not want to take part in the work my family had done. I wanted to work for myself... every season I feel lucky to have this land, to do this honorable work, not the shameful work of my family" (153). Because James has never had a genuine connection with his mother and father, his way of giving his life meaning is to re-establish a bond with the motherland by rupturing the system that betrays the Ghanian people.

Cruz also develops a plot that addresses the myths and silences around Brazilian society. As previously mentioned, Brazilian literature has been central in creating a myth of Brazil as a racial democracy, popularizing narratives of tensionless encounters between Europeans and Native Brazilians. In *Água de Barrela*, we perceive a counter-narrative that challenges the idea of racial democracy, a concept cued by scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century. The highly praised Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, in his *Casa Grande e Senzala* (English title *The Masters and the Slaves),* argued that both the "big house" and the "slave courters" have a considerable influence upon one another and together form the Brazilian society, mainly due to miscegenation—which he considered positive. Published in 1933, the book's primary purpose was to refute the idea that Brazilians were "inferior" due to miscegenation. Freyre ignores, however, the highly racist systems present in Brazilian society itself and the very process of miscegenation that involved the rape of black women in plantations around the country. Despite these issues, Freyre's idea was highly influential and determined Brazil's racial relations discourse for a considerable amount of time. Scholars believe the myth of racial democracy[17] is responsible for

[17] The term racial democracy arises together with Brazilian society's racial whitening project during the end of the nighteenth century toward the beginning of the teweentieth century. During this time, much was said about to deal with the issue of the racialized Other. While some would suggest amalgamation of the two races, others believed it was better to let the native races to gradually disappear, and segregation should be instituitionalized. In Brazil, where racial intermarriage was not prohibited, the idea that miscegenation would make the Brazilian population white within a few years was dissiminated among sociologists, Gilberto Freyre included. White intelectuals like Gilberto Freyre, Olavo Bilac, Nina Rodrigues and other supports of eugenics believed that the black Brazilian population would disappear with miscegenation. The doctor João Batista Lacerda would present the painting "Ham's Redemption" by Modesto Brocos, in the Universal Races Congress in London, 1911, predicting that the Brazilian society would be white within a hundred years (Seyferth 27). Antonio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães explains that during this time, the idea of government and miscegenation were aligned, though the actual term would only be incorporated during 1930s (10-11). The discourse was used in opposition to the racial question in the United States at the time, aiming to show how Latin America had "fixed" the racial issue (11).

the sustaining social discourses disregarding a race factor influencing veiled racism and social and economic discrepancies in Brazil (Santos and Soeterik 33; Gonzalez 72-74). In the molds of Gonzalez's work, Cruz's narrative deconstructs the racial democracy myth by unveiling Brazilian segregation, which was never sanctioned by the law but practiced socially and institutionally. Cruz shows that the separation between the "big house" and "the slave courters" remains the same from colonial times throughout independence and is still present nowadays.[18]

Cruz's unveiling of the racial democracy myth can be noticed in many instances in the narrative, but more prominently by addressing how black women have been assaulted by plantation owners, especially through Anolina's character, as the following passage shows:

> At each encounter, Firmino noticed that Anolina was taller, and her body was beginning to change. He worried about his niece. He knew what happened to the black girls as soon as they started to "show a body." The baron's son was growing up, he was a little younger, and she could well be his first "human toy." In a way, she was already part of his amusement because, among her many tasks in the house, one was to play with little Francisco, who wasn't embarrassed to bite her, slap her, and reproduce with her what he saw in the treatment of his parents, grandparents, and uncles to the blacks. ("A cada encontro, Firmino reparava que Anolina estava mais alta e que seu corpo começava a mudar. Preocupou-se com a sobrinha. Sabia o que acontecia às negrinhas assim que começavam a "botar corpo". O filho do barão estava crescendo, ele era pouca coisa mais novo e ela bem poderia ser seu primeiro "brinquedo humano". De certa forma, ela já era parte de seu divertimento, pois entre suas muitas tarefas na casa, uma era a de brincar com o pequeno Francisco, que não se constrangia em mordê-la, esbofeteá-la, e reproduzir com ela o que via no tratamento dos pais, avós e tios aos negros," Cruz, *Água* 87)

Anolina continues serving the white family as all enslaved women in her circle. Moreover, she is also abused sexually and forced to be the woman with whom Francisco has his first sexual experience. Anolina's mixed-race child exposes the exploitation of black women in forming the Brazilian biracial society.

[18] We see systematic racism being criticized in the novel through the character of Dodó as well. Dodó becomes a maid in the Tosta's household in conditions that resemble slavery, in return for a favor that allows Dodó's sister to become an elementary teacher. This resembles the idea of "outsider within" by Patricia Hill Collins, which will be addressed soon in this chapter. Dodó's insider experience of being "part" of the white family contraposes the outsider position that indicates she is never really "part" of anything. Dodó "works" for the Tosta family throughout her life, with few days off during the Holidays, in which she would join her mother and sister until her premature death. This shows the non-binary white-black society dwellings, and represents the complexity of racial relations, slave trade, and the legacy of colonialism in *Água de Barrela*.

While some characters experience displacement, living in a country that "others" them, novelists and intellectual women such as Gyasi and Cruz suffer from what Patricia Hill Collins calls "outsider within" ("Leaning" 14). While discussing the black domestic phenomenon, Collins argues that black women experienced an "insider" perspective while working and being "part" of white families. In truth, these women know they were not "part" of the family, which makes them "outsiders." In Collins' perspective, black female intellectuals have suffered from the same marginalization; they are "outsiders within" (14). Many black and brown women say that the Academy expects them to fit a certain criterion in content (14). In other words, they are constantly dwelling in this outsider-insider duality, which also relates to Du Bois' "double consciousness," since in the diaspora, the black body may feel the in-betweenness due to racism, colonialism, or simply by perceiving themselves as outsiders, because this is the place the white ruling class reserves for them. In order to resist these barriers, Gyasi and Cruz seek to recover the histories concealed from them and unveil a narrative that has never been taught in formal contexts. They make "the margins begin to speak... to contest" (Hall, *Essential vol.2* 74). This movement from margin to center creates space for representation and contributes to reshaping mainstream narratives and avoiding essentialized conceptualizations of black identities.

Both *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* resignify the past and deconstruct traditional notions of home. These works are foregrounded in travel, in displacement through the slave trade, and the creation of imaginary diasporas. With that, *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* bring a necessity to discuss the roles of motherlands and adopted countries in their narratives to dissociate these concepts from simplistic binaries that attest an individual ought to "belong" somewhere. Whereas these works resist imaginary motherland myths, there is a strong sentiment of loss, absence, and the "painful remembering" of the past—as Bhabha has observed. These common themes in post-colonial travel fiction demonstrate how the deconstruction of the traditional concept of home does not occur without tensions. As mentioned before, George identifies in the migrant genre an "excessive use of the metaphor of luggage, both spiritual and material" (8). Framed another way, migrant literature challenges simplistic and fixed concepts of home, demonstrating how homes are also political spaces. In the case of *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela*, material and spiritual luggage, the latter in the sense of heritage, language, and memory, greatly impact identity construction.

Therefore, both novels refuse stereotypical portraits of the black community, emphasizing how characters' identity construction is complex and individual without undermining blackness' political and social facets. As Bhabha states, "the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (70). Colonial discourse constructs a narrative that conveys a certain idea of truth in the colonizers and colonized collective perception. As already mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, discourses—in the Foucauldian perspective—has the power to shape voices (through stereotypical representation) and challenge them. When Gyasi and Cruz use language and memory in the process of identity construction and highlight the importance of these elements in the construction of family units, they develop counter-narratives that challenge the mainstream colonial discourse and, at the same time, start shaping the anti- racist and -colonial discourses, dislocating their voices from the margin to the center.

2.3. Language and naming role in identity reconstruction in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela.*

Displacement occupies the center of black body experiences in the context of diaspora. Black bodies and identities experience dislocations either by voluntary, involuntary migration or the legacy of slavery and the trauma of the middle passage. Consequently, there is an incessant search for "home" and identity construction in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela and* contemporary post-colonial literary works more broadly. The search for home and identity is frequently rooted in the idea that there are fixed, stable experiences of home and identity, accompanied by the myth of the promised motherland—a place where racial, gender, and social tensions disappear. We see these themes repeat themselves in travel writing, and the realization that the promised motherland does not exist often arises. Tim Youngs' examination of African American Travel writing reveals that writers like Claude Mckay and Amiri Baraka often question the idea of home, while others found good economic and social opportunities in the Soviet Union (Youngs 117). Youngs comments that black writers' travel accounts differ significantly from white travelers but are not free of the Western imperial eyes, as Richard Wright's *Black Power* travel narrative indicates. Throughout

his journey, Wright questions his identity, concluding that he is of "African descent... in the midst of Africans," which gives him not the ability to know what Africans think and feel (qt. in Youngs 119). Youngs addresses this trait of Black writers traveling accounts, in which they recognize a sense of estrangement towards Africans and uncomfortably recognize they belong to the United States (119). Despite this uncomfortable location, some writers find themselves when visiting African nations, Youngs also highlights that one of the greatest contributions of black travel writing is how authors use language because for many of them, "the stories of travel are as important as the act of travel" (117). Their writing, as much as the traveling itself, contributes to both the movement and the construction of their black diasporic identities.

With the impossibility of resolving racial tensions by simply going back to an imaginary motherland, diasporic individuals cling to one of the most important elements for forming black political identities—language. Paule Marshall writes about the importance of Bajan women's language in her writing and identity construction as a young migrant black woman. Marshall affirms that language becomes a homeland for her mother and other Bajan women, as they used the kitchen to talk about everything. These black women migrants suffered "triple invisibility, being black, female, and foreigners. They didn't really count in American society except as a source of cheap labor... [but] they fought back, using the only weapon at their command: the spoken word" (Marshall, "From the Poets" 630). In other words, language is the only means available to resist powerlessness and invisibility, both the way one uses to speak something and what they say. The refusal to speak Standard English of the poets in the kitchen is parallel to the *pretoguês* of Leila Gonzales, addressed later in this section. The resistance perceived in the talk of the women-poets in Marshall's kitchen also appears in Cruz's women in the *barrela*. As much as Paule Marshall's character Silla, women and men in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* "take [their] mouth and make a gun" through storytelling, songs, and the preservation of religious practices (630).

When considering the black diaspora and its individuals who were denied the right to preserve a mother tongue as much as the right to choose to remain in their birthplaces, it is possible to affirm that the preservation of language through naming and specific vocabulary words show black diasporic people's resistance in maintaining a connection with the motherland. Nevertheless, the question of what language and motherland this resistance creates remains. In the absence of a

geographical connection with the motherland and a mother tongue, characters rely on naming to establish a bond with a general concept of Africa and their stolen languages. Characters also do not passively accept the colonizers' language, and the movement of peoples across the Atlantic deeply affected language systems, while it became one of the most critical identity traits, capable of establishing kinships in the diaspora.

The power of language has not been ignored by colonialists, who used language imposition to dominate people. In places like Brazil, the Portuguese language was enforced on the indigenous population—and soon after, Africans. The massacre of thousands of indigenous languages in Brazil is one of the cruelest Portuguese colonial legacies.[19] Not so differently, in the United States, indigenous peoples and languages also underwent violent massacres due to diseases, enslavement, and, more recently, the struggle to maintain their rights over their lands. People who suffered enslavement also endured the violence of having their languages expunged, often being punished for refusing to speak English or Portuguese. In this section, I argue that Gyasi and Cruz distinguish language as an essential endeavor of their characters—and their own—in developing a political identity, showing how black people resisted violent colonial endeavors by preserving language and their connection to the motherland.

As previously mentioned, Stuart Hall reminds us that liberalism celebrates the plural practices, representations, languages, and customs within a determined culture ("Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 224). However, cultural differences are often controlled by dominant groups. In Brazil, for instance, dominant groups celebrate cultural diversity and multiculturalism only to preserve systems of oppression against black and brown people.[20] The discourse of multiculturalism is built on Eurocentric values, and people with lighter skin are more easily

[19] The NGO Survival International estimates that eleven million people lived in Brazil before 1500, and about ninety per cent of them were exterminated only in the first century after the European invasion, especially because of diseases like measles and the flu. In the following centuries, other hundred thousand died or/and were enslaved. Nowadays, there are about three hundred indigenous peoples in Brazil, who together totalize almost nine hundred thousand individuals, fighting daily to keep their language and costumes, despite the constant threat of land invasion and robbery they suffer with the advancement of agriculture and deforestation.

[20] A common discourse that uses multiculturalism as an excuse for maintaining oppression is one that undermines black political identities in Brazil to discourage affirmative action in universities and public service. It is common to hear that there is no knowing who is black in Brazil because we are all biracial. Meanwhile, statistics show that there is a persistent gap between white and black/brown Brazilians in terms of access to education, housing, culture, etc.

accepted in social environments.[21] Racism and the denial of national identities cause marginal groups to construct a political identity that enables them to fight for public policies and resist various systems of oppression—a process in which language plays a substantial role and creates a diasporic aesthetic.

Kobena Mercer conceptualizes "diasporic aesthetic" as "the subversive force of ... hybridizing tendency ... apparent at the level of language... where Creoles, patois and Black English decentre, destabilize and carnivalize the linguistic domination of "English"—the nation-language of master-discourse" (64). Framed another way, diasporic aesthetic bases itself on a subversion of the said "native English," which can be understood as a means of resistance to hegemonic and imperialist discourses. Similarly, Leila Gonzalez claims that African languages have had a strong influence on spoken Brazilian Portuguese, stating that what "I call *pretoguês* ... is nothing more than a mark of the Africanization of the spoken Portuguese in Brazil" ("aquilo que chamo de pretoguês ... nada mais é do que marca de africanização do português falado no Brasil..." 70). Moreover, she identifies the tone and rhythm of African languages and the absence of consonant sounds like R as an aspect of this influence, especially among people from lower social classes, black in their majority. In *Água de Barrela*, Cruz highlights characters' speeches to emphasize their orality, demonstrating this influence. An example of the "missing R" in speech can be noticed in Dionísio's character. When Akin/Firmino goes to war and starts involving himself in conflicts with the generals, Dionísio says, "You stop being stupid! You're going to get used to Luis shitty-boots, get out of here alive and win your freedom ("Ocê pára agora de sê burro! Vai *engoli* esse Luis borra-bota, *saí* daqui vivo e *ganhá* tua liberdade" *Água* 97, *emphasis added*). In Portuguese, the infinitive needs an R after each word (*engolir* instead of *engoli*, for instance). To emphasize Dionísio's speech, the Rs were erased from the text.[22] This is an example of Mercer's diasporic aesthetic that shows how the black population did not simply accept linguistic

[21] Some black scholars in Brazil study the issue of colorism, that is, how much pigmentation might hinder or facilitate a person's acceptance in society, as for instance Devulksy, *Colorismo* (2021). Djamila Ribeiro, the black scholar who edited Devulksy's book, speaks a lot about this issue on social media in Brazil.

[22] It is interesting to notice that Umbelina, another important character, speaks using the infinitives according to standard Portuguese. This says a lot about the character, who not only advocates for adjusting to life in plantation, but also works in the plantation house—explaining her usage of language in the "correct" way. In fact, many works make a clear distinction of life in the plantation house and life in the fields, highlighting the terrible conditions of the people who worked in the fields, in which being sent to the fields works as punishment.

imposition without any resistance. Perhaps as much as English, Brazilian Portuguese has been altered by diasporic dwellings.

There is a crucial difference between Pretoguês and Cockney, Black English, and French Creole—linguistics do not recognize Pretoguês as a black Brazilian dialect. Still, it is important to highlight the linguistic bias surrounding Pretoguês in the country. In a wide-acclaimed book on linguistic prejudice, Marcos Bagno discusses how standard Portuguese—as much as standard English—does not determine how people speak, a common misunderstanding. Standard speech is at the margins of language use. Bagno highlights that Brazilian Portuguese is a very diverse language firstly because of the country's size, which creates regional differences like in the United States and secondly because of social injustice. In Bagno's words, "there is a linguistic abysm among speakers of the many non-standard variants of Brazilian Portuguese" (há um abismo linguístico entre os falantes das variedades não-padrão do português brasileiro" 16). The abysm Bagno refers to is explained by social and racial injustice, in which the linguistic factor enhances people's marginalization. In other words, since the great majority of the Brazilian population speak Portuguese, different groups have their specific grammar, logic, and functionality when language is concerned. Moreover, due to the precarity of the Brazilian educational system, marginal groups are even more excluded because they do not have access to the official language employed by the public system.

Therefore, Cruz's usage of the *Pretoguês* to give voice to her black characters is a way of bringing light to the specificity of Portuguese spoken by black Brazilians. At the same time, Cruz denounces how people who usually use certain linguistic constructions not recognized by the dominant culture suffer oppression due to their body's location—in the case of Cruz's work, the plantation, and later on the *favelas*—and their linguistic usage. The issue Cruz highlights through Dionísio's voice is that linguistic bias is not only about what is being said but also about who says it, an important characteristic of this type of prejudice that Bagno highlights (43). He discredits some of the said "mistakes" people commit in Portuguese, arguing they are based on the linguistic development of standard Portuguese, common to other words speakers use (40). To illustrate this argument, Bagno emphasizes the change L for R, common in names like "Cláudia" (standard) that becomes "Cráudia" (dialect), a change that is ridiculed in Brazilian society for being considered mistakes committed by certain groups (40). Framed another way, an irrevocable trace of the lower

social class speech in the country. Bagno highlights that said "mistake" is present in the most important work of Portuguese literature, *Os Lusíadas* by *Luís de Camões.* Moreover, the linguistic evolution from L to R is recognized in some words, for instance, "branco" which came from the Germanic word "blank" (40-41). This exemplifies how linguistic prejudice in Brazil walks hand in hand with social and racial discrimination, highlighting that Cruz's usage of linguistic signals in her text is a political act.[23]

Homegoing also brings important insight into discussing language. As Nelly Furman states, "not only are we born into a language which molds us, but any knowledge of the world which we experience is itself also articulated in language" (Furman 69). Using language, therefore, is as much a political act as imagining a national identity, and often they happen together. We can observe this in Esi and her daughter Ness's naming processes. Esi's presence in Ness's early infancy represents a connection with Ghana, especially through language, since Esi would speak to Ness in Twi. The brutality of the slavery institution in the United States, however, attempts at breaking this relationship and disrupting black heritage,

> In Mississippi, Esi had spoken to her in Twi until their master caught her. He'd given Esi five lashes for every Twi word Ness spoke, and when Ness, seeing her battered mother, had become too scared to speak, he gave Esi five lashes for each minute of Ness's silence. Before the lashes, her mother had called her Maame, after her own mother, but the master had whipped Esi for that too, whipped until she cried out "My goodness!" — the words scaping her without thought, no doubt picked up from the cook, who used to say it to punctuate every sentence. And because those had been the only English words to escape Esi's mouth without her struggling to find them, she believed that what she was saying must have been something divine, like the gift of her daughter, and so that goodness had turned into, simply, Ness. (Gyasi, *Homegoing* 71).

This passage shows a three-way connection—motherhood, motherland, and identity construction through language. Ness's articulation of the imposed English language is through watching her mother being tortured. Before being violently punished by the enslaver, Esi had called her daughter Maame, Esi's mother's name. This multi-generational association represents mother-to-daughter

[23] The usage of *Pretuguês* in *Água de Barrela* speaks greatly to Zorah Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* in a time when black English was not yet recognizable as a dialect. There is also a tradition in Brazilian literature of translating regional speech, as one of the most important novels in Brazilian Literature, *Grande Sertão: Veredas* by Guimarães Rosa, in which speech does not follow standard Portuguese rules.

maintenance of their heritage and a connection with the motherland through language and naming. There is power and resistance in Esi's speaking to Ness in Twi and naming her after her grandmother. It shows Esi wanted Ness to have a language connection with the motherland and what it represents. Slavery shatters this bond; more than subjugating and raping black bodies, slavery attempted to destroy people's connection with their history and homes by destroying their identities. This violent process alters Ness's name, which becomes connected to the aggression her mother suffered simply because she was trying to preserve and pass on some part of her identity to her descendants.

Another example of the importance of naming is H and Ethe's relationship in *Homegoing*. H calls Ethe by another woman's name, and she abandons him. The name *Ethe* was given to her by her mother, with whom Ethe spent six years before she was sold away. When H denies his partner such a vital part of her identity, the one thing she has that connects her to her mother, Ethe collapses,

> The day you called me that woman's name I thought, *Ain't I been through enough?* Ain't just about everything I ever had been taken away from me? My freedom. My family. My body. And now I can't even own my name? Ain't I deserve to be Ethe, to you at least, if nobody else? My mama gave me that name herself. I spent six good years with her before they sold me out to Louisiana to work them sugarcanes. All I had of her then was my name. That was all I had of myself too. And you wouldn't even give me that. (*Homegoing* 175)

Being denied of her name, to Ethe, and so many other characters in these two texts, is to lose the only connection with family, with Africa, with a motherland that gives a person a sense of belonging and stability amid the diasporic displacement.

While Esi and Ethe attempt to preserve their heritage through naming, Effia's family does the opposite. Her grandchild is named James Richard Collins. When Quey Collins' wife asks, "James Richard Collins?... What kind of Akan are you that you give your son three white names?" (*Homegoing* 90), he believes such a name has power, "Will he not still be a prince to our people and to the whites too? I have given him a powerful name" (90). Although they have not left Ghana—except for studying in Europe—their connection with the land is shattered by their involvement in the slave trade and political rather than emotional ties. Moreover, as biracial people living in Ghana, their displacement and disconnection are enhanced. James's father, Quey, is often

asked if he is white because of his light-brown complexion. He often answers the question by proposing another inquiry, "What do you think?" (94), possibly because he does not have a definite response.

In *Água de Barrela* by Eliana Alvez Cruz, naming is also pivotal to preserving enslaved people's connection to Mozambique. At the beginning of the narrative, readers are introduced to Firmino. His "real" name, however, used to be Akin. He was given the name Firmino upon kidnapping: "A man dressed in black came aboard, speaking strange words and splashing water on each of them. He went on saying their new names. He knew that Akin Sangokunle was the same as "brave boy who fights for what he wants and kneels before Xangô[24]." Firmino... What would it mean?" ("Subiu a bordo um homem vestido de negro até os pés falando palavras estranhas e salpicando água em cada um deles. Foi dizendo seus novos nomes. Ele sabia que Akin Sangokunle era o mesmo que "menino corajoso que luta pelo que quer e se ajoelha diante de Xangô". Firmino... O que significaria?" *Água* 26). Before the kidnapping, Akin/Firmino knew his name's meaning. It connects him with his faith, land, and family. After the kidnapping from his country together with his brother (who dies in the crossing) and sister-in-law, Akin/Firmino suffers another violence—the rupture with his name and part of his identity. Only years later, Akin/Firmino would learn (also from a priest) that his new name meant "firm, constant, vigorous" ("firme, constante, vigoroso" 27), and ironically was also a name of a barbarian who faced the Roman Empire with an army of Moors (27).

As Akin/Firmino, his sister-in-law (Ewa) also receives a new name—Helena. Ewa/Helena is pregnant when she arrives in Bahia, Brazil. The young woman refuses to learn or speak Portuguese despite the advice from other enslaved people, "It's time to stop complaining and speak their language right" ("É hora de parar de reclamar e falar direito a língua deles" *Água* 31). One of the oldest enslaved women, Umbelina, goes on saying that "If you want to live and forget about your tragedies a little, get caught up in work and enough of that, Helena. Child, it's a matter of

[24] Xangô or Changó is one of the most important Orixás (orishas) of Cadomblé, an African diasporic religion which occurred through a process of religious syncretism in Brazil during the nineteenth century. It is formed by several West African religions, Yuruba included, as well as Christianity. The Orishas such as Xangô, Oxum (Oshum, associated with love and fertility) are intermediary spirits connecting the divine with the human in traditional Yoruba religion and are a feature of Afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé. Xangô is associated with thurnder and lightining, and it is also present in *Dreaming in Cuban* (see page...).

living or dying" ("Se quiser viver e esquecer um pouco os dramas, se pegue com o trabalho e chega disso, Helena. Filha, isso é uma questão de viver ou morrer" 31). Cynical as it may seem, for Umbelina, adjusting to life as a slave is a matter of survival, something one ought to do if they intend to be in the world. Ewa/Helena ultimately refuses to do so and dies in childbirth.

Unlike Ewa/Helena, Akin/Firmino's act of resistance is not in death but living. He never accepts his condition or stops fighting for his freedom. He resists life as an enslaved person and criticizes others who, in his opinion, seem to be too used to enslavement:

> Firmino arrived in Brazil as a boy, but he had never fully gotten used to how Creoles—as they called the black people born in the country—conducted things with the white. He did not like the way they always tried to negotiate or use schemes to get what they wanted, and, in his opinion, they were content with little, as if it were a lot, so accustomed that they were with absolutely nothing. They never confronted. For him, the day they all got together and faced war, they had no chance to lose. ("Firmino chegou ao Brasil ainda menino, mas nunca se acostumara totalmente com o modo como os crioulos — como chamavam os negros nascidos no país — conduziam as coisas com os brancos. Não gostava de como sempre tentavam negociar ou usar de estratagemas para conseguir o que queriam e, em sua opinião, contentavam-se com pouco, como se fosse muito, de tão acostumados que estavam com absolutamente nada. Nunca confrontavam. Para ele, o dia em que todos se juntassem e encarassem a guerra, não teria chance alguma de perderam," 108).

Akin/Firmino resists and fights for his freedom until he reaches it. His unconformity causes him many conflicts with the enslavers and later on with the army generals. When the Brazil-Paraguay war (1864-1870) began, many black men were enlisted, and Akin/Firmino was one of them. There, he realizes the plantation system replicates itself in the battle camp, with the great majority of officials being white and the privates being black. Treatment also replicates the practices of the plantation, with constant whipping and demoralizing work conditions.

Marjorie in *Homegoing* is another character that must deal with the relationship between language and identity. As a migrant, Marjorie ruptures with her motherland through language. When Marjorie tries to speak in Twi, her mother tongue, her parents insist that she would speak English "until now it was the first language that popped into her head" (Gyasi, *Homegoing* 266). Marjorie moves to the United States and starts going to school in this context, the reason why her parents believe she should acquire the new language as fast as possible, a reality many migrant children go through. Even learning to speak English fast does not guarantee Marjorie's acceptance

because she is black, and her specific accent ostracizes her around African American women. Marjorie soon learns she sounded like a white girl, that she and other black girls "were not the same kind of black ... That indeed she was the wrong kind" (268). By revealing the complexity of black identity and racial relations, *Homegoing* resists essentializing ideas about black identity. The issue with language and nation becomes even more complex when Marjorie visits her grandmother—her most genuine connection to Ghana. When in Ghana, Marjorie has "to remind herself that her grandmother required the opposite" (266). That is, her grandmother requires her to speak Twi. Marjorie's blackness becomes a political identity, while Marjorie resists a monocultural identification socially. This connection between language and motherland repeats itself throughout the whole narrative, both in characters that are forced to leave the motherland and the ones who go voluntarily. Noticeably, a connection with language presents resistance to institutional racism.

Language in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* establish relations. When characters refuse to speak the tongue of the oppressors, insist their children would speak their native languages, or even modify the language to demonstrate part of their mother tongues in the way they speak, there is a recognizable diasporic aesthetic and resistance in the making. Cruz and Gyasi's narratives deal with language and its importance to characters' identity, both explicitly and implicitly. Despite the inaccessible search for "home" and connection, which is unresolved by the end of both texts, since many characters remain in this non-space of recognition, language plays a substantial role in establishing bonds among people in the diaspora. Both Gyasi and Cruz recognize the importance of language as part of people's process of identity re-construction, preserving a connection to the motherland despite the oppression of the adopted land's historical and cultural imposition.

2.4. Memory, Storytelling, and Female Authorship in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela*.

Works such as *Água de Barrela* and *Homegoing* force readers to relocate their eyes to an ignored historical perspective. While Cruz challenges the idea of the racial democracy myth in Brazil and retells the story from the margin, Gyasi recreates and highlights what has been shaded about Ghanaians' involvement in the slave trade. Both writers believe that bringing light to narratives about slavery and its legacy is still pivotal because of the operant racist system that continues to

murder black bodies. Gyasi's and Cruz's narratives and characters carry the weight of segregation and oppression and even the guilt for their ancestor's participation in the slave trade in some cases. These authors use storytelling to construct collective memory and black political identities while creating a bond between women from different generations in a relationship that resembles mother-daughter connections and mirrors the relationships individuals try to develop with the motherland through women.

Nonki Motahane et al. recognize the importance of female authorship in Gyasi's work, and I aim to expand this notion into Cruz's text. Both these authors place equal importance to female authorship by giving voice and protagonism to female characters, especially in their role of healing through storytelling and collective memory. Storytelling is at the center of Gyasi's and Cruz's narratives, particularly through women characters such as Marjorie and Eliana. Other women, however, are also important in this section, for they unify the family unit—be that based on blood or soul ties. They are, for instance, Anna and Maame (*Homegoing*) and Isabel and Umbelina (*Agua de Barrela*). Women usually transmit stories to the next generations, a characteristic of storytelling that both Gyasi and Cruz emphasize in their writing. Women are also at the center of family units in both works, making kinship one of the essential elements to guarantee these stories will remain alive. In the lack of kinship, characters find other ways to build strong ties, and this ability determines their survival and connection with the motherland.

Gyasi and Cruz establish the importance of female authorship in their works through their research approach to composing the text. As already mentioned, Gyasi and Cruz physically traveled to the places they represented in their writing. Moreover, this return to the past happens through specific characters, highlighting the nature of double resistance in these narratives. It is also important to highlight that Cruz relied on accounts from her schizophrenic aunt and grandmothers to compose her work, as the following passage illustrates, "Whenever you come here, ask me something. Sometimes you go away, and I remember everything. Every day you ask me I remember... It was my mother, my grandmother, my great-grandmother who told me everything... Me? I was just a girl. Just a girl..." ("Sempre que você vier aqui, me pergunte alguma coisa. Às vezes você sai e eu me lembro de tudo. A cada dia que você me pergunta vou me lembrando... Quem me contou tudo foi minha mãe, minha avó, minha bisavó... Eu? Eu era apenas uma menina. Só uma menina..." Cruz, *Água* 305). In this passage, Damiana, one of the central

characters in *Água de Barrela*, reveals how she learned the story to her granddaughter Eliana. As a narrator and interlocutor, Eliana reconstructs the story parallel to the process in which Damiana learned the story itself from other women of the family.

Therefore, for Cruz, writing the story is similar to the act of remembering itself. According to Cruz, "History went on and is still going through all of us, ordinary people, who carry small pieces of life in their hands" ("A história continuous e está prosseguindo através de todos nós, pessoas comuns, mas que têm em suas mãos pedaços miúdos de vida" 305). Cruz's imagery of how history trespasses people's lives directly address Gyasi's narrative structure, in which history and time disconnect and connect people. By the end of *Homegoing*, when Marjorie and Marcus meet, symbolizing the encounter of the broken lines of the family since Effia and Esi, the reader has the dimension of how history is more about ordinary people and less about important figures, as history books tend to make us believe. It is even more striking that Marjorie and Marcus's ways of coping with their split narratives resemble Cruz and Gyasi's coping mechanisms—they go into writing, perhaps as Derrida would argue, as a supplement to speech and memory. Marjorie writes poems and studies African American and African literature, while Marcus is pursuing a Ph.D. in sociology focused on African American history—perhaps like Cruz's research to recover her family's history. In the following passages, I highlight Marjorie's and Marcus' role in retelling their stories to give themselves and their relatives some agency toward their lost stories.

Homegoing characters, Marjorie and Marcus, share with Gyasi and Cruz the same need to go and see for yourself where it all began. Marjorie and Marcus are on the different sides of the family. Whereas Marjorie is Effia's descendant, acquainted with her family's stories deeply marked by Colonialism in Ghana, Marcus is from the Esi's part of the family—a line broken and affected by slavery and racism in the United States. Marjorie's story focuses on her adaptation to the United States, as described previously. Marjorie maintains a close relationship with her grandmother and Ghana; her umbilical cord has been mailed by her parents from the United States to be buried in the shores of her motherland. Marjorie's strongest symbol of her heritage is Effia's necklace, the necklace Marjorie's father presents her as "part of their family history" (Gyasi, *Homegoing* 267).

Between Ghana and the United States, Marjorie must dwell in her hybridity. When in Ghana, she feels she does not belong, as she states, "As soon as I step off the airplane, people can tell that

I'm like them, but different too. They can smell it on me… the way I don't fit here or there" (278). Marjorie's feelings towards Ghana relates to her displacement in the United States, as she is a transversal hybrid, in-between spaces, both Ghanaian and American, learning how to speak from these both locations, especially through writing. Marjorie expresses her hybrid identity through poetry, which helps her fluidly negotiate her blackness and reconnect to her grandmother and her ancestors:

> Split the Castle open,
> find me, find you.
> We, two, felt sand,
> wind, air.
> One felt whip.
> Whipped,
> once shipped" (282).

As the first stanza of Marjorie's poem shows, she combines both family stories to comprehend her heritage—similar to what Gyasi and Cruz accomplish in their narratives. The second part of the poem starts with a statement that highlights Marjorie's hybrid identity, "We, two, black / Me, you" /… the waters seem different / but are the same" (282). Marjorie emphasizes a hybrid identity beyond historical facts and cultures and encompasses political and social elements.

As a reflection of their ancestors, Marcus is on the other side of the mirror. As mentioned previously, being black means to dwell in-between places; it involves Du Bois's double consciousness (3). Since Marjorie has a more tangible connection to her family and their past in Ghana through her grandmother, she seems better equipped to negotiate in both locations. Marcus's inability to trace his family story back to Ghana due to slavery in the United States enhances his displacement. As a black American, Marcus grows with the weight of slavery, segregation, and racism on his shoulder; his father, Sonny "was forever talking about slavery, the prison labor complex, the System, segregation, the Man. His father had a deep-seated hatred every year racial injustice continued to be the norm in America" (Gyasi, *Homegoing* 284). Marcus and his family history exemplify Du Bois' double-consciousness quite well. His father Sonny was involved in Black movements, including the NAACP and Marcus Garvey's ideas of going back to Africa. In fact, "what Sonny wanted was Africa" (244). Marcus's father longs for an idealized

Africa that he could call "home," despite the many people who tell him that one cannot return to a place they have never been.

While Marjorie dwells in her fluidity more naturally because of her knowledge of her family history, H's descendants—his grandson Sonny and his great-grandson Marcus—inherit some of his dislocations. H never knew his parents since his mother, Anna, was kidnapped, killing herself before H's birth. He grows up feeling detached from everything, as much as Sonny and Marcus. Sonny lingers for a place to call "home," an idealized Africa, and spends his life "trying to get away from white people for as long as he could remember" and failing, since "there was nowhere to go. Not even Harlem, where white folks owned just about everything an eye could see or a hand could touch" (244). Marcus pursues his Ph.D. in sociology because he is eager to understand his past and join the pieces of the traumas that define his family. He has a very latent feeling that his family is split. When he is with his family, he

> Would imagine a different room, a fuller family. He would imagine so hard that at times he thought he could see them. Sometimes in a hut in Africa, a patriarch holding a machete; … a crowd watching a young woman carrying a bucket on her head; sometimes in a cramped apartment with too many kids, or a small, failing farm, around a burning tree. (290)

The quote alludes to the sense of loss in Marcus' experience; he knows his life story is missing pieces. Some of the images Marcus imagines have occurred throughout the narrative. For instance, "[the] cramped apartment with too many kids" refers to Kojo and Anna's home, the great-great-grandparents Marcus never knew. Marcus tries to imagine what his family would look like through a collective memory of black families in the United States, and he clings to that as part of his own identity.

Attempting at putting the pieces back together, Marcus starts an overwhelming Ph.D. dissertation, in which he tries to gather material to discuss the convict leasing system that victimized his grandfather H. Due to the nature of archival research, Marcus faces writer's block while investigating the many variables concerning his research,

> How could he talk about Great-Grandpa H's story without also talking about his grandma Willie and the millions of other black people who had migrated north, fleeing Jim Crow? And if he mentioned the Great Migration, he'd have to talk about the cities that took that flock in. He'd have to talk about Harlem. And how could he

> talk about Harlem without mentioning his father's heroin addiction—the stints in prison, the criminal record? (289)

Marcus' frustration unveils the difficulty in conducting research when the roots of the problems lie in structural racism and imperialism. Nonetheless, research is how Marcus finds to cope with his trauma of displacement. Marcus uses writing to look for the pieces missing in his biography (290)—not significantly different, after all, from Marjorie's poetry or even the authors Gyasi and Cruz. Writing memory, therefore, becomes the very act of decolonization and resistance.

As Marjorie and Marcus become friends and travel to Ghana together to visit Cape Coast Castle, the promise of *Homegoing* the title suggests, seems to be superficially fulfilled. At first glance, as indicated by Pashmina Murthy, their encounter symbolically releases "the weight of the past that bears down on both characters ... in the final scene as Marcus and Marjorie run to the sea and play in the surf" (207). "Welcome home," Marjorie says to Marcus after putting her stone on his neck (Gyasi, *Homegoing* 300). However, this sense of completion and return is mainly meant to be relished by the reader; Marjorie and Marcus' lack of knowledge on how they are related shows how some things are forever lost—most like Esi's stone (Murthy 207). As the stone symbolizes a piece of the past, and the fact that Marjorie has Effia's stone shows how her side of the family has a more tangible relationship with the past, Marcus' absent stone represents the impossibility of retracing his story. There is no possibility of them knowing how close they are, no matter how much they feel connected.

Although Marjorie and Marcus go to Ghana at the end of the novel and visit the castle where everything started, the novel does not erase the sense of "unbelonging, migration, and exile to finally come home" (Murthy 207). The text shows an alienation that characters usually cannot overcome, maintaining the desire for home unfulfilled (207). In other words, although the search for a home is emphasized in *Homegoing*, the search is never completed, and a return is never possible. Furthermore, Murthy argues that "even in the final scene, *Homegoing* resolutely refuses to admit the possibility of ever being able to go home" (207). Most of that comes from the fact that Marjorie and Marcus never find out they are related—a literary strategy that emphasizes how impossible it is to put the pieces back together and mend what needs to be mending. At the same time, "by denying the characters the ability to retrace [the] journey" (207), the novel shows how

the trauma of slavery still affects people from eight generations apart and highlights the necessity of reparation.

Despite the impossibility of finding "home," characters do not stop feeling the necessity of reconnecting with Africa (Ghana and Mozambique, more specifically). For instance, writing poetry does not prevent Marjorie from feeling displaced in society, although she does negotiate her transversal hybridity with less tension than other characters. Another character that resembles Marjorie's displacement is Akin/Firmino, from *Água de Barrela*. Perhaps because he arrives in Brazil as a boy and establishes kinship on the plantation, Akin/Firmino's struggle is against slavery, not necessarily returning to Mozambique. By the end of the narrative, Akin/Firmino could travel back to Mozambique, but he chooses not to go. In his own words, "I know I have in my head a place that no longer exists... Not the way I knew it. It's been a long time. It's a strange feeling. I'm not from here, but I'm not from there anymore either" ("Eu sei que tenho na cabeça um lugar que não existe mais... Não dá forma como eu o conheci. Passou muito tempo. É um sentimento estranho. Eu não sou daqui, mas também não sou mais de lá" Cruz, *Água* 176). Akin/Firmino's sense of displacement is related to racism and slavery, hindering a genuine connection to the adopted country. However, it does not entirely obstruct his physical bonding with the place because of the strong connections he builds throughout his life. Although Mozambique is part of him, composing part of his identity, his familial connections ultimately have a more substantial impact on him. Akin/Firmino's displacement resembles Marjorie's, who migrates with her parents to the United States and maintains a solid relationship with Ghana. Marjorie learns that, although individual relations have many variables, race is a social phenomenon that arises in encountering the dominant white group. As one of Marjorie's teachers tells her, "black is black is black" for the white dominant class (*Homegoing* 273). What is suggested in this passage is that Marjorie is not exempt from institutional and social racism because she is not from the United States.

Homegoing's separated sisters are another example of how characters might use family to establish a connection with the motherland. Effia and Esi's relationships with their kins determine their connections with Ghana. Whereas Esi remains in her birthmother's care, Effia stays with her father and a stepmother who physically and mentally tortures her for years. Considering Effia's and Esi's relationships with their mothers, one can highlight issues that impact their identities as they grow and start to understand themselves as women and mothers. Their upbringing—as well

as their life afterward—works as mirrors of themselves. Effia has a brutal upbringing and by the age of ten, "could recite a history of the scars on her body" (*Homegoing* 4), as opposed to her life after marriage, which was to some extent pleasant. On the other hand, as the "daughter of a Big Man and his third wife" (31), Esi's childhood was bliss. However, Esi's kidnapping, rape, and enslavement in the United States brutally change her reality. Another mirroring situation is their detachment from the motherland. While Effia is denied a mother, Esi's denied a motherland.

According to Portia Owusu, "the strength and potency of maternal lineage among the Akan people ... pose motherhood as more important than marriage because it is the foundation on which one's status, identity and political and social influences are determined" (Owusu 92). Because of this emphasis on motherhood, Effia can be considered by her people a "bad omen" due to her lack of "a biological or surrogate mother" (92-93). Owusu seems to attempt a connection between Effia's motherlessness and Esi's rupture from Africa through the slave trade and how this signifies a rupture with the motherland itself, although she does not formally address it. Highlighting this connection is challenging because of the very structure of Gyasi's work, which does not allow for much depth in these two women's personal stories. Gyasi emphasizes Effia's and Esi's displacement through their experiences in and outside their kins. Effia's displacement revolves around her lack of a mother, enhanced by Baaba's defamation when she says Effia would "never become a woman" (*Homegoing* 15)—to be exact, she can never be a mother herself. Moreover, her family's involvement in the slave trade is a violence against the land and its people. In Owusu's words, "Gyasi uses her characterizations of Effia and her lineage to initiate a discourse of African complicity in the slave trade and the impact of it on generations" (Owusu 95) as it is perceived in the kidnapping and enslavement of Esi.[25] Moreover, Gyasi uses "Effia's motherlessness... to emphasize her loneliness, vulnerability, and lack of identity in her community" (92), culminating in her compliance with the slave trade. On one side of the mirror, Esi is affected by the slave trade and forced to physically part from her mother, her people, and her motherland.

[25] Heinz also makes an interesting analysis of Effia's displacement, which is different from Marjorie's and Akin/Firmino's. According to Heinz, Effia's first rejection happens inside her home, the family space, due to Baaba's rejection to be her mother (Heinz 128). Effia has no sense of home and feels degraded, migrating from her community involuntarily due to her marriage to James Collins, much like her sister Esi is taken to the Cape Coast Castle.

Through Effia and Esi, Gyasi initiates a discussion of the importance of mother-daughter relationships and how these relations shape characters' identities throughout the novel. Akan people traditionally believe that "the identity, heritage, and sense of belonging of an individual are acquired from the mother and her side of the family" (Owusu 92). Owusu does not get into the discussion of how motherland and motherhood are connected, but when she recognizes the importance of maternal lineage among the Akan people, she seems to be suggesting that the presence (and a genuine connection) of a mother figure might help suppress the absence left by the rupture with the motherland. Mothers play a crucial role in the family unit in *Homegoing*, connected to heritage and a sense of belonging, often symbolized by Effia's stone. Maame leaves Effia and Esi a stone to symbolize their connection, but Esi loses hers upon kidnapping, while Effia's is passed onto her descendants until Marjorie receives it.

Many critics have analyzed the symbolism behind the stone. Heinz observes that Baaba's attitude of giving Effia the stone might seem like a kind gesture at first, but in fact, it represents "a final purge of Maame's presence in the Fante community," taking into consideration that Baaba manages to get rid of both Effia and the stone, by marrying her off to James Collins (Heinz 129). Gallego restates the importance of the stone, arguing that "The black stone ... becomes a symbol of the connection among the diverse generations of women in the novel ...[and] also discloses their will to survive despite the very adverse circumstances" (Gallego 10). In addition, Motahane et al. claim that "the stones symbolize a personal relationship founded on the half-sister's common maternal 'source'—Maame" (Motahane et al. 27). While the stone connects Effia's descendants and symbolizes their attachment to their history and language, Esi's lost stone symbolizes her descendants' loss of history and language due to slavery (27). I would add that the stone symbolizes both family's struggles through generations and its memory that remains alive through the family members. When Marjorie receives Effia's stone, her father tells her, "The necklace was a part of their family history and she was to never take it off, never give it away" (*Homegoing* 267). It reflects the waters of the ocean where Marjorie's umbilical cord was buried, and it carries within itself the weight of her family history, representing Marjorie's connection with Effia, the first woman to wear it, as well as a connection with the motherland itself. Meanwhile, Esi's losing her stone symbolizes the loss of the collective family memory and represents the lack of knowledge

and the displacement of her descendants, who had to establish kinship within the black community to build a collective memory of life after enslavement.

Traumatic experiences "possess the person, the individual is not in possession of his or her history" (Prager 16). Therefore, not possessing a history is as traumatic as living through experiences. In his study, "Disrupting the Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma," Prager discusses Apartheid in South Africa, stating that first-person account of Apartheid eventually fades away as people grow old and die. However, the systems of oppression that were catalysts for the system to exist do not fade away so easily (Prager 142). In this sense, "Racism, shared both by victims and perpetrators, becomes inscribed psychically and even bodily by all social members, and wittingly or unwittingly gets passed on long after the last survivor of the apartheid era dies" (142). This logic is seen throughout *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela,* whose characters suffer from the trauma of slavery and must establish kinship to survive oppression.

Água de Barrela exemplifies the issue of relationships based on community ties as opposed to blood as much as *Homegoing*. As it was mentioned before, Cruz's narrative opens with Akin/Firmino, his brother, and his pregnant sister-in-law being kidnapped in Mozambique and brought into Brazil. Although neither Akin/Firmino's brother nor sister-in-law survive, their child, Anolina, does. In a short period, Akin/Firmino sees himself away from his motherland and without a family, except for a niece, and his survival depends greatly on the ability he has to reconstruct a family unit among the plantation's enslaved people. As put by Batalha, "among the enslaved population, families were not always formed by blood ties, but affective ties, forming a family group gathered by soul affinities stronger than blood" ("entre a população escravizada, nem sempre as famílias se formavam por laços consanguíneos, mas sim afetivos, formando um grupo familiar reunido por afinaidades de alma mais fortes que o sangue" 254). Bloodlines could be altered by violence within the plantation, where rapes were common, and the enslaved people were perceived and treated as merchandise, without the right to have a family since they could be separated when sold or offered to other plantation owners as it happens to Ness in *Homegoing*.

Cruz emphasizes the difficulty of building these ties and establishing families in the context of slavery, when she states "This business of having a family was complicated for those who were captives. How to tie commitments that could be undone for any reason, any whim of the master who acted as a god in their destinies?" ("Esse negócio de ter família era complicado para quem

era cativo. Como atar compromissos que poderiam ser desfeitos por qualquer motivo, qualquer capricho do senhor que atuava como um deus em seus destinos?" *Água* 70). In this passage, Cruz highlights the brutality of the slavery system in the black family institution, from the erasing of names and complete language systems to the silencing of histories and downgrading of experiences, and the separation of families for whatever minor reason. Still, the willingness to form families, establish relations based on affection, on protection, allow these characters to firstly form a new family unit, one that is based on spiritual connections, "soul ties" ("laços de alma" 70), and secondly to build a connection and a community that shows people's resilience and resistance.

Água de Barrela shows how slavery ruptures bloodlines while resignifying family as more than blood but affection. Anolina, Akin/Firmino's niece, for instance, is raised by Umbelina, one of the enslaved women on the plantation. As the quote illustrates, "Umbelina was the mother Anolina never knew. Firmino and Isabel became uncle and aunt, godfather and godmother, friend, guardian, and anything that meant protection" ("Umbelina era a mãe que Anolina nunca conheceu. Firmino e Isabel se tornaram tios, padrinhos, amigos, guardiões, e qualquer coisa que significasse proteção" *Água* 70). As the quote shows, kinship works differently in the plantation space, for people do not have a specific role, but they feel all commonly responsible for children's wellbeing, as much as they can in this environment. However, while people may play different roles in children's lives, the mother role is usually identified in one single member of that community or different members with the same characteristics—for instance, a group of women. According to Grosby, "however important spatial attachments may be for the family, they are of secondary significance when compared to the recognition of parents ... in the structure of the family as a form of kinship" (48). When Umbelina is identified as a mother to Anolina, she symbolizes kinship, nation, a symbol of protection in the hostile adopted country. Umbelina and Anolina's bond re-signifies home and guarantees Anolina's survival, despite the brutal context in which they encounter one another. Even the similarity in their names indicates Umbelina named Anolina, establishing their mother-daughter bond through naming.

Establishing kinship through the black community happens with Esi's descendants, especially Ness, her son Kojo, and Kojo's son H. Upon rupture with her mother, Esi, Ness moves from plantation to plantation, one of which she calls Hell—the owner "the Devil himself" (*Homegoing* 80). Ness establishes kinship in this location, her husband Sam, their son Kojo, and

Aku, a woman from Asanteland who had been kidnapped like Esi. When their plans to escape from "Hell" are unsuccessful, Sam is killed and Ness sold to another plantation, Aku raises Kojo in Baltimore. Kojo's survival and escape from slavery in the South show the importance of establishing kinship among the community, although the system's brutality guarantees they experience terrible losses. Consequently, in the lack of his biological parents, Kojo finds another mother image to rely on—Aku, whom he calls Ma Aku; together, they establish a life in Baltimore, and Kojo expands his sense of identity to "the smiles of his seven children... [and] Anna [his wife]" (112). Fatherhood becomes for Kojo a connection with his ruptured past and a way to honor his parents' sacrifice. As the passage illustrates, "Being a good father felt like a debt Jo owed to his parents, who couldn't get free... He had made a promise to Anna that he would be there for them, the way his own father had not been able to be there for him" (115). Family provides the grounds for Kojo's survival and helps him deal with the displacement caused by slavery and racial oppression. Still, the family must deal with the anxiety of being kidnapped and taken back to the South (due to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850)—as eventually happens to Anna and the baby she is expecting. Rupture with Anna enhances Kojo's displacement, and while "the children attempt to recreate the safety she offered by starting their own families and becoming mothers," Kojo's existence becomes "a vacuum unfilled by Anna's presence" (Owusu 98-99), from which he is uncertain he can recover.

Women—be that in the form of a wife or a mother-figure—become a way to reconnect to the motherland for many characters, and the next paragraphs focus on how the relationships between Kojo-Anna, H-Ethe (*Homegoing*), and Roberto-Isabel (*Água de Barrela)* confirm this assumption. According to Owusu, Anna and Kojo's relationship reflects a representation and recognition of the motherland through family and the woman/mother figure. In her own words, "Anna offered Kojo and the children the stability and identity that are associated with mothers in Akan cultures" (Owusu 98). It is worth noting that Kojo is Ness's son, but he never knew his parents. What Jo knows about the South are stories "Ma Aku told him, same way he knew his mother and father, Ness and Sam. As stories and nothing more. He didn't miss what he didn't know what he couldn't feel in his hands or his heart" (*Homegoing* 112). Still, "Jo used to worry that his family line had been cut off, lost forever. He would never truly know who his people were, and who their people were before them, and if there were stories to be heard about where he had

come from, he would never hear them" (130). Although Kojo does not "miss" his parents because he never knew him, he feels an absence characterized as the absence of the migrant. His affiliations have been cut off, his bond with the motherland has been lost, and he has to make new connections and establish bonds with the motherland and the host land where the family unit dwells.

H, Kojo and Anna's son, grows up alone on a plantation after his mother takes her own life in an attempt to kill herself and the baby. H has no mother figure on the plantation and is "used to being alone" (*Homegoing* 159). H lives to see the end of slavery bring other kinds of oppression, for instance, the coal mines. When H is arrested for allegedly "studyin' a white woman" (158), he is taken to the coal mines—the way the justice system has found to continue using black labor in the molds of slavery. As stated in the novel, "More than once, a prison warden had whipped a miner for not reaching the ten-ton quota... The convicts working the mines were almost all like him. Black, once slave, once free, now slave again" (161-62). Much like Akin/Firmino's experience in the Brazilian Army, where most privates were black, and most officials were white, which for him meant "a warlike version of what he saw in the plantations" ("uma versão bélica do que se via nos engenhos" Cruz, *Água* 93), H is condemned to a circular system that objectifies black men and uses their bodies for cheap labor. Even after twenty years since the end of slavery, H had scars on his back, "evidence of a whip" (Gyasi, *Homegoing* 167). Gyasi and Cruz show that the end of slavery does not change the condition of black people neither in the United States nor in Brazil, and the black population remained "without work or land, with the police on their back, afraid of the present and the future" ("Sem trabalho, sem terra, com a polícia no pé, com medo do presente e do futuro" Cruz, *Água* 118). Therefore, H is inserted in the same system that decimated his family, except now it is called coal mines. Displacement for him occurs mainly because of a lack, which makes him feel he does not belong anywhere, "he didn't know where home was. There was nothing left for him on the old plantations he'd worked, and he had no family to speak of" (Gyasi, *Homegoing* 166). Here, "home" refers less to the place one is born since there is no reason why H should feel he belongs to a place where he has no affiliations and, worse, where he was enslaved. Not so different from Adônis—a character in *Água de Barrela* who grows attached to the small piece of land on the edge of the plantation, which was given to his family after slavery—H decides to work for the Mines. He believes it is the only thing he knows how to do and attaches himself to the idea of having a job, a role in a community. In his search for a sense of belonging,

H reconnects to his first girlfriend, Ethe. Being free from slavery and imprisonment changes nothing in H's life, except that he feels the necessity to create bonds and construct a stronger sense of identity to help him dwell in his displacement. As Kojo, his father, a woman figure, becomes the center of the "home" idea H constructs in his mind.

Anna and Ethe consequently become associated with the Akan cultural notion of protection and lineage. For male characters Kojo and H, they re-signify family as synonyms for "home" and belonging in the adopted country. Neither Kojo nor H knew their birth mother. Although Kojo adopts Aku as an "othermother," most of his sense of self-worth comes from his wife, Anna. The minute she is kidnapped, Kojo loses what used to connect him with that part of his identity, being a husband and a father. As for H, who completely lacks a sense of belonging, his life starts when he reconnects with Ethe. Everything he knows before this reencounter is his hatred of white people and his thought about escaping the mines (165). Not even his name can be claimed as part of his identity, he could never imagine that his mother called him H because he would be Kojo and Anna's eighth child, and his name would start with that letter. Therefore, Kojo and H recreate an idea of Africa in Anna and Ethe, establishing the connection between motherhood and motherland present in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela*.

Kojo and H's stories parallel Roberto's story in *Água de Barrela.* Roberto, an enslaved man and friends with Akin/Firmino resorts to a woman figure to re-construct the bond with the motherland denied to him due to slavery. When Roberto sees himself in love with Isabel, he envisions her as part of Africa, which resonates with Oxum (or Oshum), the god of love and fertility. In Cruz's own words, "Roberto heard his elders tell the stories of Africa, of the orixás from an early age, and she was what his imagination could bring closer to Oxum, goddess of love, fertility, beauty" ("Roberto desde cedo ouvia os mais velhos contarem as histórias da África, dos orixás, e ela era o que sua imaginação mais podia aproximar de Oxum, deusa do amor, da fertilidade, da beleza" Cruz, *Água* 55). Even though both Roberto and Isabel were born in Brazil, Roberto recreates in Isabel's presence part of Mozambique, part of the motherland. After his death, Isabel and Akin/Firmino marry and have a child, whom they call Roberto in memory of their friend.

Not necessarily this woman representing a connection with the motherland is a wife in these texts. Akin/Firmino feels this connection when his niece Anolina gives birth to a daughter whose father is unknown—it can be either the enslaver who raped her for years since she was a girl or a

biracial man with whom she has an affair. Despite condemning the child's conception, when Akin/Firmino looks at the baby, he sees an image of his family and motherland. As the passage illustrates, "He looked at her as if he saw someone else ... Other people. In her face and body, he saw Ewá Oluwa, Anolina, Gowon, Iseyn, the whole of Africa. He did not see in her the great-niece who probably had one foot in that family he had always despised" ("Ele a mirava como se visse nela outra pessoa ... Outras pessoas. Em seu rosto e corpo, via Ewá Oluwa, via Anolina, via Gowon, via Iseyn, via a Africa inteira. Não enxergava nela a sobrinha-neta que provavelmente tinha um pé naquela família desprezada por ele desde sempre" 174). In this sense, Akin/Firmino perceives the child as part of himself, his brother, and his sister-in-law, part of Africa, solely due to the baby's mother, Anolina.

Relying on a woman figure is not particularly linked to male characters in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela*. Ethe, H's first girlfriend, who would eventually become his wife, also establishes a strong bond with her mother that mirrors a connection with the motherland. As mentioned before, Ethe and H's breakup relates to her ancestral connection with her mother and her name. When H calls her by another woman's name, she feels robbed of her identity, her connection with her mother and motherland. Moreover, in *Água de Barrela*, Umbelina becomes a mother figure for everyone who has "lost" their mothers and their motherland upon arrival in Brazil. Umbelina is at the center of the first pages of Cruz's narrative, attracting all the characters to her intimate circle. She reacts to everyone's struggle and gives her—often—cynical take over their difficulties, which suggests that her old age has given her a duress, and she dismisses many struggles people endure. For instance, when Anolina is forced to sleep with Francisco and is introduced to the bedroom where she will be raped, Isabel starts crying for Anolina because she too had been raped. Umbelina urges Isabel to stop crying; otherwise, "the girl will think this is death" ("a menina vai achar que isso é a morte" *Água* 89). To that affirmation, Isabel inquires, "Ain't it, Ms. Belina? ("E num é, dona Belina?" 89). Umbelina's answer unveils her major concerns in protecting her children from death, and she does not consider what is about to happen to Anolina equal to physical death through punishment. To Umbelina, death is "the pillory... the whipping, the iron around the neck" ("o tronco... a chibatada, os ferro no pescoço" 89), typical torture devices used during slavery in Brazil

and the United States.[26] Umbelina knows that Anolina's refusal to Francisco's rape is a punishment that can cost her life. Therefore, to soothe the girl, she states that "sleeping with this ugly boy is easy, think about that, Nolina" ("se deitá com esse muleque feioso é fácil. Pensa nisso, Nolina" 89). Her diminishing of Anolina's rape emphasizes the other terrible punishment imposed on the black population.

Umbelina becomes the voice of reason and resilience, asking all her adopted "children" to persist and live despite all the brutality they endure. She is the primary difference between life or death to many enslaved people (and the enslavers) when epidemics strike the plantation. Umbelina becomes the bridge between the adopted country and the motherland as far as religion is concerned, keeping Candomblé's rituals a strong tradition in the plantation with, for instance, the tradition of presenting children to the orixas (72). Despite not being the biological mother of her community, Umbelina becomes the "othermother" for many of the characters, and her imponent presence in the text enforces the connection of womanhood, motherhood, and motherland.

Building family ties helps characters in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* cope with their displacement and the diasporic conditions marked by absences. Relationships based on blood and soul family ties significantly influence characters' lives—helping them dwell in their displacement, especially if these affiliations are strong, or when they can build solid family units. Among these family dwellings, the importance of the mother figure, as shown in characters of Effia, Esi, Anna, and Ethe in *Homegoing*, and Umbelina, Isabel, and Anolina in *Água de Barrela*, determine how characters around them interact with their identity connections to their adopted country and motherlands. The double resistance happening in Gyasi's and Cruz's texts happens when we read their work as acts of decolonization and resistance through their structure and how their characters preserve memory and rewrite history to construct a collective memory for the next generation. This movement—mainly among women—represents a way to resist the imposed assimilation by the dominant white elite that reproduces the systems of colonial oppression. Moreover, storytelling creates a bond between women from different generations, necessary for connection between

[26] Portuguese word "tronco" generates an ambiguity, as it seems to refer to "whipping post," which is most commonly referred to as "pelourinho" in Portuguese. However, it is most likely referring to another torturing tool on the moldeled of the pillory, but in which people placed their feet and were forced to stay on the same position for long periods. See Appendix D.

mother and daughters and motherlands, as the next chapters show in more detail. If storytelling and connection between mothers and daughters do not occur, as with some other novels' characters, daughters feel the necessity to reconnect to the motherland. The absence of stories reflects the absence of bonding between mothers and daughters, the same way the presence of stories helps build connections and collective resistance.

Carole Boyce Davies argues that black women's writings often portray home as a place of displacement (21). This chapter has shown how *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* disrupt and question the idea of "home" and identify family, language, and memory as the most important elements of identity construction. Geographical spaces are portrayed as imaginary lands, whereas the adopted country becomes a site for struggle and fight against the systems of oppression established through colonialism and slavery. *Homegoing*'s and *Água de Barrela*'s characters carry visible and invisible scars—the ones on their skin are terrible enough, but, as Akin/Firmino affirms "the ones inside are bigger" ("as que estão por dentro são maiores" Cruz, *Água* 174). These invisible scars shape how characters understand and negotiate their existence—how they dwell in the diaspora, build family relationships, and contend with the separation from the motherland. Although traumas are never resolved, characters strive to heal through genuine connections. Family bonds and a solid relationship with a figure representing protection and kinship—such as a mother—are essential because, through these strong ties, the stories of middle passage and slavery are transmitted from generation to generation—Cruz's small pieces of life. If there is no exchange, the absence of memory becomes more distressing than the remembrance of the violent past, causing a sense of displacement characterized by an absence of connection with both space and community. This chapter explored family ties—both based on blood and soul relationships—and how they influence characters' lives either due to their presence or absence. As highlighted, characters build connections and establish kinship through language, naming, and remembering the past. Solid familial connections—mainly with the mother figure—create a bond with the motherland without which characters face difficulties dwelling in their displacement.

CHAPTER 3. SOLO TRAVELERS: IDENTITY AND DISPLACEMENT IN *LUCY*, *AMERICANAH*, AND *THE UNBELONGING*

I was then at the height of my two-facedness: that is, outside I seemed one way, inside I was another; outside the false, inside the true

Kincaid, *Lucy*

This chapter examines the similarities and disparities among women's solo journeys in three novels, *Lucy*, *Americanah*, and *The Unbelonging*, showing how Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth cope with racism and colonialism and negotiate within their new environments. These women's mothers' and othermothers' roles in their lives affect their decisions, culminating in their acceptance or rejection of their transversal hybridity.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section, "Identity and Displacement in the Solo Woman Traveler's trope," introduces the novels and authors, identifying major themes in their works that help analyze the novels. The second section, "A Real Americanah" — Migration and the Legacy of Colonialism," investigates how colonialism plays a significant role in these characters' displacement in their motherlands, except for Hyacinth, who fantasizes about Jamaica as the place where she belongs.

The third section, "I am not like her at all" — The Cultural Ambivalence of Hybrid Identities," analyzes how Lucy's, Ifemelu's, and Hyacinth's connections and disconnections with their mother-figure mirror their loss of motherlands. The fourth section, "Like a mother to me" — Othermothers and the Alienation in the Adopted Country," looks at the relationships between Lucy-Mariah, Ifemelu-Aunty Uju, and Hyacinth-Maureen, investigating their positive and negative impact on these solo travelers' lives. Although Mariah and Aunty Uju offer motherly-like support to Lucy and Ifemelu, they also play an antagonist role in their lives, similar to Maureen's role in Hyacinth's life. This shows that these women experience a lack of a strong female role in their lives before and after migration.

The final section, "Go back whe you come fram" — The journey back and the problem of identity," examines Ifemelu's and Hyacinth's return to their motherlands and the fact that they find difficulty fitting in and still dwell in "homelessness." Lucy never comes back to Antigua, but she

abandons Mariah at the end of the novel and chooses to isolate herself because both mother figures in her life have become a deception for her, as much as the motherland and the adopted country.

3.1 Identity and Displacement in the Solo Woman Traveler's Trope—an Introduction

"More people than ever before seem to imagine routinely the possibility that they or their children will live and work in places other than where they were born," said Arjun Appadurai in *Modernity at Large*, and his assumption could not be more precise (6). Indeed, living abroad has become quite common—not to say expected—especially for those born in countries considered third-world or developing. Perhaps, for this reason, migration has become the center of contemporary postcolonial narratives. As postcolonial nations—from the African continent to the Americas—become closer and closer to neoliberal ideals influenced by developed countries such as the United States, we perceive an increase in the flux of migration north. Intellectuals seek employment opportunities in developed nations, as acquiring a Western education symbolizes a path to success in many colonized subjects' mentality. Frantz Fanon addresses this mentality in *The Wretched of Earth*, discussing that colonial violence creates a mindset in which the colonized subject feels inferior and assimilates into the colonizer's culture and knowledge. The colonized subject's perception of the colonizer "is a look of lust, a look of envy" (Fanon 4). Their idea of success lies in possessing what the colonizer sets as valuable, including "sitting at the colonist's table and sleeping in his bed, preferably with his wife" (4-5). Migration stories often reveal this envy, this imitation Fanon warned us against, because recent voluntary migration often happens in capitalist monetary desires only developed nations can offer their citizens—usually at the cost of exploring migrants' motherlands.

According to Foner, Deaux, and Donato, "In 2016, immigrants represented approximately 14 percent of the US population; together with their US-born children, the figure was more than 25 percent, a remarkable eighty-six million people," a number that continues to grow (1). More importantly for this chapter is the growing number of migrants from Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean, which contributed to a racial and ethnic change in the United States—with the non-Hispanic white population decreasing as the Hispanic population grew during the same period (1). I would also call attention to the fact that ten percent of the black population in the United States

now are not American-born, coming from Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean (1). Within the rich literary works that accompany the movement of people beyond their motherlands' borders, I highlight a trope that—though it may be less common than other tropes in migrant literature—discuss the most common themes of the genre, such as detachment, displacement, and hybridity: the trope of the female solo travelers.

In "Michele Cliff's 'Into the Interior' and the Trope of the Solitary Female Immigrant," Elsa Maxwell and Lucía Stecher identify "displaced West Indian immigrant in metropolitan spaces" as one of "the most important tropes of contemporary Caribbean literary tradition" (811). They discuss the creation of a "critical nationalist discourse," made possible because writers are away from the Caribbean (812). Unlike male migrant writers, female migrant writers typically do not emphasize a diasporic community but the image of a solitary woman migrant, "whose decision to emigrate alone marks a break with colonial patriarchy" (812). When analyzing Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*, Maxwell and Stecher affirm that the lack of a migrant community in Lucy's dwellings might point toward this character's explicit rejection of patriarchal power she experiences both in her motherland and the adopted country (813). I agree with this notion while feeling the necessity to expand upon it since Lucy's rejection of her mother symbolizes her rejection of the Caribbean. The rejection of the motherland or adopted country mirrors the rejection or embracing of mother figures in other novels, such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche's *Americanah*, Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban*, and Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging*. This chapter argues that Kincaid, Adiche, and Riley use the trope of the solo black woman traveler to discuss hybridity in contemporary society, emphasizing the tensions and negotiations their characters—Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth, respectively—experience.

Elaine Lee, in the introduction of *Go Girl! The Black Woman's Book of Travel & Adventure* explains how she had to accept her "destiny" as a solo traveler because she "never seemed to be able to find someone with the time and money to travel with [her]" (11). In this very enlightening collection of black woman travelers' stories—including some well-known names, such as Alice Walker, Gwendolyn Brooks, Audre Lorde, and Maya Angelou—Lee manages to show how gender and race intersect perceptions of new places, including the very idea that black women do not travel around the world by themselves. In Lee's words, "Many black women, when they heard I had taken a trip around the world by myself told me, 'I could *never* do that!' ... or 'I'd be too

scared.' I understand where those feelings come from, and at the same time, I knew that travel was more accessible and less threatening than they perceived it to be" (14). Although I deal with another kind of travel in this dissertation—referred to here as migration—I share with Lee the aim of understanding travel through black women's perspectives, be that for tourism, educational, and healing purposes, while unraveling some of the common elements found in black woman solo traveler tropes.

Rosemary Marangoly George claims that "the immigrant genre is marked by a curiously detached reading of the experience of "homelessness" (George 8), suggesting that the literature migrants produce often does not feature their experiences with major tensions in the adopted countries regarding their displacement. These findings must be interpreted with caution because it does not coincide with what is conveyed in *Lucy, Americanah,* and especially *The Unbelonging.* In fact, these three novels explore the experience of "homelessness" in a way that *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* do not, since the latter connect the idea of home to family and heritage, emphasizing the role of the mother figure in the preservation of this heritage. An example of the "homelessness" element is how Hyacinth—the protagonist of *The Unbelonging*—denies any attachment to England while fantasizing about an imaginary Jamaica to cope with her displacement. However, upon her return to Jamaica, Hyacinth realizes she cannot ever be "home" ever again, therefore remaining in the space of "homelessness" and displacement that shows no resolution. Throughout this study, I attempt to address this lack of research on the theme of displacement in the solo woman traveler trope.

Concerning the analysis, I have chosen *Lucy, Americanah,* and *The Unbelonging* because they focus on migration through the eyes of black postcolonial female subjects, intersecting three major oppressing systems Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth must learn to navigate. These three novels tell distinctive stories, showing how migration is at the center of the black body experience—be that through voluntary or involuntary migration, the slave trade, or colonization. In addition, the novels show—albeit differently—a ceaseless search for home and reconstruction of identity common to other postcolonial literary works, as the first chapter of this dissertation has shown. However, little is said about female travel writings in the context of fiction, and it is not clear what common factors they share. This indicates a need to understand the various perceptions of the black woman traveler trope in post-colonial fiction.

Lucy was first published in 1990, following the publication of *Annie John* (1985), which is considered a prequel to *Lucy*. Lucy is a 19-year-old girl from Antigua who started working in the United States as an au-pair. As Lucy tells her experiences, she follows a non-linear time, relying on memories of her mother in Antigua, the frustration of missing her, and her experiences in the United States. Much of Jamaica Kincaid's fiction is filled with mother-daughters conflicting relationships, which mirrors her relationship with her mother.[27] Both *Lucy* and *Annie John* have many autobiographical nuances. For instance, Kincaid worked as an au pair in the United States and was the first child before three boys. Like Lucy and Annie, Kincaid felt neglected after her brothers were born. Kincaid's sexist and colonial[28] upbringing is wistfully translated in "Girl" the first short story of the collection *At the Bottom of the River* (1983). In this monologue—interrupted by the girl's occasional questions—a mother figure gives instructions on how a girl should behave so she would not become a *slut*.[29] The instructions include how to wash clothes, how to walk, cook, dress so the girl will not look "like the slut" her mother knows she is "so bent on becoming" (*At the Bottom* 4). As Lucy's mother has once taught her how to abort an unwanted child, the girl's mother teaches her "how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child" (5). These instructions and more are parallel to Lucy's upbringing and show how they must endure brutal sexism within their families and communities.

This study extends our knowledge of *Lucy* regarding the protagonist's relationship with her mother, host mother, and motherland. Much of the criticism of Kincaid's novel revolves around Lucy and Mariah's relationship and Lucy's very complex relationship with her biological mother.[30] One of the most recent works on this topic, Fulani's "Gender, Conflict, and Community," states that the mother-daughter relationship in *Lucy* is portrayed as a "site of colonization, and, therefore, a site in need of decolonization," without significantly connecting the relationship

---

[27] Jamaica Kincaid, born Elaine *Potter* Richardson, changed her name when she started publishing, referring to the part of the world where she comes from. This is another similarity between Lucy and Kincaid, Lucy's full name is Lucy Josephine *Potter*. Her parents sent her to work as an au pair abroad, so she would help them financially. Kincaid refused to do this, stopped talking to her family, and did not go back to the Caribbean for over twenty years (Kincaid, "Our Sassy").

[28] Antigua was a colony of the United Kingdom until 1981.

[29] I use this word here because of the frequency which appears in Kincaid's fiction. The word is equated with sexual freedom, for it is used as an exact opposite to sexual oppression. It can be argued that Kincaid refers to "good girl behavior" as sexually oppressive and "slut" as sexual freedom.

[30] See for instance Harkins (1991), Nagel (1995), Doyle (1999), Pittmann (2004), Majerol (2007), Fulani (2011).

between motherhood and motherland (Fulani 4). I intend to address this deficit by showing how *Lucy* enhances our understanding of the way migration affects mother-daughter relationships.

This chapter has confirmed the findings of works that discuss the issue of colonialism and its effects on Lucy's experiences both in the motherland and the adopted country (the United States). An example of this approach is "Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*: Cultural 'Translation' as a Case of Creative Exploration of the Past" by Edyta Oczkowicz, which understands Lucy as a translator of postcolonial experience through her positioning against the colonial system oppression. On a similar note, Jana Evans Braziel, in "Daffodils, Rhizomes, Migrations," identifies how Kincaid "adopt[s] botanical tropes to address the violence of colonialism and the postcolonial experiences of diaspora, migration, and transnationalism" (113). Braziel points out that Lucy's dreams of being captured and chased by daffodils symbolize colonial expansion and violence, transculturation and displacement, as well as an allegory of her running away from her mother and motherland (126-27).[31] In addition, this chapter expends on the reading of Elsa Maxwell and Lucía Stecher, "Michele Cliff's 'Into the Interior' and the Trope of the Solitary Female Immigrant," in which they identify Lucy as a solitary female migrant. Because Stecher and Maxwell only mention *Lucy*, focusing on their most important analysis source, Cliff's "Into the Interior," this study discusses how Lucy, as a black woman traveler, dwells in a state of "homelessness," never connecting with the black community, her motherland, or mother.

Like Lucy, Americanah shows the dwellings of a solo black woman traveler who needs to negotiate between the colonial legacy and sexist behavior of the motherland and the racist system of the adopted country, although no critical work has investigated the novel around this aspect. Ifemelu's story starts as she is in a hair salon having her hair braided, in the prelude of her return to Nigeria, after thirteen years in the United States. Throughout almost 600 pages, Ifemelu retells her conservative and sexist colonial upbringing in Lagos, her migration to the United States, and the encounter with racial oppression until her re-adaptation to life in Lagos. Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche has gained much popularity with acclaimed novels like *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), set in post-colonial Nigeria and during the Nigerian Civil War respectively.

[31] For a more detailed discussion on Daffodils as symbols of diaspora and colonization, see page 100-105.

Americanah sets itself apart from this background, focusing on the migrant struggles of a young Nigerian woman and her encounter with racism in the United States.

The literature on *Americanah* focuses significantly on Afropolitanism. This term—coined by Taiye Selasi—refers to a new generation of African-origin writers interested in expanding the notion of African literature, often through the topic of migration. This approach is both praised and criticized by African critics, as much as Adiche's novel itself. On the one hand, some critics state that Afropolitan writers are more included to conceive Africa outside the trope of suffering and misery and a way of being African that is hybridized and plural.[32] On the other hand, some critics believe that *Americanah* reinforces Nigerian stereotypes and claim that Afropolitanism is not beneficial to African literature.[33] In "An Afropolitan literary aesthetics? Afropolitan style and tropes in recent diasporic African fiction," Knudsen and Rahbek comment that Afropolitan novels "are redefining what it means to be African in the twenty-first century" (116). In other words, they say that this new perspective explores new spaces in African literature in general, focusing on the effects of globalization on African countries and peoples (116).[34]

Critics of *Americanah* have also highlighted the issue of migration and identity in the novel. In her highly cited article "Black Is Black Is Black," Ava Landry employs the psychological concept of acculturation to read Gyasi's *Homegoing* and Adiche's *Americanah*. She argues that African migrants must deal with blackness as a master status and a social identity in the United States, which makes African migrants "ethnicized Other[s]" (Landry 127). Another analysis that diverges from the Afropolitan discussion is Bhakti Shringarpure's "Digital Forms, Migrant Forms." In this text, Shringarpure brings technology and literature together to argue that in the same way

[32] See for instance Knudsen and Rahbek (2017), Hallemeier (2015), and Masterson (2020).
[33] See Franklin (2013) and Ogbe (2013).
[34] The question of home and belonging is also present in Afropolitanism, often showing characters who struggle with the impossibility of ever feeling "home" again. The trope of return show African "been-to" characters, people who "visit the West for a shorter or longer period" (Knudsen and Rahbek 118). Afropolitan writers often show that a return "home"—a place of belonging—is not always possible (118). They characterize Ifemelu as "an anxious Afropolitan longing for a secure place of belonging, or for a sense of re-rootedness, or, perhaps, reaspora" (121). She expects that her return will have "profound effects on her sense of self, leading to an oxymoronic sensation of 'falling into a new person … falling into the strange familiar" (121). Moreover, Knudsen and Rahbek argue that "Return can be expressed in many guises in Afropolitan writing: as homecoming, as traditional return, as reconnection and relocation, and as reappraisal or reaspora, that is, the return of the diaspora to an original African location" (122).

African people have always migrated, contemporary literature also engages with this movement, which relates to the digital waves and movements from technology and the digital era. The author analyzes Ifemelu's blog as part of this movement.

The Unbelonging, published in 1985, diverges from *Lucy* and *Americanah* in both content and resolution. While Lucy and Ifemelu are young women, Hyacinth is only eleven when she migrates, which would disqualify Hyacinth as a solo traveler. I decided to include Hyacinth in this trope because she becomes a solo traveler during her adulthood when she travels back to Jamaica. In addition, the novel accompanies Hyacinth from her teens until adulthood, which is marked by a strong detachment from a black community. Hyacinth suffers terribly in England, with xenophobia and racism in the outer world, while at home, she is violently beaten and sexually harassed by her father. Her only hope is returning to Jamaica, where she thinks she belongs. Joan Riley published only three novels after *The Unbelonging*, *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), *Romance* (1997), and *A Kindness to the Children* (1992), and her fiction "combines the recovering of a history ... with the task of inscribing a specific group of people into literature: the West Indian community in Britain" (Suárez, "Absent" 290).

A large and growing body of unpublished dissertations has investigated how *The Unbelonging* unravels themes of identity in England, together with other important black British novelists, such as Caryl Phillips, Andrea Levy, and Zadie Smith. Some examples are Michelle Denise Auster's work from 2005, Barbara L. Shaw (2007), Sheila Sandapen (2009), and Cornelia C. Photopoulous (2020). Still, much of the current literature on gender, race, and migration ignores Riley's work. While reviewing the book *Sexual Feelings: Reading Anglophone Caribbean Women's Writing through Affect* by Elina Valovirta, Tamara Braunstein mentions how easily *The Unbelonging* could have been incorporated into the discussion of sexual trauma, but it was left out.

Carole Boyce Davies' *Black Women Writing and Identity* promises to bring black women's voices together and delivers it. Her analysis of *The Unbelonging* reveals the novel's complex constructions of home and identity. Hyacinth endures the "physical and sexual abuse by her father and the British school system" and can only hope to return to Jamaica, where she has been happy (Davies 100-01). Davies notices that Hyacinth's life expresses the novel's title, with the protagonist feeling "unwanted" through most of the novel (101). Moreover, Davies shows that returning home is impossible for Hyacinth because the Jamaica she dreams about exists only in

her eleven-year-old immature mind, and her denial of attempting to accept her hybridity causes deep feelings of displacement (102). This chapter expands on Davies' analysis, focusing on Hyacinth's reason for migrating, her wish to return to a mother and a motherland that represents protection, and her ways of dealing with oppression as a solo migrant.

Isabel Carrera Suárez analyzes Riley's fiction, *The Unbelonging* included, concluding that "to the absence of an authentic black and female self, we must add the absence of place, of belonging, the absence of an authentic motherland" ("Absent" 299). Suárez refers here both to the absence of Jamaica and a mother in Hyacinth's life, whom her aunt raised since her birth. Still, we see a lack of heritage, an absence of a family with a strong female presence in Hyacinth's life and other Riley's protagonists (301). This study intends to strengthen this relationship between motherland and mother and how their absences affect Hyacinth's life.

As the previous paragraphs have highlighted, displacement is the major theme that brings *Lucy, Americanah,* and *The Unbelonging* together, as novels deal with the question of the female solo migrant searching for their place in the world and often finding none except their selves. While Lucy and Ifemelu express criticism both against their motherlands and the adopted country, for instance, by recognizing issues of sexism in the Caribbean and Nigeria and racial oppression in the United States, Hyacinth refuses to believe in a narrative that people from the Black Atlantic are struggling against the same issues. Hyacinth prefers to dwell in her fantasy of a non-corrupt Jamaica, where racism and sexism are not a concern. However, all three characters face sexism and racism in their dwellings in the adopted country. Their ability to negotiate in this environment is related to their construction of a political identity that resists essentialisms but expresses a connection with black diasporic peoples' struggles.

Analyzing *Lucy, Americanah,* and *The Unbelonging* together highlights the intersections of race, migration, and gender while broadening the spectrum of analysis to incorporate as many experiences as possible—something that I, as a migrant and woman of color myself, am committed to doing. Even though Americanah has been written at least twenty years apart from Lucy and The Unbelonging—*The Unbelonging* was published in 1985, *Lucy* in 1990, and *Americanah* in 2013—these novels show how migration affects mother-daughter relationships, considering both biological mothers and othermothers, and sent these women in search of other "motherlands." Their struggles transform them into transversal hybrids, needing to learn how to negotiate in this

new location that trespasses margin and center. Furthermore, these novels show how colonialism affects the lives of young women in colonized nations, often detaching them from their local communities and creating myths of a better life abroad. In the following sections, I analyze how the events that led to migration relate to colonization, the character's relationships with their mothers and mother figures (when they have any), and their return to the motherland—in the case of Ifemelu and Hyacinth—which culminates in their acceptance or rejection of their hybrid identities.

3.2 "A real Americanah" — Migration and the Legacy of Colonialism.

Iyko Day states that "immigration policy not only determined entry into the nation but could legally bar an immigrant from naturalizing, voting, owning, and transferring property, and working" (Day 33). This statement refers to the criminalization of migration, specifically migrants who are not welcomed in developed nations, i.e., black migrants. Harsha Walia even compares migration policies with Jim Crow, affirming that many of the rights migrants have today in the United States—such as the right of citizenship for children born in the country—came from the black movement struggles for citizenship in 1856, which led to the Fourteenth Amendment ratification in 1886 (Walia 49). On a more generalized notion, foreigners, especially people of color, are usually regarded as a threat to land security. This growing anxiety about migration in developed nations happens concurrently with the constant growth of international students in United States institutions in the last decade—except in 2020 and 2021, probably due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the many governmental sanctions against migration in 2020 ("Institute"), which reminds us of the political traits of migration.

Analyzing novels in which black women travel from developing countries in search of opportunities to improve their economic and educational situation reflects many political endeavors. It sometimes reveals the legacy of the slave trade, such as the case of migrant domestic workers. Silvia Federici states, "Starting in the early '90s, there has been a leap in female migration from the Global South to the North, where they provide an increasing percentage of the workforce employed in the service sector and domestic labor" (Federici 71). There were incentives to migration in developed nations such as England, the United States, and Canada to bring women of

color from the Caribbean, Filipinos, and Mexico to clean houses and raise children from white middle-class families (71). Federici also highlights the challenges migrant women face in taking jobs such as these because of their terrible wages and their often need to leave their own families without support and care (71-72).[35]

Lucy, *Americanah*, and *The Unbelonging* present women-centered narratives featuring themes such as puberty, first sexual experiences, and others, also considering the issue of diaspora, the legacy of colonialism, and racism. *Lucy* specifically tells the story of a young woman who migrates from the Caribbean to be an au pair for a wealthy white Western family. Scholarship on au pairs has grown over the years, and many of them focus on how migrant women on au pairs' visas seek this type of employment in developed countries to strengthen their chances of carving out a future for them abroad.[36] Sondra Cuban interviews twenty highly educated women from Latin America who decided to become au pairs in the United States, concluding that despite the temporary status of au pairs visa-wise,[37] "highly skilled young women are motivated to become au pairs in the United States" (236). Cuban suggests that these young women are attracted to au pair positions due to an unrealistic expectation that the program gives them intercultural exchange and the chance to improve their linguistic skills and study at United States institutions of higher education—when, in fact, it is focused on cheap domestic labor for wealthy western families (236).

Like many women from Cuban's article who would migrate, because the situation abroad is better than in their motherlands (240), Lucy spends her life believing that she "was in a not very

[35] The influx of migrant women to serve white families parallels black women's role as the "mammy" in many households in the Antebellum South. The myth of the mammy was so strong that it was used to validate cooking products, as for instance the caring and overweight image of Aunt Jemima—which highlights black women's stereotype of being good cooks and command the kitchen (Swell 312). Still, it is important to highlight how this stereotype is related to media and propaganda, because "black women who worked indoors were unlikely to be overweight because their food stuffs were severely rationed. They were more likely to be light as dark because household jobs were frequently assigned to mixed-raced women" (Turner 44). Moreover, it is unlikely that these women were old, because nineteenth century black women rarely lived to be sixty (44). We can see how domestic work drains Martine, in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. This character represents both an example of the movement from South to North in search on employment and better opportunity, as well as the difficulties of migration. See more on Martine on Chapter 4.

[36] For example, Dalgas (2016), Rohde-Abuda and Tkach (2016), and Cuban (2018).

[37] Au Pairs come to the United States as non-immigrant aliens, with J-1 visas, a type of temporary student visa sponsored by the State Department through specialized Au pair agencies (Cuban 236). However, their education is limited to noncredit courses, and therefore cannot be used to further their careers, most of the time (247). It is also important to highlight that baby-sitting and domestic labor are major occupations of undocumented Latin American women in the United States.

nice situation... [and] wanted to go somewhere else" (Kincaid, *Lucy* 6). Lucy's struggles, however, are not related to economic constraints, although she exposes the fact that she had never seen an elevator and had lived in a house without a refrigerator before migrating (4). Lucy becomes an au pair in the United States in the hopes of escaping sexism in her motherland, which hinders her from having any prospects for her adulthood except for marriage and children. In the United States, however, as a black woman in a servitude position, Lucy must face another reality, and she describes herself as "an unhappy young woman living in a maid's room... the young girl who watches over the children and goes to school at night" (7). Although her host parents, Mariah and Lewis, tell her to feel part of the family upon arrival, Lucy knows that "such a thing would not be said to a member of their real family" (8).[38] While many au pairs are sold "The American dream" to accept taking an au pair position, Lucy is determined to run away from her family situation.

Regarding her family and motherland, Lucy states she "could not go back" to her motherland (10). One of the elements that disconnect Lucy from her motherland is the colonial legacy that haunts her education and social life. The moment that primarily expresses Lucy's anger towards her colonial education is when her employer Mariah asks her if she had ever seen "daffodils pushing their way up out of the ground" (17). Instantly, Lucy remembers "an old poem" she had to memorize for one of her classes at the Queen Victoria Girls' school (17). This reference to William Wordsworth's poem, "I wandered lonely as a cloud," serves as an allegory to colonial education, as the quote below shows:

> I remembered an old poem I had been made to memorize when I was ten years old and a pupil at Queen Victoria Girls' School. I had been made to memorize it, verse after verse, and then had recited the whole poem to an auditorium full of parents, teachers, and my fellow pupils. After I was done, everybody stood up and applauded with an enthusiasm that surprised me, and later they told me how nice I had pronounced every word, how I had placed just the right amount of special emphasis in places where that was needed, and how proud the poet, now long dead, would have been to hear his words ringing out of my mouth. (18).

The poet, Wordsworth, in this situation, functions as a parent, a father for these pupils, a very proud one, for seeing his poem (his language) pronounced so nicely. More than anything,

[38] Lucy's feelings of displacement around the host family resembles many au pair's remarks. Cuban's article reveals that many au pairs' struggles are similar, as for instance one of the women's remarks, "They *say* you're part of the family... I don't feel part of the family... we never spend time together" (247).

Wordsworth represents England itself, the fatherland—responsible for proper education and finesse. Educating natives, therefore, is portrayed in the passage as an act of parenthood, protection—a way of saying natives who do not know better, while England (or any other colonizing nation) makes them perceive things the *civilized* way. Lucy's reaction reveals the formation of her hybrid identity. As she recalls, "I was then at the height of my two-facedness: that is, outside I seemed one way, inside I was another; outside the false, inside the true" (18). On the outside, Lucy resembles a good girl, showing "both modesty and appreciation" (18), the way her mother has raised her to be, and why she rebels. In contrast, what Lucy feels inside is a wish to forget the poem, as if to eliminate the condescending colonial education she is compelled to tolerate, accompanied by the "good girl" behavior her mother imposes on her. Lucy's ambivalence towards the poem—memorizing while desiring to forget it—resembles the gap between the colonial and post-colonial experience, called "the daffodil gap" by Commonwealth post-colonial writers and critics (Tiffin 920).

Kincaid's "On Seeing England for the first time" addresses this gap as "The space between the idea of something and its reality" (37). Before seeing England on a map in the classroom, Kincaid states England was everywhere, in the way her mother made her eat, the full breakfast they ate every morning, and the shoes she wore to school (32-33). Colonialism, as Kincaid affirms, aims at erasing people's culture and history, which is substituted by the history of the kings of England and their battles, to reduce the colonized nation's history and culture to nothing (33). Wordsworth's poem works as a "fixed feature of English colonial education deeply implicated in the project of curricular indoctrination... the imperial curriculum" (Smith, 2002, 801). In other words, the poem expresses through language and content the gap between Antigua and Britain, the colonized and the colonizer. It would take Lucy a movement North to finally see the flower she knew only by name, through a poem she had to memorize when she was ten.[39] The issue of

[39] Other writers have addressed the colonial educational system in which children must decorate poems about things they have never seen, like a daffodil, and expressing a language that is foreign to them. Sia Figiel, for instance, on her poem "The Daffodils from a Native's Perspective" writes about having to memorize Wordsworth's and Blake's poems without understanding what they meant, while juxtaposing slang and pop culture references with parts of Wordsworth's poem. The poem also exposes the violence of colonial education, with the image of the teacher pulling the narrator's ear, probably for not speaking the poem correctly. In "Daffodils (the other version)," Figiel asks "What the fuck is a daffodil?" — a political response to colonial education in Samoa.

linguistic oppression through bias on specific vernaculars of the previous chapter somewhat relates to Lucy's criticism of the issue of language imposition.

Many critics have analyzed the poem's impact on Lucy's identity. Tiffin comments that the poem serves two purposes. First, it "disciplines the bodies of performers" and secondly, "the audience whose appropriate (English) response is invoked by the recitation ritual" (Tiffin 914). Braziel argues that "the poem privileges the British pastoral tradition, correct English diction, and the natural flora of the colonial center of power" (Braziel 115). Donnel adds that "Wordsworth's poem works as both a literal example of colonial education and as a metonym for the colonial apparatus' promotion of an aesthetic which is ideologically motivated in its very essence of seeming to be devoid of ideology" (Donnel 50). I add that daffodils symbolize Lucy's disconnection with her motherland through their role in colonization and the impossibility of feeling part of the adopted country's culture for its role in imperialism.

Lucy addresses the daffodils' role in colonization and imperialism when it shows Lucy's scorn toward the flower. When Spring comes, Mariah shows Lucy a daffodil, saying, "I'm sorry about the poem, but I'm hoping you'll find them lovely all the same" (*Lucy* 29). Lucy resists it, connecting the flower with her colonial experience at school. Even before knowing the flower in Mariah's garden is a daffodil, she finds it beautiful but wants to kill it (30). "Do you realize that at ten years of age I had to learn by heart a long poem about some flower I would not see in real life until I was nineteen," Lucy tries to make Mariah see the situation through her perspective, expressing how the flower represents the brutality of colonization in erasing Antigua's history through the relationship between "conquered and conquests" (30). However, Mariah is unable to understand Lucy's hatred toward a flower. Where Mariah sees simply aesthetic, a beautiful flower detached from politics, Lucy's experience leads her to see the flower as a tool of colonialism, therefore representing "sorrow and bitterness" (30).

While Daffodils symbolize Lucy's disconnection from the adopted country and colonial oppression in *Lucy*, other novels portray daffodils in a more positive light, for instance, Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. In the article "Daffodils, Rhizomes, Migrations," Braziel analyzes *Lucy* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* to problematize diasporic identities since Lucy and Sophie regard the flower in opposite ways (111). According to Braziel, "Kincaid demythologizes daffodils, exposing the violent erasure of other histories and subjectivities within myth" (112). These flowers,

therefore, unveil a history of the Caribbean that focuses only on the violence of colonialism, the genocide of millions of indigenous populations, slavery and its aftermath, and the cultural hybridity caused by diaspora (112). Lucy has known no other history, for it has been wiped out together with its landscape and people. On the other hand, in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the botanical trope is used as a form of resistance, and daffodils become "rhizomatic rather than deeply rooted, mobile rather than fixed" (113). In other words, the symbolism of the daffodil traveling on a Mother's Day card in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* represents diaspora itself.[40]

Lucy does not deal with the issue of migration and the difficulties of becoming a citizen in the United States as explicitly as *Americanah* does. Like Lucy, Ifemelu needs to perform child-care-related activities and other "personal care" labor to support her life in the United States, but their reasons for migrating are different. In the article "Negotiating Race, Identity & Homecoming in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* & Pede Hollist's *So the Path Does Not Die*," Oby H. Okolocha discusses the diasporic experience of Ifemelu, focusing on why she left Nigeria, how she deals with racism in the United States, and how these experiences affect her identity, ultimately leading to her return to the motherland (143-44). Okolocha recognizes the importance of migration in contemporary African literature and highlights that Ifemelu migrates in search of better educational opportunities. Okolocha claims that "Ifemelu's decision to migrate is propelled by bad leadership which threatens to cripple the university system in Nigeria: staff salaries are not paid, facilities have broken down and are inadequate, and strike actions are commonplace" (144). Ifemelu shows discontentment with the educational system in Lagos, where

> students hoped for short strikes because they could not hope to have no strike at all. Everyone was talking about leaving … Sister Ibinabo started the Student Visa Miracle Vigil on Fridays, a gathering of young people, each one holding out an envelope with a visa application form, on which Sister Ibinabo laid a hand of blessing. (Adichie, *Americanah* 120).

As the quote above suggests, migration is generally socially accepted and expected in Ifemelu's social environment, where the belief in the quality superiority of US institutions is part of people's imaginary. Adichie's irony in the above passage can be understood as a way to criticize this mentality and emphasize the tension in the academic atmosphere and allude to the number of people who wish to leave the country to study abroad.

[40] See Chapter 4 for a more detailed analysis of *Breath, Eyes, Memory*.

Although Ifemelu herself does not show a great desire to leave Lagos, her high school sweetheart Obinze does, as well as her parents and friends. When one of Ifemelu's school friends, Ginika, announces her family's relocation to the United States, Ifemelu's father says, "At least they are fortunate to have that option," while her mother says, "They are blessed" (*Americanah* 78). For those around Ifemelu, having an American passport "is the coolest thing" (79). Ifemelu's boyfriend, Obinze, is one of the characters who most desires to live abroad, for "he was fluent in the knowledge of foreign things, especially American things" (80). Living abroad is equated with being successful, acquiring material possessions, and having the opportunity of a better life. In case a person lives abroad and returns to Lagos, she is believed to acquire a good opportunity for jobs—which does not differ much from Cuban's analysis of myths regarding au pair programs. Once a person comes back after living in the United States, they become "a serious Americanah... the fourth syllable extended" (78), reflecting the novel's title.

It is implicit that Western values dictate Ifemelu's education in Lagos. When Ifemelu imagines her father's education in the fifties, she pictures "an overzealous colonial subject wearing an ill-fitting school uniform of cheap cotton, jostling to impress his missionary teachers" (*Americanah* 58). A few decades later, Ifemelu's education does not show much great detachment from the colonial period, despite independence. Her father's colonized mindset bothers Ifemelu as she grows. In the narrator's words, "[her father] was haunted by what he did not have—a postgraduate degree, an upper-class life—and so his affected words became his armor" (58). Ifemelu regards her father's attempt to speak "flawless" English as insecurity, and she prefers when he speaks in Igbo because he seems free of his anxieties (58).

Nevertheless, Ifemelu's father—determined his daughter would have an education that "builds both character and career" (*Americanah* 80)—chooses a school whose pupils are of middle- and upper-classes, which is very different from Ifemelu's family's financial situation. Because upper-class citizens are portrayed in the novel as people who reproduce colonial behavior, Ifemelu's education most likely follows the same pattern. Even decades later, when Obinze and his wife are discussing their child's education, their friends say they "must send her to the French school" because French schools are supposed to be "very good, very rigorous" (35). Moreover, they argue it would not harm a child to "learn another *civilized* language since she already learns English at home" (35, *emphasis added*). The novel's criticism of this upper-class behavior that

reproduces the colonial system is irrefutable, while it is clear that the colonial legacy still dictates education in Lagos.

Ifemelu cannot flee from this colonial influence and develops many imperialist ideals about the adopted country. Although she acquires only a seventy-five percent off tuition scholarship, she is not very concerned about how she will pay for everything else. In addition, she does not show any concerns about paying for housing and food, probably thinking it would be easy to get a job—after all, it is "America," the land of opportunities, as Aunty Uju suggests through the phone. Moreover, Ifemelu has many illusions about the United States being a place where students would hold "notebooks miraculously free of wear and crease" and men would not pee in the streets (*Americanah* 122; 127)—ideas that are not so quite removed from her father's colonized conduct. These ideas are refuted when she arrives in the United States and faces racism and xenophobia, forcing her to adopt an American accent and change her hair to be accepted.

In *The Unbelonging*, Hyacinth moves to England to live with a father she has never known until she arrives at the London airport. At the encounter with her father, Hyacinth feels "lonely and small, wishing for Aunt Joyce, for Jamaica and her friends, hating the father who had insisted on sending for her" (*The Unbelonging* 13). The reasons why Hyacinth's father sends for her are not explicit in the novel, but it seems that Hyacinth is expected to help Maureen—her stepmother—with their two children, the house, and the cooking (28). As soon as Hyacinth arrives in London, Maureen shows her condescendence, stating that Hyacinth is only "there on sufferance" (28). Hyacinth lives unhappily, "her whole life seemed to be one endless round of work and fear, cleaning, cooking, beating and bed-wetting" (28). She has not been the only girl brought into London to work—some cousins have also been brought there for the same purpose.

Hyacinth had been forbidden to mention her cousin's name in the house, and after menstruating, she is instructed to "watch [her] father" because now she is "old enough for him to trouble [her] like he did with [her] cousins" (*The Unbelonging* 45). This environment of sexual harassment follows Hyacinth through the novel, while she discovers a book from her cousin that indicates what happened to her—a sentence that goes, "Incest flourished where the roads were bad" (49). It does not take long before Hyacinth's father implies he wants to show her "some of the things not to let men do" (48). The dread of physical and sexual abuse worsens after that, while

Hyacinth feels unvalued, unwanted, and the only thing she desires is to finish her education and go back to Jamaica, her "home."

England's environment is one of dread and violence. Racism and economic deprivation hunt the lives of Hyacinth and her family in London, with the school environment mimicking the oppression of the adopted country. Hyacinth fears her schoolmates, while her father scorns white people, saying that "all them white people smile up them face with them plastic smile, and then when you trust them, them kill you" (*The Unbelonging* 51). He wants Hyacinth to have an education, insisting that "education was the only way to get rich" (46). His being in England implies that he believes education there is more valuable than in Jamaica, as it is common in colonized mentality. Nevertheless, Hyacinth's experience in England is very harsh, and she finds no protection in neither her family unit nor outside. Because of that, Hyacinth's only hope is to fantasize about Jamaica, differently from Lucy and Ifemelu. Hyacinth resists others' opinions about Jamaica being similar to England concerning racism, stating, "She herself could remember Jamaica perfectly, and the one thing she had to say about it was that racism did not exist there" (117). Hyacinth's illusions about a unified and pure land of care and happiness are shattered when she returns to Jamaica as an adult.

Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth migrate for different reasons, but all show the same cultural ambivalence towards the adopted country. Despite her criticism of Mariah, Lucy believes she could escape her reality and go to a "better place" abroad, in a developing nation. Ifemelu, despite never fantasizing about studying abroad as other members of her community, still regards the United States as a better place to have an education. Even Hyacinth, who spends her days missing Jamaica, only considers returning to her motherland after finishing her education, even after her emancipation from her abusive father. These issues are investigated more deeply in the next section, in which I analyze the relationship between the presence and the absence of mothers and motherlands in the lives of Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth. It is clear, however, while *Lucy* and *The Unbelonging* show the "impossibility of achieving a complete break from constraining maternal influence or from one's personal past" (Fulani 24), *Americanah* presents a female protagonist who can embrace her hybridity with less tension than we perceive in Lucy and Hyacinth.

3.3 "I am not like her at all" — The Cultural Ambivalence of Hybrid Identities

Ifemelu's, Lucy's, and Hyacinth's feelings towards their motherlands extend to their mothers and mother figures in all novels. While Ifemelu's and Lucy's criticism of their colonial education resembles their relationship with their mothers—who may be partially responsible for their lack of connection between the protagonists and the space they occupy—Hyacinth feels the opposite. Whenever Hyacinth thinks of Jamaica, she thinks of her Aunt Joyce, who is described as a sweet woman "who had always understood, had never treated [Hyacinth] badly" (Riley, *The Unbelonging* 28). The following paragraphs show how mothers and mother figures contribute to Ifemelu and Lucy's homelessness in their motherlands, influencing their decision to migrate. In contrast, Hyacinth's connection to her Aunt Joyce, and the fact that she has no mother figure in England, enhance her feeling of homelessness and abandonment in the adopted country.

Lucy's relationship with her biological mother, Miss Annie, is very complex in *Lucy*. Perhaps, for this reason, many critics have analyzed Lucy and her mother's relationship as an allegory of colonization.[41] The issue of power permeates Jamaica Kincaid's fiction through the allegory of mother-daughter relationships; many works present these relationships as a mimic of the colonizer-colonized affairs based on power and control. An example is *Annie Jonh*—arguably a prelude to *Lucy*—in which Annie and her mother's relationship starts as very dependent-like and deteriorates until their physically parting, with Annie saying she would never return home by the end of the novel. *Annie John* shows some of the same topics described in *Lucy*, such as the impact of colonialism on people's daily lives. Another example is the short story "Girl," which opens the short story collection *At the Bottom of the River*. As mentioned, this short story consists of a single sentence in which Kincaid shows how it is to grow up female on a postcolonial Caribbean Island. In "Girl," we have a supposedly young woman (Girl) receiving instructions from her supposed mother on how to be a woman instead of a *slut*. The predominance of the mother's voice in the narrative shows the unbalanced power relations between the two characters, resembling the colonizer-colonized system that dictates behavior.

From the beginning, Lucy declares to hate her mother, mainly because of her mother's uptight perspective towards womanhood. Miss Annie believes that Lucy's sexual impulse must be contained and controlled. Lucy has never had a straight conversation about sexuality with her

[41] See for instance Fulani (2011), Joseph (2002), and Majerol (2007).

mother; from her mother, she gathered only that "the [sexual] experience could leave you feeling indifferent, that during it you might make out the grocery list, pick a style of curtains, memorize a subtle but choice insult for people who imagined themselves above you" (*Lucy* 114). In this sense, Miss Annie considers a lack of interest in sex an appropriate sexual behavior for a well-educated woman while enjoying it, on the other hand, might make women be regarded as *sluts*. Due to her mother's sexual oppression, Lucy feels detached from her. Being a woman—only that—is enough for Miss Annie's disapproval, which would explain why she names Lucy after Satan, for she was "a botheration from the moment [she was] conceived" (152). Lucy believes her mother thinks she is devil-like, while she thinks Miss Annie is god-like, resembling the dichotomy of femaleness shown in Kincaid's fiction—women can be either angels or monsters, as Gilbert and Gubar also emphasize.

For Miss Annie, appearing to be a well-brought-up girl is more important than being one. When Lucy reaches puberty, she starts to feel more detached from her mother as she grows older and finds the changes in her body grotesque; "my worst fears were true; I had hair growing there also – a patch of small, short curls, like hair on a baby's head" (*Lucy* 68). When Lucy menstruates, her mother laughs and says that "finding blood in [her] underpants might be something one day [she] would get down on [her] knees and pray for" (69). In this way, without telling Lucy why she would need "to bring a reluctant period," she takes Lucy to the garden and shows her "which herbs to pick and boil, and what time of day to drink the potion they produced" (69). Whereas Mariah—Lucy's host mother in the United States—takes Lucy to the doctor and talks to her about contraceptives, Lucy's mother presents the idea of abortion as "a way to strengthen the womb" (70). This episode confirms to Lucy that her mother sees sexuality—Lucy's sexuality, more precisely—as something to be monitored, a taboo that should not be commented on, or simply something evil.[42]

Miss Annie plays a double role in Lucy's life. She represents roots, protection, and love; simultaneously, she also represents power and colonization. In many ways, she plays the role of the fatherland—within the motherland. Lucy recognizes herself in her mother and wishes

[42] According to Annis Pratt, this is a common archetype in the novel of development, the "growing-up-grotesque archetype" (29). In this type of development, the hero is destined to disappointment, and this young woman has her desires crashed by patriarchy (29).

profoundly to be different and away from her, revealing Bhabha's ambivalence of the colonized subject. Because of her split identity, Lucy lives in this space of tension of colonial mimicry and ambivalence concerning the motherland and her mother. This reflects Kincaid's "On Seeing England for the First time," in which she addresses the colonial power strategy of mimicry, explaining how natives tend to reproduce English-like behavior, though knowing they are not and never will be English people and live in this state of inferiority imposed by the colonizer. As put by Bhabha, "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha 86). Framed another way, colonial mimicry is ambivalent, rooted in difference, on otherness.

This ambivalence between Miss Annie and Lucy is present in the novel every time Miss Annie comes to Lucy's mind when she needs nurturing and affection, though also representing the enemy, who imposes gender restrictions. Allegorically, the ambivalence extends to the motherland—where Lucy desires to return, despite the fact people's "smallest, most natural gesture" makes her feel an utter rage, to the point that she desires "to see them all dead" (Kincaid, *Lucy* 6). These connections establish the link between motherhood and motherland in the novel. Miss Annie becomes the image of the motherland as an enemy, a place full of recitals and poems which only impose colonial thinking from which Lucy struggles to free herself. Lucy, therefore, resents her motherland for similar reasons she resents her mother—because her mother (and father) wanted her brothers (but not Lucy) to "go to university in England and study to become a doctor or lawyer or someone who would occupy an important and influential position in society" (130). Although Lucy expects this type of thinking from her father, a man, hearing it from her mother feels like a betrayal. She does not accept that—just because she is a woman—she cannot have the same opportunities as her brothers.

Lucy's narrative reveals her resentment towards her mother and her attempt to construct her individual identity. Migration, therefore, is an act of resistance against the gender oppression she experiences. Lucy seeks to be free from her mother's influence, and in her mind being physically far away from her mother is the only way she can be free. Still, Lucy's mother is present in everything she does, although they are miles apart. Her presence is prominent in every relationship Lucy has (both her friendship with Mariah and her relationships with men). Lucy constantly stays in a binary position of feeling good and happy with her choices and worrying about what her

mother would say or think. Miss Annie is also present in the many letters Lucy decides not to open; she is present in every bit of Lucy's new identity construction—which can be characterized as complete opposition to everything her mother has done. Once Lucy's mother has brought her to be (or at least sound) as "clean, virginal" (97), Lucy's goal in life is to refute that and be what her mother would consider dirty and sinful.

Simone Alexander notices that "Kincaid's … [references to] motherhood serve only to validate the powerful presence of the mother. She is all-encompassing, omnipresent, and omniscient. Her lurking presence becomes threatening, therefore transforming her into a stepparent" (*Mother Imagery* 24). We can see this quite clearly in *Lucy*, especially when Lucy decides she will not open the letters her mother sends and her desperate attempt to oppose everything her mother has done or said. Lucy tries desperately not to become her mother—the devoted wife who would always keep "a clean house, delicious food…, a clean yard, a small garden of herbs and vegetables, the washing and the ironing of… clothes" (Kincaid, *Lucy* 126). From Lucy's perspective, this woman has thrown her life away and received nothing (126). Moreover, when she is told she resembles her mother, right after knowing about her father's death, she immediately says, "I am not like my mother. She and I are not alike. She should not have married my father. She should not have thrown away her intelligence. She should not have paid so little attention to mine… I am not like her at all" (123). Being compared to her mother is the ultimate insult to Lucy because she has tried very hard to detach herself from this image, which equates to mourning someone who has passed away. Throughout the novel, this is what Lucy does in many ways—she mourns her relationship with her mother, considering it dead since the moment she left the motherland with no intention ever to return.

Still, being the opposite of her mother does not empower Lucy. In trying to drift away from Miss Annie, Lucy loses track of who she is, especially because she has no other female figure in her life—except her host mother, whose ideas about sexuality Lucy also confronts because they are grounded in hegemonic feminism.[43] Consequently, Lucy isolates herself by the end of the novel. Her rebellion and resistance do not emancipate her—on the contrary. While mourning the end of the relationship with her mother, Lucy wishes to love someone else as much as she loves

[43] See a more detailed discussion of Lucy and Mariah's relationships on pages 120-21.

her mother, a love so profound she "would die from it" (164). This recognition of the importance and intensity of mother-daughter relationships comes with an evident issue—this relationship can do good and harm. Lucy wants not to get rid of her mother but to get rid of her mother's power over herself.

Lucy and Miss Annie's relationship mirrors Lucy's relationship with her motherland and the relationship between Antigua and England, the colonized and the colonizer. In an interview with Ferguson, Kincaid affirms that "I used to think I was writing about my mother and myself. Later I began to see that I was writing about the relationship between the powerful and the powerless" (qt. in Alexander, *Mother Imagery* 20). Such a relationship presents no reconciliation by the end of the novel. Although Lucy's mother's last letter says how much she loves Lucy, there is no resolution, and it is not clear if they ever see each other again and reconstruct their broken bond. It is also unclear if Lucy ever returns to her motherland. By the end of the narrative, Lucy becomes independent from Mariah and her mother, but she misses the kind of love only her mother has given her.

The relationship between motherhood, migration, and motherland is also present in *Americanah*, although to a much smaller degree than in *Lucy*. The first image we have of Ifemelu's mother is quite idealistic. Ifemelu remembers her mother's hair as something saint-like, very black and thick, which would drink "two containers of relaxer at the salon" (Adichie, *Americanah* 49). Other people seem obsessed with the woman's hair as her daughter, often asking if that was her "real hair" and wanting to touch it (49). As the narrator indicates, Ifemelu "would often look in the mirror and pull at her hair, separate the coils, will it to become like her mother's" (49). Not only is hair a recurrent theme in the novel, but the fact also that Ifemelu loved her mother's hair possibly made the following experiences even more distressing for her. Eventually, her mother comes home from work and chops off all her beautiful hair before "collecting all the Catholic objects, the crucifixes hung on walls, the rosaries nested in drawers, the missals propped on shelves" (50). After changing religions, although she remained a Christian, Ifemelu's mother transformed, starting to "[offer] starvation in exchange for prosperity, for a job promotion, for good health. She fasted herself bone-thin: dry fasts on weekends, and on weekdays, only water until evening" (50). This change upsets Ifemelu as a child. As she watches her "mother's essence take flight," she feels that woman "could not be her mother" (50).

At the highest point of her malnourishment, Ifemelu's mother starts seeing Angels, and one of them tells her to change churches. After that, her religiosity becomes a bit more moderate, but her relationship with Ifemelu never develops a firm or even remarkable bond. Ifemelu and her mother do not have much in common, primarily because of her mother's piety, while "Ifemelu was uninterested in church, indifferent about making any religious effort, perhaps because her mother already made so much" (54). Unquestionably, the most important woman figure in Ifemelu's life is not her biological mother but Aunty Uju. Even Ifemelu's mother knows that Ifemelu listens to Aunty Uju and asks her to talk to Ifemelu when she misbehaves; "Go and give Ifemelu a talking-to. You are the only person she will listen to" (63-64). Back in Lagos, Ifemelu and Aunty Uju's relationship was parallel to a mother-daughter relationship, as it was "Aunty Uju who sewed Ifemelu's little-girl dresses, and as Ifemelu got older, they would pore over fashion magazines, choosing styles together" (65). Moreover, it was Aunty Uju who taught Ifemelu to "dry a pimple with toothpaste" and "hot-stretched her hair when she got lice" (65). To Aunty Uju, Ifemelu confesses her adolescent passion towards Obinze. Aunty Uju is also the first to discuss sex and sexuality with Ifemelu, telling her to "let him kiss and touch but not let him put it inside" (65).

Although Okolocha argues that Ifemelu migrated because of social and economic problems in Lagos, it is possible to affirm that she would probably not have done so if Aunty Uju had not migrated before her. Aunty Uju leaves Nigeria after the death of the General, her child's father. In the United States, she struggles to keep a house while studying to acquire a medical license. She is the one who suggests Ifemelu should join her; "honestly, you should come and study here, I am sure you can easily get a scholarship. And you can help me take care of Dike. I'm telling you, the small money I make is all going to his babysitter. And by God's grace, by the time you come, I will have passed all my exams and started my residency" (121). There is room to question whether Ifemelu's situation is any different from Hyacinth's or Lucy's when she first arrives in the United States. Although Aunty Uju's intentions are questionable because she explicitly says she needs Ifemelu's help with Dike, giving irrefutable evidence that her financial situation is quite complicated, she is the person who first settles Ifemelu in the adopted country. Moreover, Ifemelu would still have to work as a babysitter for a white family to support herself once she left Aunty Uju. Ifemelu would also go through a traumatic experience while performing other types of

"personal services" to a tennis player in the United States when she was under severe financial constraints.[44]

Similar to Lucy, in lack of a mother figure, Ifemelu needs to find other ways to find positive representation in her life. However, as Marjorie, Eliana, Marcus, and other characters, Ifemelu successfully finds this support through her writing. She can unleash her frustration over everyday micro-aggressions through her blog, on topics from understanding racism in the United States, online dating as a black woman, traveling while black, the Obamas, and especially hair issues (274; 378; 410; 419; 367). In the blog's safe space, she discusses issues openly with (mostly) black women who experience the same things she does, including transitioning from chemically straightened hair to natural (368). Ifemelu's writing performs the same double resistance as Cruz's and Gyasi's novel because of its public aspect—she changes herself while changing others.

Ifemelu's blog arises out of her cultural shock after arriving in the United States. Without Aunty Uju's support, "she longed for other listeners, and she longed to hear the stories of others" (*Americanah* 366). People who would understand her frustration with the lack of black women's representation in fashion magazines (364); or the humiliation of going to the hair salon, wishing to have her eyebrows done, and hearing they "don't do curly" (361). Ifemelu's blog works as a space of honesty and healing for Ifemelu in a period when she had just broken up a relationship with a white man with whom she had no significant openness to discuss racial issues. Ifemelu's story shows that her blog space is intrinsically connected to the construction of her hybrid identity, while she is both influenced and an influencer in this space, considering she acquires a certain degree of fame from her blog to the point of being able to quit her stable job, buy a small condo, and live exclusively off writing. Things change when—because of the blog's success—she is invited to give a diversity workshop, where she cannot talk about race the same way she does in the blog space, mostly because the audience of these workshops is composed mostly of white people. With her success and the blog community growth, hatred messages start coming, and she feels "subsumed by her blog," regarding the blog reads as "a judgmental angry mob waiting for her, biding their time until they could attack her, unmask her" (379).[45] Although the blog helps

[44] See page 124 for a more detailed analysis.

[45] The blog is an interesting and ambiguous space to analyze Ifemelu's perceptions of race in the narrative. At times, she questions the scientific evidence of the non-existence of race (374), and in other times, she advocates for a political

Ifemelu navigate her new space of transversal hybridity, she longs for more connection, a kind of belonging that she only felt before migration, before her contact with racial issues. Hallemeier argues that "*Americanah* presents an alternative, utopic vision of global power in which the United States stands as a foil to the promising future of late Nigerian capitalism" (232), suggesting that *Americanah* shows the limited opportunities for migrants and turns to Lagos' rising in capitalism and offering more opportunities to Nigerians. His Afropolitanist reading presents simplistic explanations of Ifemelu's reasons for returning to Lagos because it only considers capitalist monetary reasons. This notion disregards the fact that Ifemelu's blog is very successful and offers her financial stability in the United States. Still, the blog confirms how black people achieve visibility more quickly when talking about racial issues, and Ifemelu shows discontent with this facet of US racism, which forces people of color to specific positions and allows them specific discourses. When she returns to Nigeria, she feels like she "got off the plane in Lagos and stopped being black" (Adichie, *Americanah* 586), which might be what she longed for the entire novel, although this is never bluntly stated.

In *The Unbelonging*, differently from Lucy and Ifemelu, Hyacinth is attached to her Aunt Joyce, resembling her relationship with the motherland—Jamaica. As Suárez has noticed, there is a lack of motherland and a mother figure in *The Unbelonging* ("Absent" 299), but I wish to highlight the role of Aunt Joyce in this paragraph. Although she is not physically or emotionally available in Hyacinth's life after leaving Jamaica, their link is emphasized throughout the novel. Whenever Hyacinth thinks of Jamaica, she thinks of her aunt, confirming how Aunt Joyce represents the caring and protective image of the mother and, by extension, the motherland. Aunt Joyce is characterized as "good-natured" with "smooth brown cheeks and twinkling dark eyes" (10; 13), perhaps as a generalized characterization of Jamaica itself. When Hyacinth arrives at the airport in London, she misses Aunt Joyce, Jamaica, her friends (13), and her life in England becomes the opposite of everything Jamaica-related. Her bed-wetting and her fear of walking

---

understanding of blackness, saying that "non-American Black" people should stop saying they are "Jamaican or Ghanian" because "America doesn't care" (273). In addition, Ifemelu also shows patronization of Latin American blacks, sometimes referring at biracial or racially ambiguous people as "Indian or Puerto Rican or something" (365), which is of course marking people by their nationalities, as if all Indian and Puerto Rican looked the same. This ambiguity is an interesting trait of the character, who is learning to navigate the racial discourse in the United States, and sometimes condemns tribalism while also participating in it. Her blog follows the same ambiguity, without much depth, and following a non-academic approach.

around the halls of her father's house at night, together with her father's short temper and spanking, are in sharp contrast with the understanding nature of Aunt Joyce.

Aunt Joyce is the only image of a mother Hyacinth has. As put by Suárez, Riley's fiction presents an absent matrilineal line since "mothers, grandmothers, aunts do not accompany the protagonists when they move away" ("Absent" 301). In Hyacinth's case, this separation causes severe trauma, and she grows up with no sense of community and love, no mother figure, or positive female representation (301). The absence of a mother figure also inhibits the passing of stories, and Hyacinth grows up without a sense of her history, a memory of her past, and knowledge of her ancestry. Aunt Joyce becomes a way for Hyacinth to hope for a different life, one that does not involve the cruelty she experiences in London.

Hyacinth's memory of a mother figure who protects and loves her also contrasts the reality of her life in London with a family that devalues her. While her stepmother says she is only in Britain "on sufferance," Hyacinth thinks of how much she wished to be back with Aunt Joyce in the "grey wood shack that had been her home for the first eleven years of her life" (Riley, *The Unbelonging* 28). The grey wood shack opposes the new one, a "peeling, black-painted house full of fear and hate" (28). When thinking about her life and all the mistreatment, Hyacinth highlights more opposition from her life in England:

> Now her whole life seemed to be one round of work and fear, cleaning, cooking, beating, and bed-wetting. It had been so nice with Aunt Joyce, who had always understood, had never treated her badly. She had been popular, with lots of friends. No one teased her, taunted her. Now her only happiness was sleep, for that was when she could go home again and take up her interrupted life. (28).

As the quote above indicates, Hyacinth's perception of England involves mistreatment, bed-wetting, and fear. England is the place of hate—within her household and outside of it, because of racism, while Jamaica is the dream, where life was good and pleasant, where she had friends, a place free from racism and oppression. Moreover, the warmness of Jamaica is contrasted with England's cold, and this contrast can be read as a metaphor for Hyacinth's migrant condition. In Hyacinth's third winter, "she wanted to die. She was so miserable, so unhappy, and so cold—always so cold" (37). In her solitude, she "tried to remember what it had been like to be warm; tried and failed" (37). She is only able to do it at night, in her dreams. The cold-warm opposition becomes a metaphor for England-Jamaica, while fatherhood juxtaposes motherhood. Hyacinth

lives with her father in England, the fatherland—cold and oppressive. Meanwhile, the warm and protective figure of Aunt Joyce represents the motherland.

As shown, Lucy and Ifemelu live in a state of "homelessness" prior to migration due to colonization and its influence on their relationship with their mothers and their communities, dictating their education and the mindset of people around them. When Lucy and Ifemelu decide to migrate, they experience the ambivalence of their inbetweeness—at the same time, they fulfill and feed the myth of migrants acquiring better opportunities in developed countries, they also break with colonial patriarchy and gender constraints imposed on them by their families. As stated by Bhabha, "there is an estranging sense in the relocation of home and the world—the unhomeliness—that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations" (Bhabha 13). The feeling of already being somewhat detached from their mothers and motherlands takes Lucy and Ifemelu on a new journey. While Lucy leaves her home in Antigua to become an au pair in the United States, Ifemelu acquires a partial scholarship to complete her undergraduate degree in the country. In these new locations, they at first seem to cling to another mother figure—Lucy clings to Mariah, her host mother, while Ifemelu seeks support from Aunty Uju upon moving to Philadelphia, and both are frustrated in that regard, resulting in an enhanced estrangement with the adopted country. In the same mold, Hyacinth becomes deeply displaced due to the lack of a mother figure in the adopted country, which leads her to desperately try to remain connected with her mother figure in Jamaica. Both her Aunt Joyce and Jamaica become an escape for Hyacinth, an image of happiness and protection—increasing her displacement in England. Hyacinth feels a connection to her motherland while contrasting it to her life in England, where she also has a stepmother who makes her life more difficult in some respects. By idealizing Jamaica, Hyacinth finds the strength to face the racism and oppression of the adopted country. In the following section, I examine these young women's relationships with their othermothers more closely, as Simone Alexander has used the term. Even though Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth have a mother figure in the adopted country, they all eventually realize their "homelessness." Unless they can accept their new realities and come to terms with their split identities, they do not empower themselves by the end of the narrative.

3.4 Like a mother to me" — Othermothers and Alienation in the Adopted Country.

Lucy, *Americanah*, and *The Unbelonging* are transnational works that avoid simplistic notions of womanhood, motherhood, and identity. In addition, they recognize migration's effects on female subjectivity—particularly in their relationship with mothers and othermothers. As I have specified in the first chapter of this dissertation, Simone Alexander identifies the "othermother" as the woman who plays a nurturing role in other women's lives and is particularly important in assistance during times of crisis, although they can also enforce colonialist beliefs (7). In this sense, perhaps to diminish the displacement they feel in the adopted country (the United States for Lucy and Ifemelu, England for Hyacinth), women try to find mechanisms for coping with their "homelessness," usually looking for a positive representation in the form of a mother figure. Lucy and Ifemelu cling to the closest female character to them, who plays the role of the othermother, at times helping them navigate the new environment, other times imposing specific changes that harm Lucy's and Ifemelu's hybrid identity construction processes. On the other hand, Hyacinth has no help navigating England. As much as her aunt Joyce, Hyacinth's stepmother, Maureen, plays no role in Hyacinth's life. While aunt Joyce is absent physically and through letters, living only in Hyacinth's fantasy, Maureen's presence enhances Hyacinth's "homelessness" and self-hatred. On a general note, these works emphasize the importance of othermother- and mother-daughter relationships, showing how they resemble women's associations with their adopted countries and motherlands. The presence of othermothers influences Lucy's and Ifemelu's lives positively and negatively, while their absence leaves Hyacinth unnurtured, experiencing utter unbelonging.

As mentioned previously, Lucy and her biological mother have a complicated relationship even before migration, largely due to colonial patriarchy. Upon migration, Lucy encounters Mariah, whose role in *Lucy* resembles Alexander's "othermother" since Mariah plays both the role of protecting Lucy from racial capitalism and advocating in pro of it—an ambivalence that Lucy notices and criticizes. At the same time, Lucy sees Mariah—and the United States—as a replacement for her mother and motherland. In a way, Mariah represents a mother figure and works as a link between Lucy and the adopted country, often positively influencing Lucy. On the other hand, Mariah also instigates "colonial habits and mannerisms" (Alexander 7). As Lucy seeks to free herself from her mother's emotional and financial dependence, finding some trace of this power in Mariah harms their relationship.

Still, Lucy states, "Mariah was like a mother to me, a good mother. If she went to a store to buy herself new things, she thought of me and would bring me something also" (Kincaid, *Lucy* 110). In Lucy's perspective, a good mother would care about her children and not judge. Mariah, in this sense, contrasts Lucy's biological mother, who has always dictated what good behavior was and set high standards for Lucy. Lucy truly believes in Mariah's love for her, for "if anyone could love a young woman who had come from halfway around the world to help her take care of her children, it was Mariah" (27). In other words, Lucy sees that although they can love one another, they cannot understand one another for their perceptions of the world. For instance, Mariah's way of loving everything and seeing beauty everywhere fascinates and puzzles Lucy. She does not understand how Mariah "get[s] to be that way" (20). In this sense, their connection remains lacking empathy since Mariah cannot see the world through Lucy's eyes. Because Mariah is a highly empathetic character, her difficulty in understanding Lucy's struggles suggests an inability of white women—and white people, in general—to understand the struggle of non-white women and people.

One example is Mariah's disinclination to comprehend Lucy's hatred toward daffodils. As mentioned before, despite knowing that Lucy had to memorize Wordsworth's poem when she was ten, Mariah believes Lucy would find daffodils "lovely all the same" (29). Lucy's colonial upbringing reality is unimaginable to Mariah—a white middle-class housewife brought up in very advantageous circumstances. Another instance in which Lucy's and Mariah's backgrounds contrast is the train ride to the Great Lake. Lucy soon notices that "the... people sitting down to eat dinner all looked like Mariah's relatives; the people waiting on them all looked like [hers]" (32). As Lucy realizes, most black people are in a serving position on the train; however, Mariah "did not seem to notice what she had in common with the other diners, or what I had in common with the waiters" (32). Mariah's perception is that things are as they are supposed to be, or in Lucy's metaphor, "the world was round, and we all agreed on that" (32). Mariah's inability to see structural racism is as strong as her inability to understand colonialism.

Mariah also instigates Lucy into Western art, especially a type of art that presents a particular way of looking at foreignness. At first, Lucy cannot recognize all the imperialist and colonialist nuances of Paul Gaugin's painting, becoming fascinated by this artist. When Mariah tells Lucy about Gaugin, Lucy immediately relates to his eagerness to leave his home and go someplace far

away—as she had done. Lucy "identified with the yearning of this man" since she comprehends what it means to feel "the place you are born in an unbearable prison and wanting something completely different from what you are familiar with" (95). According to Fulani, "Mariah's pedagogy is... colonizing" because she supports Lucy's creativity, individual thinking, and sexual experimentation in the molds of Western culture (17). Lucy soon realizes that her circumstances are very different from the painter, that she "was not a man" but a "young woman from the fringes of the world," having around herself "the mantle of a servant" (Kincaid, *Lucy*, 95). Although Lucy fails to recognize Gaugin's voyeurism and exoticism, many times portraying natives with an imperial eye, Lucy notices their dissimilarities while Mariah does not.[46]

Even though Mariah and Lucy have an open relationship—sharing, for instance, their sexual experiences, when Lucy tells her about Paul, and Mariah confidences Lucy about her marital struggles with Lewis—their relationship is still embedded in power dynamics. This fact is expressed right at the novel's beginning when Lucy moves into "a small room off the kitchen" (7), the maid's room. While Mariah and her husband see Lucy as the nanny, to their friends, she is the exotic other, coming from "the islands" to take care of white children (Alexander, *Mother Imagery* 81). Alexander comments that Lucy "leaves her mother and her mother's land, Antigua, for her adopted mothers, the United States and Mariah" (81). In other words, Lucy attempts to substitute her mother and motherland for Mariah and an adopted country, but she quits doing so due to Mariah's colonizing endeavors. Lucy must deal with the new problems, for instance, xenophobia and displacement. Consistent with Alexander, the "labeling of the room as the maid's room not only identifies the room but also labels Lucy, objectifies her, and, indeed, contains her in a palpable way" (81). Lucy is denied an individualistic identity and henceforth identified as the girl-servant from the islands (81).

---

[46] There is an interesting intersection between Paul Gaugin and Lucy's boyfriend Paul in the novel. Paul is a painter, a photographer, and a "pervert" (Kincaid, *Lucy* 97). He, along with Mariah, instigates Lucy's passion for photography; he also photographs her often. In one of these pictures, she is "naked from the waist up; a piece of cloth, wrapped around [her], covered [her] from the waist down" (155). This image resembles Gaugin's paintings of natives in Haiti, especially "Girl with a Fan" (see Appendix E). According to Lucy, Paul "loved the things that came from far away and had a mysterious history" (156). Their relationship seems to be an allegory to Paul Gaugin's paintings, and also a critical look upon relationships between white men and black women. Another interracial relationship in which exoticism is suggested, though never confirmed, is between Ifemelu and Curt in *Americanah.* The pair have a long relationship, but their first sexual encounter suggests a high level of curiosity and exoticism from both sides (Adichie, *Americanah* 240).

As Helen Tiffin has noted, Lucy "rejects new European theories about her sexuality and her body offered by Mariah. She interrogates contemporary Euro-American feminism against the background of her own experience" (919). For instance, when Mariah discovers her husband's affair, Lucy finds it not surprising, "men have no morals... I knew; why didn't Mariah know it also?" (Kincaid, *Lucy* 142). Lucy knows that if she tells that to Mariah, "she would only show [her] a book she had somewhere which contradicted everything [she] said" (142). Mariah's pedagogy is rooted in hegemonic feminism that disregards Lucy's experiences with colonial patriarchy, the legacy of slavery, and their impact on black families.

Ifemelu's and Lucy's life abroad have many similar nuances. As much as Lucy and her relationship with her othermother, the most important woman figure in Ifemelu's life is not her biological mother but her "othermother" Aunty Uju. In Lagos, Aunty Uju is supportive, nurturing, and corrective, slapping Ifemelu across her face when she does not show Aunty Uju enough respect (Adichie, *Americanah* 98). It seems certain Aunty Uju's move to the United States influenced Ifemelu to apply to US institutions and acquire her undergraduate degree there. Had Aunty Uju not done it, Ifemelu would not have had anyone to help her acclimate to the adopted country in the first months of her stay. Still, Aunty Uju does not disclose the reality of her life in the United States at first, sustaining an image that living abroad is better than living in Lagos, as people's expectations in Lagos dictate. Before moving abroad, Aunty Uju already employed strategies to make people believe what she wanted, and her relationship with the General is an example of such strategies.

While in Nigeria, Aunty Uju becomes the General's lover, and their relationship becomes taboo in Ifemelu's family. Ifemelu's religious mother calls General Aunty Uju's "mentor" to avoid disclosing their sexual relationship. Moreover, it is implicit that many women in Lagos are interested in finding a mentor themselves—a man to pay for their luxurious taste.[47] Aunty Uju becomes dependent on Oga, the General; despite being a doctor and having a job, the position Oga creates for her in the military hospital does not exist, and she is never paid—consequently, Aunty

[47] This behavior is criticized later by Ifemelu, although at some point Ifemelu herself enjoys the benefits of having a rich boyfriend herself. Curt gets Ifemelu a job in a company that leads her to US residency. Cuban comments in her article how many Latin American women who travel to the United States to work as au pairs acquire their citizenship through marriage. *Americanah* show this phenomenon quite openly, although it is usually frowned upon.

Uju never financially becomes independent of him. Still, she lives in a luxurious home and enjoys the benefits of high-class society in Lagos. However, she is, in fact, penniless. When Ifemelu discovers her aunt has no money in her bank account, Aunty Uju acts obliviously and states that Ifemelu should not worry (95). In addition, Aunty Uju has convinced herself her relationship with the general is secure and that he will eventually change his sexist behavior, "I'll make him change. I just need to go slowly" (95), as she repeats to herself. Everyone around Aunty Uju supports her decision, believing her situation is stable. At first, when she gets pregnant, her life seems to be a fairy tale, and the fact that she is the mistress of an older married man and has no financial stability bothers no one. After the General's death Aunty Uju's situation becomes a matter of discussion and preoccupation. Immediately after the funeral, she is told to pack her things and go away from the general's house, and her only option is to move to the United States with her son Dike.

Nevertheless, the same attitude accompanies Aunty Uju in the adopted country, as she makes everyone believe her life in the United States is much more stable than it is. For instance, she shows no doubt she can acquire her medical license as soon as she gets to the United States when in reality, it takes her a decade to do it (121). Like many migrants, Aunty Uju suffers from difficulty establishing herself financially in her profession, and she is forced to perform tasks reserved for migrants in the adopted country. Having a degree in medicine in Nigeria does not automatically grant Aunty Uju the right to practice medicine in the United States, and she must pass tests and do a residency in a North American hospital to become a doctor. This takes much more time than Aunty Uju and her family expects, and in the meantime, she survives and raises Dike working multiple hours and often suffering from abusive relationships. Still, when she tries to convince Ifemelu to move, Aunty Uju makes everything sound easy and better than Lagos.

Despite Aunty Uju's deceiving information about her life in the United States, Ifemelu soon realizes how her aunt has changed after migration. Ifemelu notices, for instance, that Aunty Uju is quite tired and that she "thought by now things would be better" (134). The fact that Aunty Uju needs to study and work three jobs, "doing retail at the mall, and a research assistantship, and ... some hours at Burger King" (135), on top of being a mother, leaves her exhausted. Moreover, Ifemelu believes her aunt's overall appearance was of someone giving up; while watching her, Ifemelu thinks that the Aunty Uju she knew in Nigeria would take better care of her hair and skin and dress better (135). The once giggling and happy Aunty Uju, whom Ifemelu was very fond of

in Nigeria and even considered her a mother, now resembles repression and hardship. Racial capitalism[48] keeps Aunty Uju in a certain position in society, which hinders her from helping her family the way she wants. Upon rupturing with the motherland, Ifemelu must face another rupture—with her othermother Aunty Uju, who is no longer playing the nurturing and protective role in her life. Aunty Uju becomes a dubious person in Ifemelu's life upon migration, at times helping her settle and adapt to life in the United States, but also advocating for rapid assimilation of American cultural values.

Aunty Uju becomes unable to perform a nurturing and protective role for both Ifemelu and her son Dike mostly because of racism and xenophobia, which maintains her exhausted from working three jobs and prevents her from conquering her objectives. For instance, when she acquires her medical license, another worry emerges—securing a position at a hospital. Aunty Uju believes she must unbraid her hair because employers think braids are "unprofessional" (146). Anxiety concerning acceptance and survival due to racism and xenophobia leads Aunty Uju to believe she had to deny certain aspects of her identity to be accepted; "You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed," as she tells Ifemelu (146). Ifemelu thinks that "Aunty Uju had deliberately left behind something of herself, something essential, in a distant and forgotten place" (146-47). Her anxiety and fear lead her to prevent her son from learning Igbo. When Ifemelu tries to speak some Igbo with her cousin, Aunty Uju tells her, "Please don't speak Igbo to him" because "two languages will confuse him" (134). Even though Ifemelu and Aunty Uju were raised in Nigeria speaking two languages—Igbo and English—Aunty Uju claims that "This is America. It's different" (134). Aunty Uju thinks it is better for Dike and Ifemelu to completely assimilate into American culture, for in her perception assimilation helps avoid xenophobia.

To illustrate this point, after the lady in the register's office speaks to her as if she could not understand English, Ifemelu starts practicing her North American accent. When Curt, Ifemelu's

[48] Harsha Walia defines racial capitalism as a system in which "land and labor are appropriated but people are disenfranchised" (29). This idea conjoins race and nation-state, creating "racialized and nationalized working-class identities, and exacerbates the legally constructed and state-sanctioned vulnerability of migrant works. Migrant workers are segregated from citizen workers" (29). Aunty Uju struggles are embedded in this system, which dictates she does not belong in a hospital—at least not as a doctor. Her place as a black woman and a migrant is determined before her arrival by a system that does not want her to occupy certain spaces, so stepping up the social ladder comes with many obstacles.

rich white boyfriend, arranges an interview in a public relations company for her, Aunty Uju advocates for rapid assimilation into North American standards for blackness, advising Ifemelu to "lose the braids and straighten [her] hair" because "it matters" (250), which she does to look professional—as Aunty Uju had once done—afraid people would misinterpret her natural hairstyle. As Ifemelu tells Curt,

> My full and cool hair would work if I were interviewing to be a backup singer in a jazz band, but I need to look professional for this interview, and professional means straight is best but if it's going to be curly then it has to be the white kind of curly, loose curls or, at worst, spiral curls but never kinky. (252).

Hair becomes a constant worry in Ifemelu's life, and her change in style is a reaction to racism. It is difficult for her to find hair salons to take proper care of her braids, often requiring her one-hour journeys to find establishments specialized in kinky hair texture and style. Soon enough, after many sections of relaxation, "her hair began to fall out at the temples," forcing her to cut it down short, which raised questions about the reason why she had a haircut, with people asking Ifemelu if she was protesting in a racial-deterministic perspective that all black people use hair as a form of protest (262).[49]

Americanah criticizes migration policies at length through the situations Ifemelu must go through to support herself and pay for her education. This criticism happens, for instance, when Ifemelu relies on false identities from other Nigerians to work, pay her rent, and finance her education. She must rely on undocumented job positions because as a student she can only work part-time, which is not enough to support herself and pay for tuition and rent. Still, she struggles to find work with her false identity, relying on her parents' and friends' help to maintain herself. As the bills start piling up, she answers to a "job" advertisement in a newspaper, helping a tennis

[49] Ifemelu and Hyacinth struggle with hair, though for different reasons. Still, somehow, her anxiety about hair is rooted in body image and acceptance and the ways racism affects it. As mentioned before, Ifemelu starts straightening her hair because of work, since Aunty Uju tells her she should follow what is expected of a black woman in American standards. After the disaster of the relaxation products, after she nearly shaves her head, she finds out her boyfriend Curt exchanges romantic emails with another woman. Her reaction is to comment that all of Curt's previous girlfriends "had long flowing hair," immediately feeling "small and ugly" (*Americanah* 261). This means that, after a while experiencing racism in the United States, starts internalizing American beauty standards. The same happens with Hyacinth, who experiences a lot of self-hate, and relaxes her hair so she would be noticed by a man. There has been a growth of scholarship about hair in the United States, for example, Rooks, *Hair Raising* (1996); Banks, *Hair Matters* (2000); Brown and Lemi, *Sister Style* (2021).

player to "relax" with a "massage." Before going to the man's house, she is determined not to have sex with him, but her need for money convinces her to stay.

> She did not want to be here, did not want his active finger between her legs, did not want his sigh-moans in her ear, and yet she felt her body rousing to a sickening wetness … He had not forced her. She had come here on her own. She had lain on his bed, and when he placed her hand between his legs, she had curled and moved her fingers. (189-90).

This experience changes Ifemelu; she does not talk about it with anyone and can no longer hold onto her long-distance relationship with Obinze. More than ever, her tiny bedroom (the smallest bedroom in the house—the only one she could afford) mirrors her sense of self; "She sat naked on her bed and looked at her life, in this tiny room with the moldy carpet, the hundred-dollar bill on the table, her body rising with loathing" (190). Ifemelu attempts to share her experience with Aunty Uju, believing she would understand her need to subordinate herself to the tennis coach. However, aunty Uju congratulates her on acquiring the rent money without any curiosity about the means with which Ifemelu owned it. Aunty Uju's preoccupation confirms her subordination to the racial capitalism that represses them, suggesting that anything is worthwhile to stay in the United States. Aunty Uju's cynical approach to migration and life in the United States resembles Umbelina's character from *Água de Barrela*—for these characters, survival comes before dignity. This conception, however, leads Aunty Uju to ignore both Ifemelu's and her son's depression.

Ifemelu grows confident when she starts making sense of her hybrid identity—that is when she negotiates her Nigerian identity with a political idea of blackness. She suggests that race is not an issue in Nigeria, criticizing the country's class and corruption, the scorn people from the higher classes feel toward the lower ones, and gendered oppression, which leads young women to date wealthy older men instead of pursuing their goals and dreams. In contrast, in the United States, the question of racism is embedded in Ifemelu's social relations, from her interactions at the university, work, hair, and romantic life. Racism's effect on her self-esteem and attitude towards her hair is what drives Ifemelu to start a blog, and she finds out there are many people that think like her and feel "ethnicized others" in the United States (Landry 127), and for sometimes she builds a sense of community—although that changes as she grows popular, and the blog becomes a source of anxiety, as explained in the previous section.

Dike, Ifemelu's cousin, also struggles to comprehend his "homelessness" since he moved to the United States as a young child and lives in a constant place of ambiguity concerning his racial identification and nationality. When Dike tries to kill himself, Ifemelu unconsciously blames Aunty Uju; "Do you remember when Dike was telling you something, and he said, 'we black folk' and you told him 'you are not black'?... You should not have done that," Ifemelu tells Aunty Uju (Adichie, *Americanah* 470). Ifemelu blames Aunty Uju for never reassuring Dike's identity when he was inserted into a society that treated him a certain way because of his physical attributes. "You told him what he wasn't but you didn't tell him what he was" (470), as Ifemelu tells her aunt. While Aunty Uju is certain that Dike's suicide attempt has nothing to do with his upbringing, Ifemelu is more than convinced that is the case. Having once suffered from depression herself, after encountering the tennis coach, Ifemelu knows the cruelty of racial capitalism, which affects Aunty Uju as well, despite her unwillingness to accept that she is black. Dike's displacement culminates in an identity crisis with suicidal tendencies.

Americanah starts when Ifemelu is convinced to return to Lagos, partially because of her lack of connection with her boyfriend Blaine and his academic friends and Aunty Uju—who becomes as distant as Ifemelu's biological mother after migration. Without a supporting system and a community, Ifemelu grows uneasy, longing for a real connection she cannot find in the United States. She clings to Lagos, the fantasy of the motherland, as the last resource. Ifemelu goes back to Lagos, hoping she can reestablish long-lost connections with her parents, friends, and Obinze, her first boyfriend. However, as the following section details, Ifemelu's search for the motherland is incomplete because the home she envisions is out of reach, lost in space and time. She not only wishes to go back to Lagos but to the city she left thirteen years before, in a temporal journey that can never be achieved. In the lack of a stronger mother figure in the United States, Ifemelu feels anxious and longs for home, Nigeria—a search that is never fulfilled, although Ifemelu learns to dwell organically in her new location as a transversal hybrid.

Unlike the deep bond between Lucy-Mariah and Ifemelu-Aunty Uju, Hyacinth and her stepmother Maureen have a very turbulent relationship, the reason why Maureen cannot be considered an othermother to Hyacinth. Maureen is the opposite of Hyacinth's good-natured Aunt Joyce; she is described as cold and mean. Throughout the novel, it is evident that Hyacinth's feelings toward these two supposedly "mother" figures resemble her feelings about her

geographical locale. While Aunt Joyce embodies the warmness of Jamaica, Maureen symbolizes the coldness and hostility of England. Maureen clarifies that Hyacinth will not be protected in that house, that she was not one of the children. Whenever Hyacinth wets the bed, Maureen acts with triumph, saying, "wait till your father gets home" (Riley, *The Unbelonging* 11). It is suggested that Maureen enjoys seeing Hyacinth be punished. Still, Hyacinth believes her father hates her stepmother as much as he hates her, and because of that, he does not mind if they make each other miserable (28). Moreover, Hyacinth's father constantly acts violently against Maureen, hitting her "in front of his friends" (28). No affection whatsoever is present in Hyacinth's household, and the very exterior of the place denounces its miserable condition with its "neglected and ugly" look (12). Hyacinth's unsafe family environment serves as a micronarrative in the novel, while the macro narrative exemplifies the hostility of the adopted country.

Nonetheless, Maureen's attitude changes when Hyacinth starts menstruating. Lawrence, Hyacinth's father, asks Maureen to talk to her, which she does. More than that, Maureen tries to warn Hyacinth about her father's previous attitudes, saying, "'You must watch your father,' she said in almost a whisper, looking round nervously as she did so. 'You old enough for him to trouble you like he did your cousin... Your cousin left a book when she went. A didn't read it but is something to do with what happen to she'" (*The Unbelonging* 45). Maureen's warning is at first ignored by Hyacinth, who could not think of how her father could get any worse. As previously mentioned, Hyacinth soon learns that he could when he is "going to show [Hyacinth] some of the things not let men do" (48). As the sexual violence grows, with Lawrence watching Hyacinth bathe herself, "her stepmother seemed to avoid her eyes, even more, watching her worriedly, but looking guiltily away if she caught her eye. Now she no longer tried to speak, and Hyacinth had the feeling that the woman felt sorry for her" (52). Indeed, Maureen seems sorry and protective, even confronting Lawrence and telling him that if he does to Hyacinth what he had done to Anne (Hyacinth's cousin), he could go to jail (53). Even after seeing Maureen speak up on her defense and being badly beaten because of it, Hyacinth does not trust her and stays alone with her father in the house after Maureen leaves with her children. Seeing the atmosphere of sexual violence growing around Hyacinth might be what led Maureen to plea her to leave, offering protection. Hyacinth denies it because of how Maureen treated her when she first arrived in England. As she states, "I wouldn't go anywhere with her when I know how she hates me already... For all she

knew the woman might even give her over to the white people... As far as I'm concerned the whole lot of you could drop dead" (55). Maureen and Hyacinth's lack of bonding determines Hyacinth's continuing self-hatred because she does not believe anyone in England could love her as much as she believes she does not belong there.

Not surprisingly, this inhospitable physical and sexual violence environment affects Hyacinth's soul intensely, and she is utterly miserable at the beginning of the narrative, wishing she was dead (24). Hyacinth's self-hatred has a clear connection to the hostile "sea of white faces" she encounters when she gets to London (13). All Hyacinth wants is to be accepted, and for that, she wishes she would not look *different*. To illustrate this, Hyacinth "wished with all her might that her prayers would be answered and she would become like them" (13). Because of that, Hyacinth desperately wishes to return to Jamaica, in her mind, the only place where she has felt valued and loved. Returning home becomes Hyacinth's beacon of hope for a better life, although, ironically, she does not write home.

After surviving an abusive childhood that led her into a Youth Reception Centre, a temporary house she stays for over a year while white children come and go daily, Hyacinth starts hating her body image and reproducing the Western narrative around black people. She believes the care workers hate her, but at least they are not "violent like black people" (69). She wonders how she "could compete with white girls" for male attention since she was "too ugly for my use" — as one of the boys at the shelter tells her (88). Somewhat differently from Ifemelu, who relaxes her hair to look professional, Hyacinth goes to the hair salon to try to feel more attractive:

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

As the quotes suggest, Hyacinth's perception of blackness corresponds to pre-established stereotypes about black people in England (Shaw 153-54). The lack of active black women roles in Hyacinth's life makes her perform her femininity in the molds of whiteness to be desired (153-54).

Therefore, there is no active mother or othermother figure in Hyacinth's life. Her stepmother in England only worsens Hyacinth's presence in the adopted country. As Isabel Suárez writes, "the

only positive image" in *The Unbelonging* is "the memory of Aunt Joyce's warm embrace" ("Absent," 301). Hyacinth clings to this image and desires to return to Jamaica and reencounter a fantasized mother and a motherland. However, Aunt Joyce plays no actual role in the narrative, mainly because Hyacinth does not write to her, and she does not write Hyacinth either; their communication is inexistent, and their relationship is as imaginary as the very idea of the motherland Jamaica.

Hyacinth is not the only one lacking a mother figure, differently from Lucy and Ifemelu, who have women who play this role in their lives at specific moments. However, the three characters experience a similar absence of strong female representation in their journeys for empowerment. Lucy cannot find the representation she longs for in Mariah, a female representation to help her negotiate her black woman migrant identity. Mariah cannot fulfill this role primarily because of their different backgrounds. Ifemelu and Aunty Uju, although sharing many similarities in their identities—being both black, Nigerian, migrant women—still struggle to support one another, revealing the non-essentialist depiction of black women's identity in Adichie's novel. Despite sharing some identity traits, Ifemelu and Aunty Uju have different demands, with Aunty Uju's mother's role to Dike dictating many of her choices regarding her and her son's mental health.

Hyacinth, Lucy, and Ifemelu migratory experiences send them out to create spaces where they can dwell in their transversal hybridity. Ifemelu's life in the United States gives her what she needs financially but not a sense of belonging. Upon return, she will find out she cannot ever be "home" again—not in the sense of returning to a version of herself and Lagos before migration. There is no "reaspora." Instead, Ifemelu experiences re-rooting as she falls into a strange-familiar location and needs to rediscover her new self and the new Lagos (Knudsen and Rahbek 121). Ifemelu return is facilitated by her upper-middle-class life, in which she can reproduce much of the life she had in the United States in terms of financial stability. The same cannot be said about Lucy and Hyacinth.

Lucy cannot find a home in her motherland or the United States and is constantly haunted (in dreams especially) by the legacy of colonialism and imperialism, wishing she would find someone to love. On the same note, Hyacinth cannot find a home in England and believes Jamaica is the place she will be happy—a dream shattered when she returns to the island. These two

women's social class differs greatly from Ifemelu, and upon return, they would not encounter similar life experiences. In the next section, I show how Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth cannot find a home in a geographical space because migration has split their identities, made them transversal hybrids, and only by accepting and coping with this fluidity and tension space can they find ways of dwelling in their "homelessness."

Alexander states that daughters can only find "wholeness" when connecting with either mother or motherland (25). Although I believe the word "wholeness" is not adequate to express the condition of these transversal hybrid subjects, Lucy and Hyacinth experience an absence of both a mother figure and a motherland, which culminates in a feeling of displacement that shows no resolution for Lucy and Hyacinth. Their lack of community and female representation, which is the opposite of Eliana Alves Cruz in *Água de Barrela* and Marjorie in *Homegoing,* enhances their dislocations. Their mechanisms to fight this absence are different. Lucy rejects her mother, othermother, and motherland, ultimately isolating herself; Hyacinth fantasizes about a mother and a motherland to endure the harshness of her life in England and ends up isolated in a hotel room, similarly to Lucy. Arguably, these women are looking not for a place but a person who will love them and give them a sense of "home"—a sense of belonging, as the next section will show.

On the other hand, Ifemelu does not completely reject her mother or othermother, and she goes in search of a motherland lost in time. Her trajectory from Lagos to the United States and back to Lagos demands a negotiation between Ifemelu's Nigerianess and Americanness. In this hyphenated space of tension, Ifemelu struggles to fit in while living in the diaspora, and when she returns to Lagos. However, as she rediscovers new versions of herself and accepts them, she becomes able to successfully dwell in this new space, reestablishing her old connections and making new ones. Her return to Lagos creates spaces of nostalgia and hope for a future where she will no longer feel displaced.

3.5 "Go back whe you come fram" — The journey back and the identity problem.

In the final lines of Kincaid's novel, Lucy opens a diary and writes down, "I wish I could love someone so much that I would die from it" (*Lucy* 164). Such desire suggests a willingness to be attached to something, so attached she would die from it—despite the fact Lucy has been fighting

to become independent from her mother and—consequently—her motherland since the beginning of the narrative. On a similar note, in the first pages of *Americanah*, Ifemelu expresses her wish to come back home as "amorphous longings, shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living" (Adichie, *Americanah* 7). Ifemelu's feelings show not precisely the desire for something that fills the void but the desire of the void itself. It is shapeless, unattainable. Yet, it is voracious, and it consumes her eagerness to be where she is and keep doing whatever she is doing. Finally, we have *The Unbelonging* and the two opposing images of Jamaica: the warm and sweet-scented Jamaica from the novel's first page and the Jamaica of the novel's final pages, when Hyacinth returns to her motherland as a young woman and is taken by a feeling of dread, without being able to familiarize herself with the place, for it "was not the place she remembered" (Riley, *The Unbelonging* 137). These three passages illustrate what Srilata Ravi reveals about returnees acting like visitors, developing a tourist-like observational eye.

Migration brings the impossibility of ever being "home" again, and Ravi's observations on the returnee being a type of tourist relate to Ifemelu's and Hyacinth's experiences upon return, which makes them diasporic returnee-tourists reshaping their homes through the memories they have created in the diaspora (Ravi 67). Both Ifemelu and Hyacinth look at streets, houses, and even the people noticing how they changed in their absences. Their observations "clash with perceptions of locals (friends and relatives) who presume that returnees will follow scripted performances that distinguish them as tourists" (Ravi 66-67). This section examines Ifemelu and Hyacinth's return to the motherlands and how their attitudes are read as tourists-like by locals, enhancing a feeling of "homelessness" in both characters. Ifemelu and Hyacinth's attitude upon their "homelessness" is what determines their empowerment by the end of their narratives. Lucy does not return to Antigua by the end of the novel, and the final pages of *Lucy* reveal her displacement and her lack of empowerment.

Ifemelu's return to Lagos exposes her transversal hybridity right away, even though Ifemelu's first reaction is to refute the idea she has become an "americanah." For instance, Ifemelu tries to reproduce her "American" life in Lagos, starting a blog after not adapting to a magazine position. Her perspective on Lagos' people's interactions represents irrefutable evidence of her change. Before going to the United States, Ifemelu does not openly criticize women who maintain relationships with older and wealthy men, as, for instance, her aunt had done with Oga, the general.

After returning, however, Ifemelu faces problems with her acquaintances for criticizing gender relations that she no longer passively accepts. She writes about an acquaintance who experiences this kind of life on her blog, saying that women in Lagos "live lives they can't afford… One of them is my friend, a beautiful, brilliant woman who works in advertising. She lives on The Island and is dating a big man banker. I worry she will end up like many women in Lagos who define their lives by men" (Adichie, *Americanah* 521). However, the post is not well-received, and Ifemelu receives many complaints from women, including her friend Ranyi—the friend she mentions in her blog. Ifemelu's attitude in criticizing her friend's lifestyle strikes Ranyi as arrogant and hypocritical since Ifemelu has done the same in her relationship with Curt. Ifemelu's attitude shows one important issue; by writing a blog criticizing social interactions, Ifemelu reproduces the same kind of perspective she used to criticize the United States. In other words, she uses the same "foreignness" to address social issues. Ifemelu's willingness to show what is "wrong" in her perspective is another trait of her "foreignness" despite being in her motherland.

In addition, Ifemelu realizes that she no longer has anything in common with her old friends. Upon return, when they meet, "Ifemelu wanted to talk about the past, about the teachers they had mocked and the boys they had liked, but the marriage was the preferred topic—whose husband was a dog, who was on a desperate prowl, post too many dressed-up pictures of herself on Facebook" (490). Throughout the nostalgic reunions, Ifemelu "struggled to find, in these adult women, some remnants from her past that were often no longer there" (490). Everything Ifemelu lived in her experience abroad, which exposes her to the United States' racial capitalism, creates a void between her and her old friends, even Ranyinudo. She concludes their friends have not changed. They have been inserted into the same cultural ideologies and share similar concerns. Ifemelu is the one who, after thirteen years abroad, is no longer the same and developed a new perspective on society. As observed by Safran, some diasporic bodies do not go back home even when they are back in their nation (91). In other words, the diasporic body becomes hybrid, belonging to what Homi Bhabha called "third space," within an international culture that is formed in the negotiation of space by the hybrid body (36). Still, Ifemelu is able to dwell in this new location organically, to the point in which she states she feels "really home" and does not need to text her friend to decide what she might do within the hours of a day (Adichie, *Americanah* 506).

This ability to reinvent herself until becoming able to be part of Lagos, and exercise her new self in that location, is what makes Ifemelu a transversal hybrid.

Still, Ifemelu fights this "foreignness" feeling caused by her hybrid identity at first. For instance, she feels comfortable among other returnees who were "back home with an extra gleaming layer" (502) while wishing she did not. Ifemelu refutes feeling comfortable around them, pretends not to be interested in the same things they were, or have the same North American eating habits (503). When one of the returnees criticizes Nollywood, saying it is like "public theater," Ifemelu disagrees, even though she too thought precisely the same thing (504). Ifemelu's "urge to be contrarian was strong" because she supposes that "if she set herself apart, perhaps, she would be less of the person she feared she had become" (504). Instead of embracing her hybridity, Ifemelu feels ashamed of it and wants to hide it, deny it, because returnees are often criticized for thinking themselves better than locals. To Ifemelu, this behavior equates to her father speaking in "perfect" English. It is a way to collaborate with the imperialist thinking that molds the colonized mindset to believe they are inferior compared to developed nations.

Ifemelu condemns the arrogance of returnees and other people's beliefs about returnees. When she announces her return to Lagos, for instance, many people indicate concern about her decision, fearing she would not be able to cope with life in Nigeria, as if, somehow "she was … irrevocably altered by America, had grown thorns on her skin" (*Americanah* 24). Her parents, for instance, prefer that Ifemelu had not returned to Lagos and are delighted that "at least" Ifemelu is now "an American citizen" and can go back to the United States at any time she wants (24). People's staggered reactions about Ifemelu's decision to go back to Lagos at the beginning of the novel expose their beliefs that the United States is always on a pedestal compared to Nigeria. People's reaction to Obinze's decision not to put his child in the French school also shows this tendency. As an acquaintance tells him, "If you decide to disadvantage your child by sending her to one of these schools with half-baked Nigerian teachers, then you only have yourself to blame" (36). This confirms Fanon's remarks on how the "colonialist bourgeoisie frantically seeks contact with the colonized elite" (9), which comes with the prejudiced notion that the colonizer is a more civilized nation.

Pashmina Murthy comments that Ifemelu's return is related to "Lagos's rise as a global city, which offers new possibilities for the cosmopolitan subject" (200). In other words, Murthy's

argument implies that Lagos "rises" to become more like the United States—offering opportunities for young, educated people like Ifemelu and Obinze. Murthy's argument parallels Hallemeier's idea that *Americanah* presents a "utopic vision of global power" of the cosmopolitan Lagos (232). Although these readings would make some sense in Ifemelu's case—the agent in her decision to go back to Lagos—the argument does not fit Obinze's case since he is deported from England. Nevertheless, Murthy's argument is parallel to all the colonizing thoughts of other characters in the novel who could not understand why Ifemelu wanted to go back to Lagos in the first place. Much like Murthy and Hellemeier, many characters try to understand and rationalize Ifemelu's decision when Ifemelu herself says she is coming back "because she wanted to" (Adichie, *Americanah* 16). In addition, the very idea of linking Ifemelu's return with a capitalist ideology of job opportunities that comes with the "rise" of Lagos does not fit Ifemelu's character since she has shown disdain for such ideologies for most of the novel, quitting a secure job twice to dedicate herself to writing a blog. In addition, she also decides to stop writing her blog—a relatively financially stable blog—to return to Lagos, showing that her objectives are not related to capital but an individualized search for meaning and purpose for her life. It is very interesting to notice that by the end of the pages of the novel, Ifemelu herself shows disdain for the idea of comparing Lagos and New York. In a blog post she writes when she is already back in Lagos, she says, "Lagos has never been, will never be, and has never aspired to be like New York, or anywhere else for that matter. Lagos has always been undisputably itself" (519). Ifemelu, in fact, goes on to criticize returnees who complain that Lagos is not New York (519).

Murthy argues that *Americanah's* narrative "undoes the earlier trauma of ambiguous belonging and hurtles toward a happy reconciliation of the lovers with each other and with Lagos" (201). This is not only a naïve understanding of the novel but also an inadequate one, which ignores Ifemelu's struggles after her homecoming. As it was already mentioned, soon after coming back, Ifemelu realizes that she no longer has anything in common with her old friends while struggling to accept that she feels more comfortable among the returnees. She also must realize she cannot simply replicate some of her North American life hacks, especially when it comes to her new blog. Likewise, she looks at things with foreign eyes, noticing the heat, the rubbish on the streets, or "a man's body lay on Awolowo Road" or how the "cars became gasping boats" after a flood (Adichie, *Americanah* 475). As Ranyinudo tells her, "You are looking at things with American eyes" (475-

6). Coming back, therefore, causes Ifemelu to feel "nostalgic and melancholy, a beautiful sadness for the things she had missed and the things she would never know" (478). Whatever came to pass during her absentia cannot be reconsolidated. Ifemelu must rediscover new versions of Lagos, Obinze, and herself. Her reasons for coming back to Lagos never become explicit in the novel, but I would like to emphasize three issues I have already mentioned. Ifemelu longs for connection, something she was lacking in the United States. She does that by reconnecting with her parents, her friends, and her high school sweetheart Obinze. Secondly, Ifemelu comments how coming back to Lagos means she is no longer black. Being back in Lagos takes off the weight of racial issues in the United States, which had led Ifemelu to start a blog on it (though she was still criticized for not doing enough by her boyfriend, Blaine) (387); these two issues might represent the underlying reasons why Ifemelu goes back to Lagos.

Ifemelu successfully embraces her new diasporic identity and dwells in her new locations in a way that Lucy and Hyacinth do not. Although all three characters continue to experience a lack of mother figures, Ifemelu, differently from Lucy and Hyacinth, becomes comfortable in Lagos and within her skin, developing a sense of self that enables her to resolve her issues and live without feeling she does not belong in Lagos, accepting and embracing her past experiences. This easiness Ifemelu slowly builds contrasts Hyacinth's visit to Jamaica and Lucy's refusal to return to Antiqua. While Hyacinth feels even more displaced upon return, Lucy completely denies returning to her island by the end of the narrative, which closes with her emancipation from Mariah, settling in her new apartment. As and Hyacinth, Lucy's loneliness reflects her inability to find a community in the United States and the motherland. Her refusal to go back to Antigua and the melancholic ending of her story set Lucy apart from Ifemelu. Instead, she ponders on the feeling of "homelessness" perhaps as much as Hyacinth does.

Lucy's "homelessness" reflects her rupture with her mother, as was already mentioned. However, most of her feeling is self-imposed because Lucy refuses to talk to her mother, read her letters, speak to her. She deeply resents her mother for favoring her young male siblings (Kincaid, *Lucy* 130). In Lucy's words, "my mother was my mother and... society and history and culture and other women, in general, were something else altogether" (131-32). In other words, Lucy understands sexist behavior and the legacy of colonialism in the Caribbean; she knows that her ancestral history and her being on an island named by Christopher Columbus in passing "was the

result of a foul deed" (135).[50] As a child, she wished to have been colonized by the French, for "they were prettier, much happier in appearance, so much more the kind of people [Lucy] would have enjoyed being around" (136). Mariah tries to convince Lucy to forgive her mother, talking about "women in society, women in history, women in culture, women everywhere" (131), but Lucy refutes the "every woman" rhetoric. In other words, Lucy's awareness of the lack of female representation sends her on an individual search, a very solitary one. She wants to live on her terms, as she tells her mother in a letter:

> I wrote my mother a letter; it was a cold letter. It matched my heart. It amazed even me, but I sent it all the same... I reminded her that my whole upbringing had been devoted to preventing me from becoming a slut... I then gave a brief description of my personal life, offering each detail as evidence that my upbringing had been a failure and that, in fact, life as a slut was quite enjoyable, thank you very much. (127-28).

By the end of the novel, after ignoring her mother's letters until she learns of her father's death, Lucy writes home and gives her mother the wrong address (140). Lucy's sexual rebellion to prove to her mother that her oppression has served no purpose except create a void between them does not free Lucy—on the contrary. Lucy feels a terrible void by the novel's end, wishing she could only love someone else (164). Therefore, Lucy loses herself in her attempt to eliminate Miss Annie's power over her. The closure of *Lucy* indicates how far she is from finding a sense of "wholeness," resulting from her denial of a part of her self.

According to Angela Castro, by the end of the narrative, Lucy "becomes a woman with power who can control her consciousness. Kincaid draws on this idea in *Lucy* and portrays a character whose body is not repressed, much less living within an illusory model of power" (Castro 26). Building on Audre Lorde's concept that suppressing the erotic is not empowering (Lorde 53), Castro demonstrates how Lucy's goals dominate her non-heteronormative sexual choices and empower her at the end of the narrative. Although I agree that Lucy's endeavor to free herself from her mother's sexual oppression enhances her resistance to patriarchal society values, I consider that Lucy is not empowered by the end of the narrative because she does not learn how to navigate her traumas and accept part of her identity, as Ifemelu and other characters do. Rupture reveals to

[50] In 1493, Christopher Columbus named the island in honor of *La Virgen de la Antigua,* a statue in the cathedral of the southern Spanish city of Seville.

be two-folded for Lucy, and she remains in a space of denial and pain. The same can be said about Toni Morrison's *Sula*. By the end of the narrative, when Sula dies, her disruptive sexual behavior does not empower her, and she dies alone. Lucy and Sula share the idea that performing sexuality on the molds of patriarchal masculinity frees them from gender oppression when in reality, they reproduce the same behavior that oppresses them.

Lucy's lack of reconciliation and acceptance is not very different from Hyacinth's sense of "homelessness" by the end of *The Unbelonging* since Hyacinth also fails to reconcile with her mother-figure and the motherland. Hyacinth spends the whole narrative missing Jamaica and wishing to return to her motherland and Aunt Joyce, her mother figure. Her feelings toward warm Jamaica are highly romanticized, and Hyacinth fights back every piece of criticism towards her motherland to keep her fantasy intact. She argues with her friend Charles, insisting that struggles for freedom, like those in Zimbabwe, do not happen in Jamaica (Riley, *The Unbelonging* 126). Charles resists that romantic image of Jamaica, saying that "your country must still struggle against domination, surely... you are still facing the problems of imperialism and neo-colonialism" (126). Hyacinth opposes this thought and shows condescendence, saying that Jamaica is "not like Africa... people are more civi... well, aware of what freedom and independence mean" (126). Her willingness to keep the image of Jamaica as a sacred land, with no issues like racism and power struggles, is so strong she must believe they are in a different position, a higher position even, from countries such as Zimbabwe. She fails to see how "European civilization is a poor yardstick for development" (126)—as put by Charles—because recognizing that means shattering the only thing that has kept her willingness to live intact through the awfulness of her life in England—the idea that Jamaica would be there for her, with a warm embrace, as soon as and whenever she returned like a mother would do.

Hyacinth's return to Jamaica confirms her friends Perlene and Charles' predictions of disappointment. Firstly, she is in Jamaica for over a week before she has the guts to visit her Aunt Joyce—even though she spends the whole novel missing this woman who was like a mother to her. Hyacinth's attachment to her dreamy Jamaica eagers her to ignore reality. Upon getting there, she sees that it "was not the place she remembered" (137). The same resistance to listening to other people's comments about Jamaica's situation reflects in the fact that Hyacinth has never written to her aunt. She walks to her aunt's shack fearful, while "her mind screamed rejection of the

wooden shack, refused the ragged familiarity of the splintered door," and she becomes aware of the hostile looks of the neighbors that take her back to Lumber Street in England, where she had been physically and sexually abused by her father (137).

The image of poverty and despair worsens when Hyacinth meets Florence, a friend from the past, and sees in her an image of decadence that represents the shattering of Hyacinth's dream of homecoming. Florence accuses Hyacinth of not writing to her aunt, who was almost dying, and never sending money to help them. Additionally, she tells Hyacinth to "go back whe you come fram" (142)—a statement Hyacinth has heard in England. After spending her adolescent years in England, thinking that the place she had to come back to was Jamaica, hearing such a thing from Florence destabilizes Hyacinth; "'go back to where you belong,' they had said, and then she and thought she knew where that was. But if it was not Jamaica, where did she belong?" (142). Being rejected from Jamaica enhances Hyacinth's feelings of displacement because she feels she has no place in the world. Hyacinth's search for a fixed idea of home and identity comes to a bitter end at the realization that, as a diasporic person, she cannot find any of those.

Undoubtedly, Hyacinth's physical and sexual abuse adds another layer to the struggle of migration and racism, which enhances her displacement. Hyacinth's fear of rejection ultimately hinders her from searching for her friend Perlene's parents in Jamaica, and she finds refuge in the interpersonal hotel room. This room resembles the small windowless one from the middle of the narrative—to where she goes after leaving her father's house at the youth center. There is nothing to love in this interpersonal room, but there is nothing to hate or hurt either. After so much violence, abuse, and oppression, Hyacinth cannot let herself trust anyone. Her friend Charles is an example of how much Hyacinth has become traumatized after her abuse. When Charles tries to understand what happened to Hyacinth, she lies to him, saying she had been attacked by a man but not disclosing it was her father. They eventually have sex, and after it, Hyacinth feels a "sick disgust, her mind an incoherent jumble full of anger and self-loathing" (131). Her sexual experience with Charles sends her mind back to the abuse she suffered from her father. She cannot connect to

another man due to her past's violent deeds, and she does not look for help, as other women with sexual traumas do.[51]

After her sexual experience with Charles, "only the thought of Jamaica sustained her" (134). All of her life in England had become "sordid evil," and she can only find hope in the Jamaica fantasy (135). Once she realizes she cannot return to Jamaica as she had hoped for so long, Hyacinth notices that inside her, "buried inside her woman's body, trapped and bleeding in the deepest recesses of her, a young girl screamed" (143). Hyacinth knows "she would never be free until that child had healed" (143). However, the novel concludes before we can see Hyacinth achieve such healing and come to terms with her hybrid identity. She finishes the novel even more hopelessly than when she started, unable to even dream of a better life in Jamaica. Hyacinth envies white tourists who went to Jamaica "for sun, sea, excitement" (143). Tourists did not deal with poverty and decay because they thought it had nothing to do with them. *The Unbelonging* closes with its title reflecting Hyacinth's soul. She is truly in a "homelessness" position because she cannot find either a place or people to connect with; she cannot trust people she loves and keeps longing for a time when she was happy.

Hyacinth's idealization of Jamaica contrasts *Lucy*'s criticism of her motherland or Ifemelu's acceptance of her transversal hybridity. Her idealization of Jamaica enhances her helplessness and unbelonging. As much as Lucy, Hyacinth cannot find a way to feel empowered upon her return to Jamaica because there is no reconciliation with her mother or motherland. By analyzing Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging*, Davies affirms that Hyacinth fantasizes and romanticizes ideas of home, only to find out that she can be fully part of neither Jamaica nor England (101). Hyacinth, according to Davies, wishes she had "construct[ed] new worlds borne of resistance" (102). In other words, Hyacinth wishes she would be more like her friend Perlene, who can dwell in both worlds—Jamaica and England—without belonging to any. Perlene, who has come to terms with her transversal hybridity, can dwell in this in-betweenness as successfully as Ifemelu, and because of that, they are more empowered by the end of the novel compared to Lucy and Hyacinth.

[51] Sophie, from *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, for example, looks for help to heal from her sexual traumas especially in Santeria and other ancestral practices.

Nevertheless, although Ifemelu goes back home and can successfully dwell in this location with her hybrid identity, there is no reason to believe she is entirely "home." Safran discusses the contradiction of the returnees, saying that "Returnees, particularly from host countries that are more advanced than the homeland, might unsettle its political, social, and economic equilibrium; returning … Mexicans … might be too ambitious …; blacks too Americanized; and Armenians too capitalist" (94). This change resembles the struggles of Ifemelu and Hyacinth. While Florence asks Hyacinth why she has never helped them financially, Ifemelu struggles to adapt to working habits in Lagos when, for instance, she and her boss have very conflicting views of what the magazine should be. Much of this conflict comes from the fact that Ifemelu has a different, *alien* perspective on Lagos' gender relations. Although Ifemelu is reluctant to accept her new identity, she soon comes to terms with how her experience in the United States has transformed her.

Compared to Lucy and Hyacinth, Ifemelu can be seen as truly living within two cultures. That is only possible because "Ifemelu engages in the US host culture while still retaining parts of herself that hold value," as, for instance, her accent and her hair (Landry 143). After trying to sound "American," Ifemelu decides to keep her accent as a substantial part of her identity. Moreover, "In the beginning, Ifemelu scoffs at the notion of being completely changed by her time in America, but when she decides to return to Nigeria, she realizes that she is an "Americanah," an amalgamation of both cultures" (43). In other words, Ifemelu finds a way to cope with her hybrid identity in a way that neither Lucy nor Hyacinth could. According to Landry, Marjorie from *Homegoing* also dwells well with her hybrid identity, negotiating her Ghanaian and American identities more naturally. Marjorie—and Ifemelu—internalize a broad black political identity and go beyond the Atlantic's boundaries while preserving an Africaness that connects them to their motherlands (143), which is missing at the end of *Lucy* and *The Unbelonging*. Although this in-betweenness does not come without tension, accepting it makes Ifemelu (and Marjorie) more empowered than Lucy and Hyacinth.

Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth desire to undo the fragmentation of the diasporic condition, even though it is impossible. Their willingness to let go of the anxiety to feel whole and part of a community without any tension embracing their hybridity ultimately allows them to participate in the community. In many ways, as Inés Salazar has suggested, it is the same struggle some women of color face while participating in a community without choosing which side they will fight on—

their race or gender—and decide to speak from both locations (408). As Ifemelu becomes able to do that, as she sets things straight with important people in her past, like Blaine and Curt, and find a balance in her new life, she reestablishes bonds with her community, despite everything that is different and now part of her new self, we notice an easiness on her. *Americanah* closes on a positive light, with an empowered Ifemelu accepting herself and living her life the way she desires. This is the opposite of what happens in *Lucy* and *The Unbelonging*, in which the final pages leave the reader wondering if Lucy and Hyacinth will be able to find the same empowerment.

CHAPTER 4. MIGRATION, DISLOCATIONS, AND THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER DYAD IN *BROWN GIRL, BROWNSTONES, DREAMING IN CUBAN*, AND *BREATH, EYES, MEMORY*.

"Talk yuh talk, Silla! Be-Jees, in this white-man world, you got to take yuh mouth and make a gun."

— Paule Marshall, *Brown Girl, Brownstones*

This chapter examines the mother-daughter dyad in *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, *Dreaming in Cuban*, and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, showing how migration enhances generational conflicts between mothers and daughters. Through the characters of Selina, Pilar, and Sophie, along with their mothers, we observe the connection between motherhood and motherland unfold, as daughters feel the necessity to reconnect with their motherlands and their mothers to understand their diasporic conditions.

The first section, "Surviving Racism and Sexism: The Mother-Daughter Dyad," shows a literature review of the novels chosen, pointing to their limitations as well as how this study attempts to address some of them in order to contribute to a growing scholarship on the topic of mother-daughter dyad and migration. The second section, "Everything gon be white: Generational conflicts and diaspora," discusses the mother-daughter dyad and how migration and racial capitalism affect family relations, for instance, causing severe ruptures between Selina's parents (*Brown Girl, Brownstones*), Lourdes and Celia (*Dreaming in Cuban*), and Sophie and her mother (*Breath Eyes, Memory*).

The third section, "You got to take yuh mouth and make a gun:" Language and Identity in the Diaspora," analyzes the role of language identity construction, as well as the role of the mother in passing on memory to their daughters. Language helps and hinders mother and daughters' communications, and it is even embedded in some of the novels' designs. The final section, "You call it home?": Searching for home and belonging" concludes the chapter by discussing the characters' journeys back (or intentions to go back) to their motherlands. Selina, Pilar, and Sophie become more able to dwell in their hybridity because they attempt to connect with their mothers and motherlands.

4.1 Surviving Racism and Sexism: The Mother-Daughter Dyad.

Mothers, othermothers, and motherlands protagonize novels like *Homegoing, Água de Barrela, Lucy, Ameriacanah,* and *The Unbelonging* even when they are absent in the daughter's lives, for their presences and absences cause an impact on identity construction and belonging. Chapter three has shown that even women who prefer to isolate themselves and become solo travelers, like Lucy, Hyacinth, and Ifemelu, still deal with the often overpowering (metaphorically) presence of their mothers and othermothers, which affect their identity constructions. Miss Annie, for instance, dictates Lucy's actions, even though they are geographically apart, and Lucy's inability to deal with this hinders her empowerment. Mother-daughter relationships often affect daughters' identity constructions—a process made more complex in the context of the diaspora.

This dissertation has discussed how the concept of mothers can mean both a soul and blood ties, though I employ "othermother" to indicate surrogate/host mothers. These female representations often show ambivalence in daughters' lives, playing a "nurturing and suffocating" role (Alexander 7). They help daughters know their history through storytelling and preserving language and culture, which helps deal with traumas. However, this precursor female image also often dictates behavior and reproduces patriarchal repression in daughters' lives. In this sense, mothers in the context of diaspora both connect daughters with a past that is pivotal for their constructions of political identities, as well as they sometimes reinforce beliefs around the ways of dwelling in the diaspora. This ambivalence often determines mother-daughter relationships, for they live in a tension between valuing the past and heritage and striving in the diaspora. For instance, while mothers have many memories of the motherlands (which are usually harsh and represent the struggle for survival), daughters go on a journey of imagining the motherland and wishing to return, hoping the geographical place will give them an understanding of their identity. Moreover, mothers are often interested in owning property, achieving financial stability, and establishing roots in the adopted country, while daughters search to construct their individual identities in a process that involves unrooting, detaching, and looking for a space in which they become comfortable in their split, transversal hybrid identities.

Migration enhances mother-daughter conflicts and provokes feelings of disconnection and unbelonging in *Brown Girl, Brownstones, Breath, Eyes, Memory,* and *Dreaming in Cuban.* This

chapter analyzes how daughters in the diaspora often become controlled by their mothers' power, who insist on imposing behavior constraints, especially concerning sexuality, but also regarding political inclinations. I argue that daughters' disconnections with their temporal and geographical spaces reflect their conflicting relationships with their mothers and identities. In *Brown Girl, Brownstones, Dreaming in Cuban*, and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, reconciliation between mothers and daughters—however minor—happens upon reconnection with the motherland, when daughters achieve a "wholeness" that has nothing to do with a fixed identity but an acceptance of their hybridity. In other words, reconciliation among mothers, daughters, and motherlands does not resolve all disconnections between mothers and daughters, but all novels offer some possibility of restoration and bonding.

Brown Girl, Brownstones tells the conflicting story of a migrant family living in New York, divided between establishing a home in the adopted country (Silla, the mother's desire) and returning to the motherland (Deighton, the father's desire). Amid this dispute is Selina, Silla and Deighton's youngest daughter. Selina's displacement in a society that does not value her because she is a migrant black girl mirrors her inbetweeness at home, where she is between her parents' dispute, always favoring her father, for whom she feels more connection and less need to retaliate, but at the same time having her opinion devalued for being a child. Selina and Silla's struggle can be described in discordance in their ways of dwelling in the diaspora, besides their ideals of womanhood. Throughout the story, mother and daughter find out how similar they are and how far they are willing to go to achieve their goals. Marshall's novel resembles much of her fiction and the repeated intersection of mother-daughter relationships amid poverty and racism in the diaspora.

Marshall draws inspiration from the women poets of her family. These women's speech is present in all of Marshall's fiction, but especially in *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, a novel with many biographical nuances. Her other works include *Soul Clap Hands and Sing* (1961) and *Daughters* (1991). Marshall's fiction celebrates West Indian culture and voice while also portraying in her characters "a sense of alienation and displacement which minority people experience" (Denniston 54). Furthermore, Marshall proposes that cultural conflict be resolved by self-empowerment, which is greatly facilitated through responsible participation with others (54). Selina follows this idea, and the character's emancipation happens because of her disposition to independent thinking.

Also, Selina starts to reconcile with a part of her that is similar to her mother by the end of the narrative—a trope that repeats itself in *Dreaming in Cuban* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*.

Scholarly research on *Brown Girl Brownstones* emphasizes gender conflicts,[52] female sexuality,[53] and race and identity.[54] Marshall's fiction and criticism guide readers toward identifying a "creation of consciously Black woman-identified art" (Smith 20). In other words, her work is consciously feminine, and her critics, in their majority, have identified. Selina's struggles and mixed feelings about her own body's development, as put by Shirley C. Parry, mirror her "highly ambivalent response to being "one" with the communal group" (41). Marshall addresses the ambivalence of being both black and female, making Selina feel detached from her community, trapped by this community's patriarchal values that protect and oppress black womanhood.

Another important theme of Marshall's work that is somehow shaded by the three major points above—gender, sexuality, and race and identity, is the journey. As put by Joyce Pettis, "The journey motif complements and enhances the geographic sweep of Marshall's fiction and becomes crucial in the reciprocity between her texts and the cultures represented in them" (Pettis 2). For example, the Barbados migrants in *Brown Girl, Brownstones,* although confined to the physicality of the brownstone, keep strong connections with their motherlands, either through fantasizing about their return or cooking meals. Marshall's novel focuses on the fragmentation of characters like Selina, demonstrating "historical experiences of black people of the African diaspora..., a process that represents an unavoidable consequence of traumatic cultural displacement" (3). Although this conflict is never resolved, we see through Selina's attempt to find some sense of comfort in "homelessness" that she can empower herself by accepting her hybridity and connecting herself with her mother and motherland.

The mother-daughter dyad is also very relevant in this study since Selina and Silla's relationship centralizes the novel. Few works have directly discussed this theme, and my study aims at addressing this limitation on the scholarship of *Brown Girl, Brownstones*. I should highlight, however, Lisa D. McGill's "Thinking Back Through the Mother: Poetics of Place and the Mother/Daughter Dyad in *Brown Girl, Brownstones,*" which argues against psychoanalysis

[52] For example, Byerman (1991); Denniston (1995); MacLeod (2006)
[53] For example, Schneider (1982); Christol (1990); De Abruna and Nielson (1995); Parry (2000)
[54] For example, Jackpot (1998) and Chin (2006)

feminist perspectives of the "matrophobia."[55] McGill concludes that the mother-daughter dyad is depicted as hostile and challenging in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (34). Still, mother-daughter relationships are essential to the daughter's development of an affirmed self (34).

In *Dreaming in Cuban*, Pilar sees herself split between her dreams in Spanish and her mother's ambition to strive in the United States. The relationship between Pilar and her mother, Lourdes, has migration as its most prominent conflicting issue, as Pilar longs for a mother, motherland, and self-knowledge. Lourdes has also experienced a rupture with her mother, Celia, a firm believer in the Cuban Revolution. Lourdes puts all her hopes into capitalism, "convinced she [could] fight Communism from behind her bakery counter" (García, *Dreaming* 136). Celia places her expectations on Pilar, hoping "she will remember everything" and become a speaker for their family's history (255). While Lourdes feels comfortable with her life in New York, Pilar dwells between two worlds, without knowing where she belongs and longing for an imaginary Cuba and a (grand)mother figure. Mother and daughter become closer when they travel together to Cuba, enhancing the theme of reconciliation that many of these novels feature.

Dreaming in Cuban (1992) is Cristina García's first novel, and her non-essentialist characters have received both praise and criticism. In an interview with Chris Abani, García says, "That's an essential part of the mystery and discovery for me. I expect to be disturbed. I hope to be discomfited. I want to be derailed from my suppositions" (García, "Cristina"). She refers to the fact that her characters are often displaced, positioned on liminality and ambiguity concerning their own identities. García's characters are usually discussed within a post-colonial, Latinx identity theme.[56] For instance, Annabel Cox examines *Dreaming in Cuban*'s conformation to Latinx writing and postcolonial migrant identity construction, especially concerning the postmodern style of the text and use of magical realism. In the same molds as Cox, Alicia Collado shows Pilar's acceptance of her hybridity as she returns to Cuba through a post-colonial framework. Still, a black feminist approach, as this study proposes to do, is not as common. However, it is clear that Pilar's and Lourdes's struggle resembles greatly the struggle in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* and *Breath,*

[55] As explained previously, Adrienne Rich says that "Matrophobia can be seen as a womanly splitting of the self, in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mothers' bondage, to become individuated and free" (236).
[56] Some examples include Fornet (2009); Cox (2009); Collado (2016); Manizza Roszak (2017)

Eyes, Memory, in which mother and daughter have conflictual relationships, but this relationship becomes the ultimate way of finding self-awareness in the daughter's path.[57]

One of the works that highly influenced this study is Rocío G. Davis's article, "Back to the Future: Mothers, Languages, and Homes in Cristina García's 'Dreaming in Cuban,'" which discusses the mother-daughter dyad in *Dreaming in Cuban*. Rocío believes that ethnic writing often misinterprets mothers' roles, culminating in conflicts between mothers and daughters (60). In his own words, texts that deal with the mother-daughter dyad usually delve into the "implications of specific maternal discourse (or lack thereof) in the process of self-identification and affirmation" (60). Therefore, "the place of the mother—personally, socially, culturally—directs, modifies, and influences the daughter's responses to both individual and cultural demands" (60). Still, these texts highlight how daughters construct their identities based on differentiation from the mother while showing mother-daughter bonding as a "fundamental step toward self-awareness and mastery of the culture" (60). This study builds and expands on Davis' notions, specifically addressing Pilar and Lourdes' relationship with each other, language, and food.

Katherine Payant's "From Alienation to Reconciliation in the Novels of Cristina García" also gives a potent close reading of *Dreaming in Cuban*, with a particular focus on how politics and social relationships are not easily separated in the novel, complicating relationships among family members, but still showing signs that a reconciliation is possible. Payant does not focus on mother-daughter relationships, but her close reading indicates how the novel intersects the relationship between Celia and Lourdes as a metaphor for social struggles between the poor and the higher classes in Cuba, while struggles between Lourdes and Pilar resemble the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. I add that Lourdes and Pilar's relationship mirrors the migrant binary perceptions of rooting versus unrooting, staying versus leaving the adopted country, searching for an imaginary motherland.

[57] It is important to highlight that, as suggested by Manizza Roszak, "García's female refugees enjoy a somewhat better start in the United States because of their greater economic resources and the less visible traces of their African heritage in a racist national context" when compared to the other women migrants discussed in this study (284). Nevertheless, "*Dreaming in Cuban* reflects harsh, important realities about the nature of the female immigrant experience in 1960s and 1970s America, testifying to the ways that Caribbean women with diverse immigrant and diasporic identities were limited by the cultural imperative of traditional female work" (284).

In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, twelve-year-old Sophie starts living with her mother in the United States, a mother she barely knows. There, young Sophie must endure the ancient practice of "testing" young women's virginity—something her mother had also endured. This practice causes a rupture among the women of the Caco family and resembles Haiti's past of exploration and colonization. Testing, enhanced by traumas that pass on from mothers to daughters, causes Sophie to suffer from bulimia and sexual phobia in her adulthood, affecting her relationship with her mother and husband. Reconciliation and healing only become possible when mother and daughter reunite with other kin women in Haiti. *Breath, Eyes, Memory* is Edwidge Danticat's first novel; it was published in 1994, and it now has a growing body of scholarship that deals with trauma.[58]

Many Critics have also discussed diaspora in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. Trimiko Melancon's "Ou Libéré?" Sexual Abuse and Resistance in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*" discusses diaspora through Sophie and her husband Joseph, which "develops out of a diasporic awareness that goes beyond the present reality, and that is based on a shared past and legacy" (7). Furthermore, Melancon notices that diaspora can be employed as a tool to understand the role of women in undermining fixed concepts of identity since they hold a diasporic memory and make use of diasporic tools to disrupt cultural processes, like testing, to create a space for healing (8). Similarly, Sophie resignifies controlling images of black womanhood, like the Jezebel, to signify sexual empowerment (12).

A work that analyzes the mother-daughter dyad in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* is by Masoumeh Mehni. Through the abjection theory of psychoanalysis, Mehni argues that an important step into identity formation is the abjection on the part of the child from its mother (79). Mehni claims that Sophie did not forgive her mother, nor did she love her; she simply felt "sympathy" towards Martine (89). This assumption contradicts his conclusion, in which he claims that Sophie "finally comes to understand that the blame for the testing does not lie in Martine but the tradition, her mother being just as traumatized as herself by this practice" (89). I interpret Sophie's realization as embracing her mother's story, taking it in as part of her identity instead of rejecting it altogether.

This study expands on Simone Alexander's "M/othering the Nation: Women's Bodies as Nationalist Trope in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*." Alexander claims that "women

[58] See for instance, Suárez (2003); Harbawi (2008); Latchman (2013); Morais and Moura (2021)

in Danticat's novel unwittingly adopt certain stereotypical roles" while at the same time representing a "counter-discourse by operating within the existing (patriarchal) structures of state violence" ("M/othering" 373-72). In other words, women in Danticat's novel participate in patriarchal violence and are victims of it. While I agree with that, I wish to emphasize in this study that these women use their bodies to rebel against patriarchal systems. For instance, Sophie breaks with the tradition of testing in her family—both by rupturing her hymen with a pestle and looking for psychological help to heal her traumas so as not to reproduce them with her daughter Brigitte.

I have chosen these three novels because they offer a wide range of mother-daughter relationships in the Latinx and African Diaspora. There is, for instance, transnational motherhood in *Breath Eyes Memory* and first and second-generation migrant conflicts in *Brown Girl, Brownstones,* and *Dreaming in Cuban.* Another trope these novels share is the possibility of reconstruction and reconciliation between mothers and daughters by these novels' end. Reconciliation between mothers and daughters coincides with daughters (and sometimes mothers) returning to their motherlands, which I consider an attempt at reconciliation and reconnection with the motherland. This reconnection, however, does not offer a reaspora or a resolution of the tensions of migration but rather an acceptance of transversal hybridity on the part of daughters.

Another important work that shows this dynamic is Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*. Although Tan's novel is not part of this dissertation's scope, since it focuses on another diaspora, I highlight some connections and similarities this novel shares with the other works discussed here. *The Joy Luck Club*, as much as *Breath Eyes Memory*, *Brown Girl, Brownstones,* and *Dreaming in Cuban*, emphasizes how the migration factor in the mother-daughter dyad complicates issues with language preservation, identity construction, and patriarchal dwellings. Moreover, these novels show that daughters are not only searching for a connection with their mothers but also with their motherland—an imaginary motherland—that might help them make sense of their split identities. This search is sometimes hindered by their mothers, who disregard their willingness to understand their multiple roots. Ironically, at the beginning of the narratives, Selina, Pilar, and Sophie (as well as June from *The Joy Luck Club*) first believe they need to be as far away from their mothers as possible to construct their individual identities, as much as Lucy does. However, as the narrative progresses, they understand they need to re-establish a connection with their mothers and

motherlands to embrace their hybridity. Ironically, embracing their hybridity makes them feel "whole," an essential step for empowerment.

However, migration does not happen the same way for the characters in these novels. For instance, in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Martine experiences transnational motherhood. Meanwhile, Silla (*Brown Girl, Brownstones*) and Lourdes (*Dreaming in Cuban*) are first-generation migrants. All three mothers share common characteristics of assimilation and often reproduce sexist, patriarchal behavior in raising their daughters—provoking even sexual traumas at times. These repressions and traumas often create a distance between mothers and daughters, making daughters believe they need to go back to their motherlands to understand who they are. Selina's, Pilar's, and Sophie's journeys of self-discovery are simultaneously a journey in search of an idea of "home"—a search for a sense of belonging.

In the article "Central Themes in the Study of Transnational Parenthood," Jørgen Carling and Cecilia Menjívar define migrant transnationalism as the "physical absence … compatible with social presence and participation" (192). When we consider parenthood in this context of physical absence, we must consider the complexity and the challenges this experience entail. Carling and Menjívar also notice the differences between parenting roles, highlighting that transnational parenthood faces gendered issues. Although both parents usually send financial support and maintain communication with their children—abandonment among men is more common—mothers are still perceived as responsible for their children's emotional care (193). In other words, the patriarchal system that advocates that women are naturally connected to their children, making unconditional love between mother and child an obligation, can still be prevalent in a transnational setting. Women who experience transnational motherhood often provide for their children and impose great expectations on them, performing "intensive mothering" (qt. in Carling and Menjívar 194). As a result, children usually "reproach [their mothers] more than they do their fathers for having left them" (194), which culminates in feelings of guilt and hopelessness, even if their reasons for migrating were their children's wellbeing. Still, it is undeniable that women who migrate and perform transnational motherhood "subvert traditional definitions of motherhood" (193), as I emphasize when talking about Martine, Sophie's mother in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*.

In *Brown Girl, Brownstones,* and *Dreaming of Cuban*, we have first and second generational conflicts between mothers and daughters.[59] There is acute miscommunication between mothers and daughters in these two novels. Carly deAnda and Patricia Geist-Martin investigate mother-daughter generational conflicts in their article "Memory as Insight: Navigating the Complexities of Generational Mother-daughter relationships." Through Autoethnography,[60] they analyze how their relationships with their mothers reflect their relationships with their daughters, and in doing so, deAnda and Geist-Martin highlight the importance of memory in understanding present situations (403). Although memories are not factual, they "portray accurate ideas about how people feel about something" (405). Memory is an important mechanism for comprehending emotional situations in the mother-daughter dyad. Thus, deAnda and Geist-Martin conclude that memories of their mothers become instructive in their mothering performances. This is also related to how Selina, Pilar, and Sophie become more accepting of their mothers' way when they can either connect to and /or understand (remember) their mother's past.

The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan exemplifies the dichotomy between mothers and daughters in the diaspora. Suyuan assimilates deeply into the American Dream ideology, or as June, her daughter, says, "My mother believed you could be anything you wanted in America. You could open a restaurant. You could work for the government and get good retirement. You could buy a house with almost no money down. You could become rich. You could become instantly famous" (132). Arriving from China after abandoning her twin infant children from her first marriage during World War II, Suyuan believed the United States was a land of opportunities. There was simply no reason why one would not strive.[61] Suyuan achieves many of her goals in the adopted country,

[59] According to the US government, Pilar is not a second-generation migrant, she is a first-generation migrant as her mother and father, because she arrived in the US as an infant. For the purpose of this study, Pilar is an involuntary migrant, and her family members can be considered refugees. As middle class in Cuba during the revolution, Pilar family loses their farm and Pilar's mother is raped by soldiers. Still, because Pilar was so little when she migrated with her parents, her struggles are similar to Selina, who was born in the diaspora.

[60] A method of research through which authors "scrutinize, publicize, and reflexively rework their own self-understandings as a way to shape understandings of an in the wider world" (Butz and Besio 1660).

[61] Suyuan's belief mirrors the story which opens the first section of the book. An old woman who had tried to bring a swan into the Untitled States but only ended up with a feather of the animal (which was taken from her when she went through the immigration office). She wanted to give the swan to the daughter she would have one day, a daughter who would look like her but would not suffer the same gender constraints she had suffered in China. In the United States, the old lady believed, "nobody will look down on her, because [she would] make her speak only perfect American English. And over there she will always be too full to swallow any sorrow" (Tan 17). As a result, the woman has a

especially monetary ones, but cannot fully communicate with her daughter. June feels she can never take her mother's place at the Joy Luck Club because she knows little about Suyuan. She feels like she and her mother "spoke two different languages" (34). Indeed, their communication was challenging; June talked to her mother in English, and Suyuan answered in Chinese (34). June can only feel a genuine connection with her mother when traveling to China. There, June starts perceiving her mother as a woman with a past and her fears and struggles. June's trip to China to meet her half-sisters brings a new understanding of her mother and her own identity. In her words, "The minute our train leaves the Hong Kong border and enters Shenzhen, China, I feel different. I can feel the skin on my forehead tingling, my blood rushing through a new course, my bones aching with a familiar old pain. And I think, My mother was right. I am becoming Chinese" (267). Because June had tried to deny that part of her identity was Chinese—perhaps to disconnect herself even further from a mother she did not quite understand—going to China changes this dynamic. Of course, it is not only the trip that makes June realize and accept her hybrid identity but an overall realization that her embarrassment towards her mother's foreignness—like "haggling with store owners, pecking her mouth with a toothpick in public"—does not make her understand what it is to be Chinese (267). The closeness that she finally feels with her mother—while boarding a train and going back "home"—gives her the weight of her ancestry. The feeling that a part of her belonged in China and her willingness to hear her mother's backstory in Chinese also helps June recognize herself as part of that culture. In her words, "now I also see what part of me is Chinese. It is so obvious. It is my family. It is in our blood" (288). This realization helps June finally cherish her heritage by reconnecting with her family, half-sisters, and mother's memory.

Like June's experience in *The Joy Luck Club,* characters in *Brown Girl, Brownstones,* and *Dreaming in Cuban* can only cope with their hybrid identities when they undertake a journey back "home." This journey allows daughters to connect with a part of themselves because they recognize a culture that impacts their identities and, at the same time, they become more connected with their mothers. In an article by *The Guardian* named "Necessary journeys," Caryl Phillips, whose family left their native St. Kitts for England when he was four months old, discusses the

---

daughter with all these qualities, but she is unable to give her daughter the feather, waiting "year after year, for the day she could tell her daughter [the story] in perfect American English" (17).

difficulties of being in-between cultures and that, sometimes, there are necessary journeys one must take to understand the full complexity of their being. According to Phillips, "for people of the African diaspora, "home" is a word that is often burdened with a complicated historical and geographical weight. This being the case, travel has been important for it has provided African diasporan people with a means of clarifying their own unique position in the world." As Phillips also recognizes, many black writers have traveled throughout history, such as Langston Hughes, W. E. B. DuBois, and Phillis Wheatley. In other words, it is necessary to travel—and sometimes return—to fully understand the complexity of a diasporic identity. Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* also comments on this necessity to travel. When observing the journeys taken by Black writers and their significance, Gilroy affirms that they "are especially important in the history of the black Atlantic, where movement, relocation, displacement, and restlessness are the norms rather than the exceptions and where… there are long histories of the association of self-exploration with the exploration of new territories and … cultural differences" (133). In other words, black Atlantic narratives juxtapose—or rather try to re-conciliate—routes and roots.

Analyzing migration and its impact on family bonds is essential to understand that the routes are taken by enslaved people, free people of color from developing nations, social and economic migrants, and refugees cannot be understood as simply pleasure tourism, and other types of migration, as it is for primarily white travelers from developed countries in search of change and adventure. These journeys always bring an element of necessity, either financial or social. They can also be imposed, such as the slave trade. For this matter, migrants search for a sense of home that many times have been destroyed once their ancestors survived the middle passage and colonization or simply for a necessity to adapt and survive the new reality. In the following sections of this chapter, the issues of generational conflicts, identity, and travel are considered more thoroughly to highlight the role of migration in complicating the mother-daughter dyad.

4.2 "Everything gon be white" — Generational Conflicts and Diaspora

When discussing the daughter-mother dyad in Caribbean novels, Simone Alexander recognizes Paule Marshall's central role in theme and genre, together with Maryse Condé and Jamaica Kincaid (*Mother Imagery* 1). As mentioned previously, Alexander highlights that the mother-

daughter complex relationships in these novels mirror women's complex "home" dwellings—be that in the Caribbean, Africa, or adopted countries such as the United States, which is the chosen "home" of all migrating families in the novels to be discussed here (3). Additionally, daughters' opposition to their mother's ruling presence in their lives can be connected to resistance against the domineering imperialist position of the adopted country with regard to their motherlands. Even when this adopted country is not the one that has colonized the motherland, as is the case with the United States, capitalism and imperialism exercise power over developing nations, and it functions as another form of colonization—one that is based on the rhetoric of economic power and sustained by stereotypes of the exotic and the uncivilized.

In the third chapter, I have shown that solo black women characters who travel to the adopted countries by themselves and how their reasons to migrate differ significantly from what Jamaica Kincaid called "ugly tourists." Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth go to the United States and England not as leisure but to be an au pair, study, or simply because a parent demanded,[62] to get an education considered superior. In other words, they are not tourists. Most of the time, these women need to perform labor to survive, live in precarious conditions, and deal with racism. There is a striking difference between the reasons people from developing nations migrate compared to why individuals from developed countries do so.

In *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, and *Dreaming in Cuban*, the diverse reasons that lead mothers to migrate and how they assimilate into the "American way-of-life" ideals cause most conflict with their daughters. Whereas most mother figures are attracted by North American capitalist values such as buying a house, having a business, and educating children with Western values, daughters are preoccupied with a more internal struggle, questioning who they are and where they fit in. This section analyzes the generational conflict between mothers and daughters, as it is perceived in mothers' materialistic purposes in the adopted countries, which is

[62] In *The Unbelonging*, Hyacinth migrates to meet her father in London, which resembles Sophie from *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. The reason why I decided to include *The Unbelonging* together with solo travelers is because of the lack of female representation in Hyacinth's life, which isolates her. This lack of community in Hyacinth's narrative approximates her from Lucy and Ifemelu, even if it is more a consequence than a choice. Sophie, on the other hand, relates more to Selina and Pilar, who are inserted in a community, which help them negotiate their identities more successfully. Moreover, Hyacinth returns to Jamaica by choice, which makes her a solo traveler by the end of the narrative.

usually common in first-generational migrants, as opposed to the second generational struggle experienced by daughters, revolving around subjective values of dwelling in-between two cultures.

Tao et al. discuss the issue of cultural orientations—the study of the degree of influence individuals may assimilate when engaging in different cultural traditions, beliefs, and practices, as it is commonly perceived in any migrant experience. Children with at least one foreign parent will most certainly be exposed to two sets of cultural norms (Tao et al. 482). Tao et al. explain that two processes are recognizable in migrant behavior after migration; they are acculturation (which can be described as fully assimilation into the adopted culture) and enculturation (adapting to the ethnic culture). Moreover, according to Tao, "individuals may adhere highly to both cultures, and acculturation to the host culture does not necessarily diminish enculturation to the native or ethnic culture" (482). In other words, this process is not at all regular and linear. They are complex interactions that vary from family to family. Despite these degrees of assimilation, there is still a sense of community—not without tension—emphasized in the three novels to be analyzed in this chapter.

Brown Girl, Brownstones precedes the boom of black feminist criticism, which may have come into its own with Barbara Smith's essay "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," originally published in *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us are Brave* in 1982. Still, when discussing black women's writings, the psychology of migration is not enough to explain the literary approaches at play in their novels. According to Joyce Pettis, "neither black women as characters nor black women writers [occupy] center stage" (Marshall, "A MELUS Interview" 17), which only highlights the importance of *Brown Girl* and its praise upon publication. Marshall, herself was not aware of women writers of the beginning of the twentieth century, such as Zora Neale Hurston or Nella Larsen (17). When she brings these literary approaches to *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, she sets the ground for great writers like Toni Morrison, even though Marshall's novels would never receive as much critical attention as Morrison's novels, perhaps because their classification is not clear-cut.

The story starts during the prelude to World War II, in 1939—a time also marked by the great influx from the West Indies to New York and other Northern cities of the United States. Marshall describes first-generational migrants as people "who had never owned anything perhaps but a few poor acres in a poor land" (*Brown* 2). She adds that these migrants loved "the houses

with the same fierce idolatry as they had the land on their obscure islands" (2). This sets the mood for the central conflict in the novel, the one between wife and husband, Silla and Deighton, revolving around selling a piece of land in Barbados, which Silla wishes to conclude, so she can purchase the brownstone they live in Brooklyn, as the other Bajan families of their community have successfully done. On the other hand, Deighton wishes to go back to Barbados and build a big house there. In the middle of this conflict is Selina, their youngest daughter, caught between two cultures, and who also shows a powerful willingness to independence despite her young age.

Throughout the pre- and post-war years in the United States, the novel follows Selina's growth amid her parent's disputes. This is a period in which boundaries of color are strictly divided. In other words, Selina's family are not considered African Americans—mainly because they did not suffer the awfulness of being kidnapped from their countries, nor did they suffer from the terrible conditions of the middle passage and the atrocities of slavery. Yet, although Selina's family was probably one of the free people of color of the British West Indies, it is inevitable that their living conditions were underprivileged. They were forced to do slave-like work to support their families. In Silla's mind, the United States represents a land of opportunities, a place to start over, where hard work is worthy for it guarantees better life conditions. Silla believes in the melting pot ideal, which entails that the United States is a place of equal opportunities where everybody can strive, provided that they work hard enough. However, as *Brown Girl, Brownstones* shows, the ideal American-melting-pot experience does not happen for most Black Caribbean families living in the United States. Most of them embrace the "American" ideology of getting rich rapidly and measuring achievements by how many material belongings one can acquire. Still, they remain in poor living conditions, performing arduous factory labor that does not allow them to achieve financial stability compared to white individuals. Though young, Selina perceives how this system has corrupted her family, negatively affected her relationship with her mother, and killed her father—certainty that grows as the novel progresses and further isolates Selina from her community. Ultimately, Selina decides to go to Barbados because she feels it is what she needs to understand who she is.

As put by Timothy S. Chin, in his article "Caribbean Migration and the Construction of a Black Diaspora Identity in Paul Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*," it is impossible to discuss Marshall's work without recognizing her presentation of how locations influence hybrid identity

constructions and intercultural relationships (64). Chin argues that Marshall's novel "not only reflects the historical realities of the Caribbean migrant experience and its effect on cultural identity, it also constructs cultural identity by repositioning and reformulating prevailing discourses of race and ethnicity" (67). In other words, *Brown Girl, Brownstones* reflects an attempt to highlight hybrid, diasporic subjectivities and therefore features a new fluid construction of identity and belonging. In the following sections, I show this is also true for *Dreaming in Cuban* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*.

Such construction of a hybrid identity—especially portrayed in Selina's character—develops tensions in Selina's household interactions and her sense of belonging to the Bajan community. As mentioned before, Shirley C. Parry notices that "Marshall repeatedly links Selina's sexual development with her membership in the Bajan community," and such mixed feelings Selina has toward puberty mirror her feelings concerning the Bajan community, including the association in which her mother participates (41). Another critic that points to the intricate relationship between Selina and the Bajan community is Martin Japtok when he states that "the novel harshly criticizes and yet celebrates the Barbadian community" (305). In the face of racism, communities—such as Selina's—represent a solid ground to fight injustice and claim better conditions. However, on an individual level, it can also mean the prevalence of solid patriarchal values that oppress women inside the same community that supports them against racism. In this sense, "*Brown Girl, Brownstones* resists the idea that ethnicity is destiny and embraces individualism as an important value" (306). Similar to the solo female travelers discussed in the previous chapter, Selina and other daughters feel detached from the community because of the strong patriarchal expectations her community demands of her as a woman.

Lewis MacLeod's essay "'You Ain No Real-Real Bajan Man': Patriarchal Performance and Feminist Discourse in Paule Marshall's Brown Girl, Brownstones" discusses how most of the characters in *Brown Girl, Brownstones,* especially Silla's character, "relentlessly pursue property and money in a way that mimics … Western capitalist and masculinity ideas of value" (169). Although I agree with this analysis, I resist Macleod's argument that the novel fails to show resistance to this behavior. I believe Marshall's fundamental reason for the mother-daughter dyad resembles generational conflicts seen in many other novels—the conflict between assimilation to the adopted country's cultural values and subjectivity and hybrid identity construction. Moreover,

although MacLeod claims that his article goes against most readings of Deighton, trying to show how gender dynamics are complex in *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, he falls into the same paradox of previous critics, who do not analyze Deighton's character in its full complexity. MacLeod's outstanding analysis of Deighton puts Silla as the story's villain and the reason behind Deighton's emasculation, stating that she "duplicates rather than critiques hegemonic masculine norms" (183). Therefore, to avoid this trap, this chapter considers Silla and Deighton's dynamic and how their conflict represents the destructive power hegemony of whiteness, racism, and capitalism.

Although Silla and Deighton are both immigrants, their experiences in Barbados were dissimilar, influencing their disagreement and leading to a tragic ending in their marriage. Silla was born in a low-income family, so she had to work in a cane field "from the time God sun rise in his heaven till it set" (Marshall, *Brown* 39). Perhaps, due to this arduous life, Silla has no nostalgic remembrances of her motherland—unlike Deighton. When Selina expresses that she would like to live in Barbados, that it might be a nice place—under the influence of her father's nostalgic memories of the motherland, Silla paints another picture of Barbados to her daughter. By inquiring of Selina, "You know what I was doing when I was your age? … I was in the Third Class. You know what that is?" (39). Innocently, Selina believes it to be school. Awaking Selina about the harsh reality she had endured as a young girl of eleven is Silla's way of educating her child on her reasons for migrating.

> "School, ha!… Yes, you might call it a school, but it ain the kind you thinking of, soul. The Third Class is a set of little children picking grass in a cane field… With some woman called a Driver to wash yuh tail in licks if yuh dare look up. Yes, working harder than a man at the age of ten… And when it was hard times… I would put a basket of mangoes 'pon muh head and go selling early-early 'pon a morning. Frighten bad enough for duppy and thing 'cause I was still only a child…" (39).

Silla's act of educating Selina by describing her harsh and slave-like life conditions back in Barbados serves to contest Deighton's idealization of the island, which he is also trying to bestow to Selina. Silla's image creates a love-hate feeling in her daughter, as she compares it with her father's image of "a boy … bounding on the waves in some rough game" (39). As the narrator comments, "It seemed to Selina that her father carried those gay days in his irresponsible smile, while the mother's formidable aspect was the culmination of all that she had suffered" (39). Only

by this statement alone can the reader grasp the basics of Silla and Deighton's conflict. As the previous passage indicates, Deighton's comfortable life back in Barbados is in striking contrast to the life of the "small girl hurrying from the dawn ghosts with the basket on her head" (39).

Deighton is the last and only male child of a big family, and for that, he has had everything he wanted from a mother who spoiled him. Contrary to his wife's background and objectives, when Deighton learns he has inherited a piece of land in Barbados, his first idea is to go back to his motherland and build a big house. As the quote shows, "I gon build it out of good Bajan coral stone and paint it white. Everything gon be white! A gallery with tall white columns at the front like some temple or the other. A parlor with 'nough furnitures and a dining room with glasses of every description and flowers from we own garden" (72). While Silla wants him to sell the land, as their arguments at night confirm, he declares the land is his to do as he pleases (41). Lewis MacLeod has a fascinating take on Deighton, albeit ambiguous. He states, "Deighton is anything but a straightforward agent of patriarchal power, and Silla's problem seems to have almost nothing to do with her husband's excessive maleness" (MacLeod 172). In fact, Deighton has several masculinity beliefs rooted in white patriarchy. His description of the house reflects bell hooks' analysis of how black men consider it vital to acquire material things as a symbol of success. As she states, "by the late sixties and early seventies, most black men had made a choice to identify their well-being, their manhood with making money by any means necessary" (hooks, *Real Cool* 17). Not only does Deighton accept and reproduce this belief of manhood, highlighted even in the very description of his dream house, where everything will be white, Silla believes it too. Their major conflict is where such a house will be, but they have the same goal. Silla and Deighton show how it is almost inevitable to be inserted in the North American capitalist order without letting it consume you.

Deighton's and Silla's assimilation into the North American's ideology of consumption, which attaches personal value to material things, is also related to the legacy of colonialism, their possession of a "look of lust, a look of envy" upon the colonist's table (Fanon 4-5). In this sense, as argued by Fanon, the colonizer "fabricates" the colonized subject; that is, the colonizers create the colonized identity, an entire mindset of submission and inferiority on the part of the colonized. Decolonizing, alternatively, means making "new men," people with an entirely different perspective—people suited to freedom rather than submission (Fanon 5). This is not the case of

Silla and Deighton, who "participate in competitive money-making capitalist patriarchal state" (hooks, *Real Cool* 17). However, because they are black migrants, on top of gender constraints in Silla's case, they face many difficulties in fulfilling their purposes.

As for Silla and Deighton's conflict, which MacLeod claims to have nothing to do with Deighton's excessive maleness (172), it seems related to a complex understanding of gender roles and what masculinity values Deighton chooses to embrace. Silla desires to acquire material things in New York, especially the brownstone her family inhabits, a common trait of first-generation migrants who came from harsh realities. She has tried to "put little ambition" in her husband. Still, Deighton was "always half-studying some foolishness that don pan out. Years back it was the car. He was gon be all mechanic till he lose interest," as Silla tells her friend Virgie (Marshall, *Brown* 27). Silla adds that Deighton was interested in working with radio repairing and accounting more recently. People from the community despise Deighton's efforts, cynically telling him that he "can know all the accounting there is, these people not gon have [him] up in their fancy office and pulling down the same money as them" (33). It is impossible to understand Silla and Deighton's marriage dynamic outside the structures of power that surround them, for they are what ultimately emasculate Deighton and prevent him from performing fatherhood, leaving Silla to deal with the financial obligations of their household and the raising of their daughters.

Silla expects her husband to act like the other Bajan males of her community, who came to New York to work and acquire as many possessions as possible. She believes her family should be acting like their neighbors—working day and night and saving any bit of money they earn. She willingly takes minor harsh jobs in factories to have enough resources and slowly purchases the brownstone, her ultimate goal in life. Silla also believes education to be an important value that can impose respect and make one ascend in society. For example, Silla wants Selina to have the best education possible and become a doctor. Her American capitalist values are in striking contrast to Deighton's, who refuses to accept a white man bossing him around or treating him as an inferior. As Deighton mentions,

> Tha's the trouble with wunna colored people. Wunna is satisfy with next skin to nothing. Please Mr. White-man, gamma little bit. Please Mr. White-man, le' the boy go to Harrison College so he can be a schoolmaster making $10.00 a month. Please Mr. White-man, lemma buy one these old house you don want no more. No, I ain

> with wanna. It got to be something big for me 'cause I got big plans or nothing a-tall. (69).

As the quote suggests, racial capitalism is at the very core of the Boyce family situation. It is the most destructive power surrounding them, followed by patriarchal masculinity. Deighton's resistance to racial capitalism does not hinder him from sustaining patriarchal values. His maleness is connected to acquiring a big house, having people recognize his worth, womanizing, and showing control over his money [land], wife, and children.

Therefore, it is evident that Silla and Deighton's conflict is connected to the legacy of slavery and racism in black men's and women's roles in the family. Despite being migrants, life conditions—at least to Silla—were slave-like, with "the white people treating we like slaves still and we taking it. The rum shop and the church join together to keep we pacify and in ignorance. That's Barbados" (58). Silla believes that colonialism in Barbados is worse than racial capitalism and patriarchal masculinity in New York, where "at least you can make a head-way" (58). On the other hand, Deighton wants to acquire money without wasting his life working for white people in the United States, which is why he does not adapt to any job. When Deighton learns about inheriting a piece of land in Barbados, he does not show any predisposition to go back to Barbados right away. He enjoys fantasizing about it more, which coincides with Silla's description of his tendency to have inconclusive plans. As the narrator states, "it was as if, even before they had begun to live, they were defeated by life and knew it" (33). In other words, Silla and Deighton, but especially Deighton, have lost all his hope of actually feeling fulfillment as a person. His depressed tendencies are confirmed when he kills himself before arriving in Barbados.

Eleven-year-old Selina is in the middle of this conflict, which intersects gender, social, and racial politics. Selina knows about her parents' dispute and favors her father—with whom she has a better relationship. Selina insists that she wants to go to Barbados and visit the place, despite her mother's insistence that it is a hideous place. It is not clear in the beginning how much of this desire to visit Barbados is real or just an attempt to call her mother's attention. Being the first generation of Barbadian children born in the United States, Selina feels a connection with Barbados. At the same time, "she felt a profound detachment from [her community], from everyone, even Beryl. She was no longer human, she told herself, but a bit of pollen floating over

the field and circling the world on a wind" (47). From the beginning of the novel, Selina struggles for independent thinking and identity construction that will only become stronger as she matures.

In *Dreaming in Cuban*, three different stories (each with their own narrator and writing style) are joined across time and location. Celia's story is told in the third person and through epistles in Cuba, where "equipped with binoculars and wearing her best housedress and drop pearl earrings," she "sits in her wicker swing guarding the north coast" (García, *Dreaming* 3). Celia's daughter, Lourdes, migrates to the United States. Her story is told in the third person, mostly from behind the counter of the bakery she owns. Lourdes's daughter, Pilar, whose narration is done in first person and, therefore, understood as the force remembering her grandmother's and mother's stories (especially when she inherits the letters of her grandmother), was born in Cuba but moved to the United States with her parents at the age of two. Pilar is on a journey of self-discovery as much as Selina (*Brown Girl, Brownstones*). Part of her identity construction comes from her ability to identify and bond with her mother, grandmother, and the locations that culturally help construct her identity. As put by Rocjo G. Davis, "The immigrant characters in García's novel—Lourdes and Pilar—need to return to Cuba in order to come to terms with the tangled meanings of mothering, language, and home, and renew their lives in the United States" (61). In other words, their search for self-definition is realized when they face their hybridity and accept the Cuban and North American cultural values that form their identities.

Dreaming in Cuban's mother-daughter relationships becomes more complex because of migration, the longing for motherland (usually understood by Pilar as synonyms for belonging and home), and self-knowledge. Amid the common generational conflict traditionally observed in the mother-daughter dyad, politics and ethnic issues also transgress these women's relationships. Celia, for instance, is a firm believer in the Cuban revolution. At the same time, her daughter Lourdes opposes communism and puts all her hopes into North American capitalism. Celia, in turn, puts her hopes on Pilar. Celia and Pilar's relationship can be considered paranormal since they communicate through telepathy—portrayed in the novel as something quite natural, which hints at why many critics understand *Dreaming in Cuban* as magical realism. On the other hand, despite living under the same roof, Lourdes and Pilar's communication is hindered by their different political stances. Whereas Lourdes feels comfortable with her new life in New York, assimilating deeply into the adopted country's culture and language as a way to renew herself, Pilar lives in an

in-betweenness, not knowing where she belongs, and longing for an imaginary Cuba and (grand)mother figure.

When we consider Alexander's "othermother"—in which the biological mother englobes an "other" (*Mother Imagery* 7)—it can be claimed that Lourdes plays this role in Pilar's life since she encompasses both a positive and a negative influence in her daughter's life. Lourdes, as other biological mothers analyzed previously, "advocate[s] colonial habits and mannerisms" and repudiates Pilar's resistance to the US culture (7). In a sense, Lourdes acts as a controlling force in Pilar's life, mirroring the United States' imperialism over Cuba. On the other hand, grandmother Celia (to whom Pilar writes letters in the Spanish used by tourists and not the colloquial Island variety) plays the role of what seems to be—at first—an understanding and nurturing role, intrinsically connected to the idea of the motherland as Pilar has imagined and desired. Pilar longs for Celia, even though she has not seen Celia in years and does not know her, with the same strength she longs for Cuba, a motherland where Pilar supposes she will find belonging. Expectedly, Lourdes "refuses to talk about Abuela Celia" and "gets annoyed every time [Pilar asks] her" for information (García, *Dreaming* 138). Pilar does not know what happened between her mother and grandmother or why the two are so drifted apart. This separatism is due to Lourdes's different political views, resentment, and trauma. Lourdes' refusal to deal with her traumas and her disposition to hinder Pilar from everything Cuba-related creates more space for Pilar's search, as she tries to fulfill the whole of unbelonginess.

Lourdes' traumas accompany her throughout her life and affect her relationship with her family, body and identity. Two months before moving to the United States, Lourdes loses the child she is expecting (who would be Pilar's younger brother) soon after two soldiers rape her. Lourdes thinks her mother knows about the rape and still supports the revolution, and such a fact drives them further apart. After this trauma, Lourdes completely assimilates into American life. In her perspective, "Immigration has redefined her, and she is grateful. … She welcomes her adopted language, its possibilities for reinvention. Lourdes relishes winter most of all—the cold scraping sounds on sidewalks and windshields, the ritual of scarves and gloves, hats and zip-in coats. Its layers protect her" (73). As the quote suggests, Lourdes longs to leave her past behind and reinvent herself; she believes wearing lots of clothes somehow protects her from violence. She does not even seem to miss the food, as she usually cooks what would be characterized as North American

dishes. Food, which usually is one of the primary things migrants long for and certainly one of the factors that build the relationship between diasporic subjects and motherlands, is disregarded by Lourdes. During Thanksgiving—a hugely overlooked holiday by migrants in the US—Lourdes "gets up early and drags [her family] out on Thanksgiving Day loaded with plastic foam coolers" (137). Lourdes fully embraces her adopted country and culture, becoming a bakery owner in Brooklyn. Notwithstanding assimilating into American culture, Lourdes "wants no part of Cuba, no part of its wretched carnival floats creaking with lies, no part of Cuba at all," claiming that her motherland has "never possessed her" (73).

To Celia, Lourdes "sends her snapshots of pastries from her bakery in Brooklyn. Each glistening éclair is a grenade aimed at Celia's political beliefs, each strawberry shortcake proof—in butter, cream, and eggs—of Lourdes's success in America, and a reminder of the ongoing shortages in Cuba" (*Dreaming* 117). Lourdes's capitalist ideals and her success within this political system is almost an assault on Celia's socialist principles; she sees that her daughter "prefers the luxury of uncertainty, of time unplanned, of waste" (117) rather than political justice, "the right to a decent life" for all (233). According to Elena Machado Sáez, Celia and Lourdes are in extreme opposition, and Pilar is the only person to reconnect them since she finds herself somewhere in the middle. While Celia completely rejects commodities and Lourdes profits from them, Pilar uses commodities to reconnect with Cuba and—consequently—with her grandmother, for instance, "via the Beny Moré[63] album or the Santeria herbs" (Saéz 136).

Interestingly, Lourdes's denial of her mother and motherland resembles Kincaid's *Lucy*. As mentioned before, Lucy leaves the West Indies to become an au pair in the United States, rupturing with her mother and motherland, not even answering her mother's letters for months. Lucy's going to the United States, and her encounter with things new to her, like an elevator and a refrigerator, brings the possibility of renewal. Lucy, like Lourdes, embraces Mariah in the role of an othermother and the United States as her new "home" because they represent an escape from her actual mother's and motherland's domineering positions in her life. Both Lucy and Lourdes think their mothers do not love them, and therefore their search involves a substitute in the form of a

[63] Beny Moré (1919-1963) was a popular Cuban singer and bandleader.

new location. Migration, therefore, is the way Lucy and Lourdes found to recreate their identities in opposition to their mothers.

Lourdes' opposing political affiliations enhance her conflict with her mother since Celia supports the revolution. Being from low-income family background, Celia sees the revolution as a way to guarantee social justice. Freedom, as Celia tells Pilar, "is nothing more than the right to a decent life" (García, *Dreaming* 233). On the other hand, the revolution threatens Lourdes' middle-class life. After being raped and tortured by two soldiers, Lourdes must flee Cuba with her family to guarantee their survival. When Lourdes' father is dying of cancer in the United States, he helps Lourdes come to terms with Celia, taking part of the blame for Celia's mental illness and making Lourdes promise she will visit her mother in Cuba—what she ultimately does with Pilar. The trip is both a way for Celia and Lourdes to heal their relationship as it is for Pilar and Lourdes to start healing theirs.

The third mother figure to be discussed in this section is Martine, from *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, positioned in a transnational motherhood narrative. The emerging literature in transnational parenthood recognizes how this practice affects parents and children in multiple ways.[64] As mentioned before, Carling et al. argue that women who migrate redefine what it means to be a mother in the traditional sense (193). Women like Martine do not perform motherhood as patriarchal society would convey as the essential mother role in children's education. In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Sophie only knows Martine "from the picture on the night table by Tante Atie's pillow" (Danticat, *Breath* 8). She is raised by her aunt (Tante Atie), whom she perceives as a mother. She even puts a Mother's Day card below her aunt's pillow. Tante Atie, however, never allows Sophie to perceive her as a mother, reminding her constantly of Martine. She even makes Sophie send Martine the Mother's Day card with the flattened and drying daffodil. Despite their physical distance, it is Martine's "New York money" that allows Sophie and Tante Atie to live comfortably in a house "with a living room to receive [their] guests, *plus* a room for the two of [them] to sleep in… where they did not have to share a yard with a pack of other people" (11). As Tante Atie emphasizes before Sophie leaves for New York, their family is "a family with dirt under [their] fingernails," meaning they are people who work the land, not people who can have an

[64] See, for instance, Carling, Jørgen 2012, Konig and Regt (2010), and Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012.

education (19). Sophie can go to school and live in a comfortable house because of her mother's allowance. Martine's journey to the United States has given their family the means to provide Sophie with a better life in Haiti.

Martine's life as a migrant in New York shows its toughness on her face, which for Sophie resembles not "the picture Tante Atie had on her night table" (39). Martine's hair has a blunt cut, her eyes are hidden around dark circles, and wrinkles form on her expression when she smiles (40). Furthermore, "her fingers were scarred and sunburned" (40). For Sophie, it is like her mother "had never stopped working in the cane fields after all" (40). This rash reality confirms itself with time. Martine works two jobs, the nursing home in the morning and taking care of an old lady at night. Sophie notices how her mother's face is "cloudy with fatigue" (56), enhanced by her nightmares at night, hindering her sleep.

Martine's primary interest is Sophie's education, confirming transnational motherhood expectations toward children. Because she and her sister could not fulfill their dreams of becoming the first women doctors and engineers of their village (40), Martine's wishes are for Sophie to assume this dream, as she gives her daughter the responsibility to rise above them all and honor the sacrifices they have done. In their first interaction, as soon as Sophie arrives in New York, Martine tells her,

> Your schooling is the only thing that will make people respect you… You are going to work hard here… and no one is going to break your heart because you cannot read or write. You have a chance to become the kind of woman Atie and I have always wanted to be. If you make something of yourself in life, we will all succeed. You can *raise our heads* (41).

This responsibility befalls Sophie's twelve-year-old self as she first arrives in a strange and cold city. Sophie feels sad that her mother must work herself sick to provide for them and their family in Haiti. Still, Martine does not want Sophie to do any work. She wants Sophie to study and "get a doctorate, or even higher than that" (56). Martine's sacrifices are all conditioned to her hopes that Sophie will be a doctor and ennoble a whole generation of women before her that did not have such opportunities. She urges that Sophie should learn English fast, therefore avoiding violence at school, and not think of having a boyfriend before she is eighteen.

Martine's assimilation into the culture of the United States resembles Silla's and Lourdes' in a few aspects. Silla's connection to the Bajan community resembles Martine's connection to the

Haitian—in Martine's case, primarily because of Marc. As Silla, she wants her daughter to have the opportunity to study, different from herself, who had to work in the fields. Martine also worries greatly about the male influence in Sophie's life, first and foremost for her traumatic rape experience, when "a man grabbed [her] from the side of the road, [and] pulled [her] into a cane field" (59)—violence which resulted in Sophie's birth. Secondly, Martine is also traumatized by the practice of testing her mother has imposed on her and her sister since they were very young, in which "she would put her finger in [their] very private parts and see if it would go inside" (58). For Martine, the male presence represents a hindrance to achieving success in a woman's life.

On the other hand, Martine's assimilation is also connected to capitalism and the belief that working herself sick in two demanding jobs will allow her to raise her child in a better condition than the one Martine experienced as a child. Martine does achieve material possessions; as mentioned before, she sends her mother and sister money regularly, allowing them to live comfortably in Haiti without having to work in the fields. She also manages to maintain a one-family house in the United States for her and Sophie, where they have a closet as big as a room in some of Haiti's houses. Sophie also manages to get into college, indicating that Martine's sacrifices pay off. However, these acquisitions do not stop Martine from killing herself.

Furthermore, Martine imposes some of her traumas on Sophie, albeit unknowingly, justified by her wish to secure Sophie's integrity. For example, as Sophie explains, "Aside from Marc, we knew no other men. Men were as mysterious to me as white people, who in Haiti we had only known as missionaries. I tried to imagine my mother's reaction to Joseph. I could already hear her: 'Not if he were the last unmarried man on earth'" (65). As the quote shows, Martine regards men as dangerous. Her relationship with Marc is based on gratitude and a degree of duty. Marc has helped her achieve legal status in the United States, and Martine retributes that by offering him what she has, her femaleness and her Haitianess, which is comforting for Marc—a man who is connected to his culture and misses his mother's cooking. Sophie is certain that Martine would never accept Joseph, a black American musician significantly older than Sophie. Her fears are confirmed, for after Martine finds out about Joseph, she starts testing Sophie every week. Martine's obsession with Sophie's virginity and worrying that her daughter has initiated her sexual life out of wedlock contrast Martine's own experience with Marc, her lover. Her punishment and testing of Sophie, and the ultimate rupture between them, work as self-punishment as well.

According to Renee Latchman in "Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*: A Critique on the Tradition of 'Testing,'" Haitian society preserves strong cultural expressions and nationalism, perhaps due to its early independence from French colonization (53). Consistent with Latchman, "In Haitian society, a woman's purity is her honor and an honor to that woman's family and future husband" (53). In other words, mothers are supposed to ensure their daughters remain virgins to fulfill the male desire for purity, a role criticized by Danticat and other Caribbean writers, such as Jamaica Kincaid, as shown in the previous chapter. Danticat celebrates a matriarchal society that maintains many important cultural traditions alive, such as speaking Creole. At the same time, Danticat criticizes that same community for reinforcing patriarchal-rooted practices that damage women's relationship with their sexuality, such as the testing tradition.

Selina, Pilar, and Sophie all rupture with their mother's control over their bodies and minds. Selina plans to use a study grant she receives through her community to run away with her boyfriend. Pilar paints a punk version of the Statue of Liberty for her mother's second bakery opening party. Sophie, after weeks of being tested by her mother, presses a pestle into herself, violently rupturing her hymen, as an act of defiance to her mother's testing that would cost her "two days in the hospital in Providence and four weeks with stitches between [her] legs," not to mention a harrowing sexual encounter that resulted in pregnancy and sexual trauma (Danticat, *Breath* 127-8). As discussed in the following sections, these rebel daughters purposefully rupture with their mothers and the patriarchal ideals that surrounded their upbringing.

4.3 "You got to take yuh mouth and make a gun" — Language and Identity in the Diaspora

As discussed in the previous sections, first-generation and transnational mothers assimilate profoundly into the "American Dream" ideology. Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* also shows this trope. Another similarity between Tan's novel and *Brown Girl, Brownstones, Dreaming in Cuban,* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* is the novel's emphasis on the diasporic struggle of being between two cultures and the difficulties of establishing proper dialog among family members. Firstly, none of the American-born children in Tan's narrative speak fluent Chinese. June is perhaps the one who better understands the language, though she does not seem comfortable speaking it. The break with

the native language is one of the first traumas of people in the diaspora, accompanied by a communication constraint among community members.

According to Tao et al., children from three years old start to make sense of emotions, and language plays an essential part in this process, as they impose "structure on the interpretation of emotions" (483). Naturally, social, economic, and gender issues also influence the emotional talk between parents and children, with low-income families speaking among themselves less and with more impoverished vocabulary and women being forced into certain linguistic gender restrictions (483-84). More specifically, Tao et al.'s research findings indicate that Chinese American mothers are "unlikely to share their own emotions or link present experiences to children's past emotional experiences" (494), which is undoubtedly linked to the lack of communication between mother-daughters in *The Joy Luck Club*. Tao et al. do not consider the translated meanings (from Chinese to English) mothers and children must employ to understand one another, which seems to be the case of the lost-in-translation struggle between Suyuan and June in *The Joy Luck Club*.

The language gap and the unavoidable lost-in-translation struggle enhance the generational and educational conflict between Suyuan and June, mirroring their in-betweenness and displacement in the United States. In June's words, "My mother and I never really understood one another. We translated each other's meanings, and I seemed to hear less than what was said, while my mother heard more" (Tan 37). June does not refer only to the gap between her and her mother's languages but also their belief around how they should live their lives. Framed another way, June does not assimilate so profoundly into the North American capitalist ideology as her mother does regarding educational and financial values. June believes her mother had lied to her friends, stating that June had plans to go back to school and finish her degree instead of facing June's reality as a "college drop-off" (37). Furthermore, Suyuan and her friend Lindo always competed about whose child was more successful. June believes her mother "resented listening to Auntie Lin talk about Waverly when she had nothing to come back with" (37). Both Suyuan and her friend Lindo enforce the adopted country's imperialist beliefs upon their daughters—albeit unconsciously.

June and her mother's struggle to understand one another mirrors the toils present in *Brown Girl, Brownstones, Dreaming in Cuban,* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, mainly because of a disparity in linguistic identity and literal lost-in-translation moments. Selina, Pilar, and Sophie need to return to their motherlands to come to terms with their hybrid identity and the complex experiences

of diaspora, which inevitably influence their relationships with their mothers, languages, and perceptions of belonging. According to Davis, "Language plays a central role in this process, as the exercise of female self-definition develops within the nuances of meaning, of understanding and misunderstandings, of significance, misconstrued or unaccepted" (61). In other words, how communication happens between mothers and daughters is a pivotal cultural element that is part of daughters' search for identity reconstruction. In this process, they must learn that their struggles with their mothers are based on differentiation as opposed to segregation—and, therefore, they do not need to complete separate themselves from their mothers to self-define themselves (as Lucy has done), as long as they understand they are parts of the same whole. Although Davis is specifically discussing *Dreaming in Cuban,* Pilar's struggle to find belonging is also perceived in Selina and Sophie—as much as it is also experienced by June.

Unlike *Dreaming in Cuban* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory, Brown Girl, Brownstones* does not show Selina's trip to Barbados. However, by the end of the novel, Selina is ready to take the journey by herself. As mentioned previously, Selina is caught in the middle of her parents' dispute regarding the piece of land in Barbados—a piece of land her mother wants to sell to purchase the brownstone where the family lives in Brooklyn. In contrast, Selina's father wants to go back to Barbados and build a big house there. Selina despises her mother's attitude of selling the land without her father knowing, insisting that she would live in Barbados. It is not clear whether Selina's wish to go back to Barbados at first is a way to confront her mother or if she already felt the necessity to reconnect with her motherland at such a young age. As a second-generation offspring, Selina shows a connection with Barbados to compensate for her lack of connection with her mother and her profound detachment from her community in Brooklyn. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that, as Selina grows to feel more in-between and disconnected from her community, her decision to go "back" to Barbados becomes an essential step forward that will be determined in her process of identity reconstruction.

Despite Selina's "homelessness," some female figures influence her maturing process, and much of this influence comes from hearing the women's talk in the kitchen. This speech is embedded in the novel's layout design, with Silla's critical and sometimes misogynistic remarks opening several sections in the story. For instance, Silla's thought opens the second section of Book I and continue to separate the scenes as the characters of Miss Mary and Deighton are

introduced. However, Silla's thoughts and acid remarks drastically oppose the scenes that follow them, often presented through Selina's curiosity and sensitivity. This bivocality of discourse is perceived in many other instances in the narrative when women's voices "compete with each other for the control of the narrative" (Gates 240). Therefore, Silla's voice represents an entire community, speech, and constraints, being immediately opposed by Selina's perceptions.

An example of this bivocality is the very first scene presenting Suggie Skeete. A single woman renting a room in the brownstone, Suggie is described as having "full-fleshed legs and arms…, [a] languorous pose…, [and a] liquid roundness of her body…, [which] hinted that love, its rituals and its passion was her domain" (Marshall, *Brown* 11). Not surprisingly, Silla's opinion of Suggie is consistent with her sexist behavior, leading her to despise Suggie. Her commentary that opens the scene goes, "that concubine don know shame. Here it tis she just come to this man country and every time you look she got a different man ringing down the bell" (13). However, as the scene follows, Suggie is shown cooking while posing as "a priest preparing the sacrament" (14). Suggie's cuisine reflects her way of connecting with the motherland, "the way she held the bowl in her palm and solemnly scooped up the food she might have been home in Barbados, eating in the doorway of the small house perched like a forlorn bird on the hillside" (14). Her organic and harmless pose drastically contrasts Silla's harshness and stiff back from hard factory work. Suggie "gives herself without guile and with a full free passion" as she eats and imagines herself back home, forgetting that she lives in a cold, blue-walled room in New York (14).

The reason behind Silla's remarks appears later in the same scene, which reads, "every Saturday, her day off, she waited… for a lover, knowing that she could not endure the next week without having someone … on the noisy bed" (15). Silla and other women in the community find this behavior unacceptable, and they consider Suggie a part-time prostitute, as the colloquial understanding of "summer woman" would indicate.[65] Suggie is coincidentally the first woman to have a sexual encounter described in the novel, which enforces her sexual freedom and why Selina is very interested in knowing her. Selina describes Suggie as a "summer woman" (42) in a literal

[65] Paule Marshall resignifyies the use of "summer woman" to mean sexual freedom, much like the term "slut" employed by Kincaid. In many ways, Marshall and Kincaid seem interested in creating a linguistic feminist aesthetic by resignifying words and expressions employed by patriarchy. By doing this, they exchange derogatory vocabulary toward women's sexuality with authentic female images through characterization, breaking with patriarchal representations that are limiting and oppressive.

sense, a woman who understood and proved the pleasures of life and did not feel ashamed of it. Selina desires to be like Suggie, carrying "the sun inside her" (42). However, Selina grows up to become a woman that "carried what seemed the weight of winter in her body" (161), a result of the harsh experiences she endured throughout her life, much more like her mother is portrayed in the novel.

Despite Suggie's struggle to "make [Selina] a summer woman" like herself (42), Selina becomes harsh as the winter, just like her mother. At eleven, Selina despises and admires her mother to the same degree. For instance, when she feels scared of the war, she sits "at a small table in the corner [of the kitchen], out of the mother's way yet near her" (55). At this location, Selina learns what it means to be Barbadian and a woman in all its complexity. The kitchen is full of Barbadian fragrances from Silla's cooking and voices from Silla's friends. There, Silla and her friends discuss everything—from the difficulties of raising children in New York to politicians' negligence regarding the poor. Among the women she trusts, in the safety of the kitchen, Silla can say what she thinks and feels most honestly. As one of her friends tells her, "Talk yuh talk, Silla! Be-Jees, in this white-man world, you got to take yuh mouth and make a gun" (58). These passages highlight that the kitchen is where Silla and her friends hear and validate one another, a place of resistance to what happens elsewhere in their world.

Paule Marshall examines her use of the kitchen as a space of empowerment through language in her 1983 essay "Poets in the Kitchen." She highlights the importance of growing up amid her mother and her girlfriends in the kitchen and their role in passing on stories from generation to generation of Bajan women (Marshall, "From the Poets" 633). Consistent with Marshall, these women's concerns, lives, as well as the way they spoke, were ultimately an act of resistance, "the only weapon at their command: the spoken word" (630)—experiences that visibly trespass the author's biography and make a discernible presence in *Brown Girl, Brownstones*. In this sense, the kitchen—arguably where women's presence is most prominent in the household—becomes a site of retelling and rewriting history, in a transversal movement, from margin to center, emphasizing voices and stories commonly ignored and erased from dominant discourses. I mean not to suggest that the women in the kitchen are transversal hybrids, but the kitchen itself becomes a transversal place connecting the Caribbean and the United States, where these women can perform their diasporic identities without repression. As Timothy Chin highlights, "within this intimate,

domestic space, Caribbean identity coalesces around the positions that the immigrant women take on a wide range of both "public" and "private" issues—child-bearing, marriage, religion, the war" among others (68). The kitchen is where Selina learns her first lessons on Barbadian cultural identity, as well as the intersections of class, race, gender, and ethnic struggles black women migrants suffer in North America.

Dorothy Hamer Denniston points out that Marshall employs many literary devices to create her speech. For instance, "hyperbole and metaphor also help us visualize a given image" (Denniston 11). Marshall employs double adjectives—often opposites—to emphasize a statement, for instance, when Silla refers to Deighton as "beautiful-ugly" (Marshall, *Brown* 38). Other characters do it too, and hyphenated words resonate through the narrative; Deighton refers to a tennis match as "hard-hard," and Silla refers to their deceased male child as resting "easy-easy" in her womb (7; 25). Biblical allusions complement the speech, using Silla's unique imagery and proverb (Denniston 11), for instance, when she refers to Miss Mary as "living dead," present in the world "since they said 'Come let us make woman'" (Marshall, *Brown* 15). These literary devices that abound the text "confirm Marshall's unmistakable immersion in the sounds and meanings of the Barbadian vernacular" and her awareness of how using this speech in her text empowers these women in the kitchen, teaching Selina the intersections between language and identity, which guarantees that the Barbadian community will have a substantial impact on her experience, whether she recognizes it or not (Denniston 11).

Furthermore, for Silla, the communicative ability marks someone's maturity. Her conversations with Ina and Selina show the striking difference with which she perceives the two, despite the closeness of their ages. For instance, when Ina asks her mother for a nickel to get a soda, Silla notices Ina's breasts growing under her shirt and immediately scorns her, "You does just be going there to meet boys. That's all this drinking soda is. But lemme tell you, soul, if I ever see you with any boy I gon break your neck out in the street 'cause I not tolerating no concubines and I ain supporting no wild-dog puppies" (Marshall, *Brown* 36). Such warning never occurs when Selina asks her to walk around the park with her friend Beryl without her older sister. In response to that, Silla says, "What you need Ina for any more? You's more woman now than she'll ever be, soul" (43). Silla's point is not about age or body maturity, as Selina struggles to understand, but

her ability to communicate and form an opinion about the issues around the house—an awareness that Ina never shows.

Therefore, Marshall emphasizes African oral narrative tradition in her writing and textual design, much like Zorah Neale Hurston did—although Marshall claims she was not aware of Hurston when she wrote *Brown Girl, Brownstones* ("A Melus Interview" 120). Marshall states she structured her novel in the molds of Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, a *bildungsroman* (120). However, the striking difference is that she based the novel on "the life and experience of [the] community in which [she] grew up" (120), which involves the importance of speech in shaping Selina's experiences. Words, to Selina, are living things, and they create synesthetic energy, "bestriding the air and changing the room with strong colors" (Marshall, *Brown* 71), and readers can see that through the design and the literary devices employed in the text.

Language and identity work differently in *Dreaming in Cuban* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, but at the same time, with a few similarities. According to Rocío G. Davis, "language functions in *Dreaming in Cuban* as a measuring device for gauging connection and separation, loyalty and abandonment, between families and land" (64). Language therefore unites and hinders bonding and breaks with the concept that speaking the same language enables good communication. The novel shows that communication goes beyond language and that distance makes characters engage in other types of communication. While Lourdes embraces the new language to reinvent herself (García, *Dreaming* 73), Pilar dreams in Spanish and communicates with her grandmother Celia telepathically. As Pilar indicates, she hears her grandmother "speaking to [her] at night..." (29). Likewise, Pilar tries to build a bond with every piece of Latin culture she can get her hands on in the United States. She primarily communicates her ideas through painting. In the following paragraphs, I analyze how Pilar's mother tongue and artistic expression affect her identity construction throughout the novel.

Pilar migrates with her parents to the United States when she is only two years old and communicates with her grandmother Celia through letters, "in a Spanish that is no longer hers. She speaks the hard-edged lexicon of bygone tourists itchy to throw dice on green felt or asphalt" (7). This change in speech, Celia fears, is a change in perspective in identity. She fears Pilar's eyes "are no longer used to the compacted light of the tropics, where a morning hour can fill a month of days in the north" (7). The words on the paper even change Pilar's appearance to Celia. She

imagines her pale, "malnourished and cold without the food of scarlets and greens" (7). At the same time, this change Celia fears is happening to Pilar does not hinder their communication, since Celia can see, for instance, Pilar's secret diary and the fact that they communicate just by closing their eyes (7). Therefore, communication between the two is not confined to the letters, but more importantly, it represents a spiritual bonding between the two and Cuba.

On the other hand, Lourdes and Pilar's relationship is conflicting, and Lourdes often plays an ambivalent role in Pilar's life, imposing control and advocating for assimilation. Lourdes feels highly protective of Pilar, "when Pilar doesn't return home by nine o'clock, Lourdes calls the police station and begins defrosting a two-and-a-half-pound stash of pecan sticky buns," later telephoning the fire department, hospitals, and radio stations and eating all of the sticky buns (23). Some more hours and "Lourdes can no longer envision Pilar, only floating parts of her. An amber eye, a delicate wrist with a silver-and-turquoise bracelet, eyebrows arched and thick as if inviting danger" (23). Not only is Pilar Lourdes's only child, but as a victim of rape, Lourdes is terrified by the mere idea that something might happen to her daughter. Lourdes does not seem to approve of Pilar's boyfriends or her choice to be a painter because, in Loudres' perception, "artists are a bad element, a profligate bunch who shoot heroin" (29). Lourdes equates artists to communists, revolutionaries that disturb the capitalist peace, reflecting how she perceives her mother and motherland.

As mentioned before, Lourdes welcomes the changes that came with migration, embracing the new language as a way of redefining herself (73). When they moved to the United States, she decided where they would live by the temperature, purposefully choosing New York because it was cold enough—the opposite weather of the tropics (69). Meanwhile, Pilar decides to go back to Cuba when she turns ten. She takes all the money she has, which sums up to one hundred and twenty dollars, and buys "a one-way bus ticket to Miami," hoping she can figure out a way to get to Cuba from there (25). Instead of the stereotypical United States invasion narrative, this reverse boat crossing from Miami to Cuba represents Pilar's search for self-definition and a sense of home.

Part of Pilar's search for answers relies on a dangerous imaginary boat trip back to her motherland because schooling has not given her the knowledge she seeks to understand who she is. In a conversation with her friend Minnie, she asks why she has not learned about Cuba and colonization. As Pilar questions, "who chooses what we should know or what's important?" (28),

stating that people would learn other things in school if it was up to her. Moreover, she says that "most of what I've learned that's important I've learned on my own, or from my grandmother" (28). Based on the bond Pilar and Celia share through their nontraditional communication, this learning guarantees Pilar's connection with her past, her history—the real knowledge that matters to her because it helps her discover who she is. Kincaid's *Lucy* shows the same resentment from Lucy toward her colonized education, which made her memorize a poem about a flower she would only see after migrating to another country. Pilar feels that her imperialist education tells only one side of Cuba's history, usually condemning the revolution to strengthen the capitalist narrative.

Pilar and her mother's relationships with food seem to relate to their relationship with the motherland and language—both Spanish and English. Lourdes, for instance, has a change in her appetite when her father goes to New York to treat—ironically—his Stomach cancer. The more Lourdes takes care of her father and takes him to doctor's appointments, "the more she reached for the pecan sticky buns" (20). Lourdes gains 118 pounds in a few months while submitting to her cravings "like a somnambulist to a dream" (21). Lourdes' sexual appetite also changes during this time, causing her husband's body to ache, "his joints swelled like an arthritic's. He begged his wife for a few nights' peace but Lourdes' peals [sic] only became more urgent, her glossy black eyes more importunate. Lourdes was reaching through Rufino for something he could not give her, she wasn't sure what" (21). As these quotes show, Lourdes' father's presence in New York and his eminent death creates a profound lack in Lourdes, which she tries to fill up with food and sexual activity. Lourdes' connection to her father is related to her idea of a motherland. When she thinks of him, she imagines him "heading south, returning home to their beach, which is mined with sad memories" (24). Therefore, Lourdes supersedes her longing for the motherland—connected to her father's image, the only person with whom she can be her true self (131)—with other rapid pleasures.

Lourdes' relationship with food differs from Suggie's, who uses food to reconnect to her roots in Barbados. Lourdes's food choice symbolizes her assimilation and wishes to rupture from Cuba. Because of that, Lourdes "makes food only people in Ohio eat, like Jell-Omolds with miniature marshmallows or recipes she clips from *Family Circle*. And she barbecues anything she can get her hands on" (137). Pilar questions if this means living the "American dream." It certainly does for Lourdes, considering she believes Cuba is the picture of everything she wishes to eradicate.

Lourdes' assimilation is so profound that after almost starving herself to death to lose the 118 pounds she gained while taking care of her father, she chooses Thanksgiving, traditionally a holiday characterized by a generalist "American" identity concept, to start eating again.

Pilar, on the other hand, has a different relationship with food. She even suggests that, once in Cuba, she might "decide to eat nothing but codfish and chocolate" (173). Pilar believes that migration has changed her mother's appetite, and it might do the same with hers. This highlights the relationship between food, migration, and identity. New eating habits are inevitable when migration is involved. However, the way Lourdes uses food is yet another way to glorify her assimilation as something that everyone in her family should do. She communicates that by eating and owning a successful business—not surprisingly a bakery—in New York.

Another way Pilar uses to communicate her feelings is through painting. Her grandmother Celia was the one who encouraged her to start painting, while Lourdes thinks Pilar's style is morbid (29). Still, Lourdes asks Pilar to paint "a big painting like the Mexicans do, but pro-American" to open her second bakery (138). Pilar paints a punk version of the Statue of Liberty, scorned as "gaaahbage" by Lourdes' customers (144). However, Lourdes "swings her new handbag and clubs the guy cold inches from the painting," making Pilar love her very much (144). Lourdes and Pilar feel most connected at this point, before their trip to Cuba, where their differences are overlooked, and they start re-establishing their bond as mother and daughter.

Many critics have commented on Pilar's artistic expression and its relation to her identity. Manizza Roszak, for instance, argues that "Pilar's artistic production is what readers might more readily imagine when they envision a woman artist rebelling against gender norms on American shores" (288). David T. Mitchell believes that Pilar communicates a "lack of commitment to fostering her mother's … nationalist agenda through art" by painting the punk version of the Statue of Liberty for her bakery opening party (56). Conversely, Rocío G. Davis affirms that "Pilar's anxiety about losing the language of her culture … is manifested through her obsession with painting" (65). Although I partially agree with all these ideas, it is quite important to notice that, despite their differences, the painting represents the start of connection and trust between Lourdes and Pilar, in a way that Celia and Lourdes could never achieve. Their bond encounters in their relationship with the adopted country, which is based on the same feeling of liberty, the very reason

why Lourdes migrated, and that will make Pilar realize she belongs more to New York after her trip to Cuba.

Similar to *Brown Girl, Brownstones* and *Dreaming in Cuban, Breath, Eyes, Memory* emphasizes a transnational identity through language and communication. It is important to start with Danticat's distinction between speaking French and Creole, employed in the novel to differentiate the language spoken in school instead of social interactions.[66] French is related to colonization and power; the ability to read and write can determine a person's social status in Haiti. Sophie does not work in the fields because Martine sends the family money from New York. Still, Martine maintains a linguistic connection to her sister and mother by regularly sending tapes. Though preventing them from reading Sophie's Mother's Day card, their illiteracy evokes the African oral tradition and their cultural bond through speaking creole to one another. As pointed out by Maha Marouan, "Creolization is defined by a blending of cultures," characterized by multilingualism that expresses the Caribbean culture and identity formation (Marouan 19).[67]

As discussed in the previous section, Martine imposes her American expectations onto Sophie. Desperately trying to please her mother, Sophie accepts many of them. For instance, Sophie works hard to be an excellent English speaker after her mother stated how important it was that she learned English fast, or "the American students would make fun of [her]" (Danticat, *Breath* 48). Martine is aware and worried about discrimination against Haitians since some of her friends have shared how their children get into fights because locals accuse them of having "HBO—Haitian Body Odor… [and] AIDS because they had heard on television that only the "Four Hs" got AIDS—Heroin addicts, Hemophiliacs, Homosexuals, and Haitians" (48). Martine worries that these stereotypes will strain Sophie the more she appears to be Haitian. Therefore, avoiding them would be to appear more American as possible. Sophie follows her mother's expectations and works hard to sound like a native English speaker and avoid another layer of discrimination—xenophobia.

---

[66] This also relates to Pretoguês and the standard Portuguese taught in schools, as well as Pilar's letters written in Spanish spoken by tourists in contrast with grandmother Celia vernacular Spanish.

[67] When we consider the Caribbean peoples' ancestry, we should think of an Africa that "has since been joined by the East Indians and the Chinese: indenture enters alongside slavery. The distinctiveness of our culture is manifestly the outcome of the most complex interweaving and fusion in the furnace of colonial society, of different African, Asian, and European cultural elements" (Hall, *Essential, vol.2* 211).

Still, Martine does not completely assimilate into American culture since she remains living in Haitian-majority neighborhoods, with people "who seemed displaced among the speeding cars and very tall buildings" and walked around arguing "in Creole and even played dominoes on their stoops" (48). The Haitian atmosphere composes part of Sophie's experience in the United States, even her education. She attends the Maranatha Bilingual Institution, which, for Sophie, feels like she had never left Haiti since "all the lessons were in French, except for English composition and literature classes" (64). She continues being excluded from North American culture, being regarded as "The Frenchies," the "boat people," or even "stinking Haitians" (64).

Martine, however, insisted that Sophie practice English and made her "read out loud from the English composition textbooks" (64). Sophie's first words in English "sounded like rocks falling in a stream. Then very slowly things began to take on some meaning" (64). Interestingly, these words strike her first because she hears them in Creole conversations around her neighborhood, such as "*nationality, alien, race, enemy, date, present*" (64). The emphasis on these words brings two interesting concerns regarding Sophie's relationship with English. Firstly, she learns the words that highlight her transnational identity, particularly the term *alien*, which denotes foreignness in the United States embassy. Additionally, Sophie's remarks on how these words in English are similar to French, despite their different pronunciation, emphasize the "creolization" of English and French. Although these languages often pass as homogenous, Sophie highlights how they are also part of a mix of cultures as much as Creole. However, because dominant white groups speak these languages, they are not degraded to the status of dialects.

The diasporic emphasis in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* continues regarding the black Atlantic and music. After their first Haiti visit, Martine and Sophie reestablish contact, and Martine begins to embrace her own and her daughter's diasporic identity more openly. Despite her growing uneasiness because of her sudden pregnancy, Martine arranges for Joseph to meet Marc, her lover, and they have a pleasant interaction, highlighting the characters' acceptance of a diasporic identity that unites them. When Joseph comments he was born in Louisiana, Martine responds, saying, "I feel like I could have been Southern" (219). Moreover, Marc remarks, "We're all African" (219). This embracing of black diaspora to connect them is emphasized because of music since Sophie's husband, Joseph, is a musician. In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy highlights how music and religious practices connect people from the black diaspora, and *Breath* makes use of these two

elements, among others, to emphasize that. For instance, in the same scene above, Martine comments on how much she loves gospels and intends to have them sung at her funeral. When Joseph explains that gospels are "like prayers… hymns that the slaves used to sing" (219), Marc immediately recognizes its similarities to *Vodou Song*. Even the lines Joseph sings, "*Oh Mary, don't you weep,"* connects Marc to another tune, to which he remarks, "He just described a *Vodou* song. *Erzulie, don't you weep*" (219-220).

Martine and Sophie, however, still cannot communicate effectively, same as the other mothers and daughters discussed in this chapter. English and acquiring a second language have both advantages and restraints for Sophie and Martine. At the same time, it allows Sophie to communicate with her husband Joseph and Martine to connect with Gospel songs, it restrains the mother and daughter relationship. Martine's willingness for Sophie to learn English fast, and the instance that she spoke English at home for practice, creates a communication constraint between the two. Their relationship becomes similar to "glass breaking" (163). It is cold and harsh; it does not feel natural. Sophie's grandmother notices that when Sophie and Martine meet for the first time two years after their separation and start speaking to each other in English (163). Their conversation in a non-native language highlights the foreignness between the two, also represented in their dialog.

> "I got all the pictures you sent me," [Martine] said.
> "Why didn't you answer?"
> "I couldn't find the words" (162).

Martine and Sophie's lack of communication is even expressed in their way of dealing with their conflict. They do not reach out to one another. Sophie only sends her mother pictures, and Martine cannot find the words to reply. Their relationship can only start being restored once they meet in Haiti and the foreignness between them starts being overcome. However, their difficulty communicating, on top of Martine's and Sophie's traumas, creates a wall between them, making it impossible for Sophie to piece out her mother's story in time to save her from herself.

This section has shown how important communication is in identity construction. Selina, Pilar, Sophie, and other characters use different ways to communicate with one another through telepathy, foreign languages, and painting. Food becomes a way to connect to one's roots or to demonstrate a complete rupture with the motherland, as well as the use of specific seasoning

creates sensations that are specifically from one place. In the following and last section, I discuss how Selina, Pilar, and Sophie resolve their traumas and can reconnect with their motherlands once they establish a connection with their mothers.

4.4 "You call it home?" — The Journey "Home."

As mentioned previously, Jamaica Kincaid exposes the neocolonial endeavors behind the tourism industry on the island of Antigua, saying that the tourist is an "ugly thing" ("A Small" 17), who romanticizes colonialism and the struggles of developing nations' natives. While the poor cannot escape their difficult realities, tourists enjoy the cheap destinations of the Caribbean, where natives' hardships into their leisure activity (19).[68] The diasporic subject cannot be considered a traditional tourist, for they most often travel for reasons different from leisure. Still, returnees and tourists share some similarities. As Srilata Ravi considers returnees as tourists because they have become diasporic subjects who visit and cannot help observe how "natives" live (66), as observed in Adichie's *Americanah*. Another character who possesses a tourist gaze is June from *The Joy Luck Club*.

June's trip to China connects her with Suyuan, finally stopping to see her as only a mother and perceiving her as a woman with a past, fears, and struggles. June's journey to meet her half-sisters brings a new understanding of their mothers and June's own identity. Having tried denying that part of her identity was Chinese—perhaps in an attempt to disconnect herself even further from a mother she did not quite understand—going to China changes this dynamic, and June starts to understand she has tried to suppress the part within herself that is seen as "wrong" or "culturally unacceptable" in the United States. In other words, June attaches herself to the idea that identities

[68] This idea is also seen in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*. In this novel, the rich American family lives in a luxurious house in an island of the Caribbean, Queen the France, in a town named Isle des Chevaliers. Valerian Street and his wife, Margaret, live in the best house of the neighborhood, along with their servants, Ondine and Sydney. Not surprisingly, the servants are natives from the island. The house, therefore, works as a mirror of the neocolonial situation in which the natives of the Caribbean islands find themselves at–often, servants to white rich families who afford to buy designed houses in the Caribbean, where they spend their retirement years. Valerian Street, and his greenhouse where he grows northern flowers, represent whiteness and the maintenance of colonial structures, with natives in a servitude position. Son is whom mostly thinks about Valerian's position of power, especially when he sees him "chewing a piece of ham… dismiss[ing] with a flutter of the fingers the people whose sugar and cocoa had allowed him to grow old in regal comfort" (Morrison, *Tar Baby* 203). Therefore, the Caribbean, which once lived under the ruling of the English, the French and other empires, has now to deal with the neocolonialism practiced mainly by the United States, as other developing nations like Brazil.

are fixed and that one must choose between one thing or the other, that a single person cannot dwell in two or more cultural dynamics. While boarding a train and going back "home," June feels a closeness with her mother that gives her the true weight of her ancestry. However, June's tourist gaze still observes China through a North American filter. She feels disappointed, for instance, that Shanghai looks like an American city and that she can see McDonald's restaurants all around. When June opens a hotel shampoo packet, she is delighted to discover "the consistency and color of hoisin sauce" because that's real China for her (Tan 278). Framed another way, June looks for the exoticism of China as any tourist would since she is unable to undress herself of her Western imperial eye, remaining unaware of it while visiting her motherland.

Another work that discusses the tourist gaze is *Homegoing,* through the characters of Marjorie and Marcus, the last descendants of Effia and Esi. By the end of *Homegoing,* Marjorie and Marcus travel to Ghana without knowing they are distant cousins separated by the slave trade. During Marcus' and Marjorie's trip, Marcus refutes the tourist gaze, feeling, in fact, a repudiation toward it. While visiting the Castle where his ancestor, Esi, spent her final hours before being sent to the United States, Marcus gets upset by how the tourist guide talks about the slave trade. When the guide shows them the "door of no return" and says, "This door leads out to the beach, where ships waited to take them away" (Gyasi, *Homegoing* 299), Marcus says, "Them. Them. Always them. No one called them by name" (299). Although Marcus cannot trace his family line back to Esi, he knows many families were torn apart by the slave trade, and as a black American, he suffers from the legacy of slavery and segregation in his own family. His objection toward the simplistic tourist gaze, which ignores people's lives and treats history superficially, relates to his personal search for his identity and family memory. Marcus and Marjorie refute the superficial tourist-gaze but still cannot feel they belong to Ghana, remaining in an in-between space of returnee-tourist.

Struggles with migration and identity always bring about feelings of absence, not being at home, as this is constantly shown in postcolonial literary texts such as *Brown Girl, Brownstones Dreaming in Cuban,* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory.* Selina, Pilar, and Sophie need to reconnect to their motherlands to reconnect with their mothers and better accept their hybridity. It is never simply a geographical change that causes their awareness, however, but their closeness with their side of themselves, which they have tried to repress throughout their lives, the part that resembles their mothers. This recognition and acceptance ultimately make these young women feel the

weight of their ancestry. Despite wanting to know more about their cultures, Selina, Pilar, and Sophie are still unable to accept their mothers, showing to a certain extent what Fanon has recognized as a colonized identity. Although they want to discover their roots, they cannot identify these in their mothers. Restoring this bond with motherhood will take these characters on a geographical and personal journey of remembering, recognition, and acceptance. This section examines Selina's, Pilar's, and Sophie's reasons for returning to the motherland and their negotiating their split identities in the new setting. Although these characters may sometimes reflect a tourist gaze, as Ravi has suggested all returnees employ, their journeys are also part of a more cultural necessity, without which they do not feel fulfilled as human beings.

In *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, Selina expresses her wish to travel from the novel's first pages, mostly because she feels she does not belong in her community. Still, Selina is surrounded by female characters who affect her understanding of womanhood and race, even though she does not recognize their influence immediately. These characters are Suggie; Selina's older sister, Ina; her school friend Beryl; Miss Thompson, an older black American woman she befriendsç and her mother. Wishing not to recognize her mother as a role model, Selina turns to Suggie and Miss Thompson to drift herself apart from her mother's personality. However, Silla would still become the most influential person in Selina's life.

Selina sees Beryl and Ina as examples of womanhood she does not want to follow. In an interview with Joyce Pettis, Paule Marshall states that "Beryl represented something I had to work out for myself and using her as a character helped me deal with this, to deal with the fact that my family did not follow the pattern of the typical Barbadian West Indian immigrant family" ("A Melus Interview" 121). Marshall discloses that her family did not acquire a house or stay unified once her father became involved with Father Divine (121). While Beryl and her family go through the "established route," Marshall's family, much like her character Selina's, have not "realized the immigrant dream" to buy a brownstone and put children into college (121). Selina's personality differs significantly from Beryl's and Ina's in the novel. While part of Selina longs for the stability Beryl has in life, the other part despises that Beryl is controlled by her parents and is not allowed an opinion of her own. Beryl often comments on what her parents want from her, where and what they believe she should study at college, among other things.

In contrast, Selina does not understand why women must blindly obey their parents instead of doing whatever they wish. In a conversation with Beryl, when she is about sixteen, Selina becomes upset by Beryl's lack of assertiveness upon her parents' demands, asking her friend, "What do you say about anything? You begin everything with 'My father says this or that' or 'My father's gonna give me this or that'—but what do you say, what do you want" (Marshall, *Brown* 168). On Selina's part, it is much more important to follow her way and discover what she wants by herself instead of following a pre-established path. The same idea applies to Ina, Selina's older sister. Ina refuses to interfere in her parents' dispute and scorns Selina for wanting to talk about it. She is represented as peaceful and quiet, the model of conventional womanhood of the period—the one who is religious and gets married. Not surprisingly, she is married by the end of the narrative.

Selina's choice of models reveals her desire to be a different kind of woman, for instance, Suggie and Miss Thompson. She chooses Suggie as ideal womanhood because Suggie behaves like her father in many ways. Suggie is a dreamer, and to escape from her reality as a housekeeper, she finds refuge in cooking and sex. Both Deighton and Suggie are out of place in New York, trying to find something that helps them deal with their lack of control over life. Deighton tries to find excitement in everything that crosses his mind and leaves such things unfinished. Suggie, on the other hand, lives in a different kind of world, not interested in accomplishing much. Moreover, Selina's search for her identity trespasses her role models, her mother, and the community she is inserted in. Her bonding with Miss Thompson, for example, represents Selina's understanding of blackness as a more fluid concept than her family believes it to be. Miss Thompson is one of the few characters not from Barbados, which contributes to Selina's pattern of identifying with women who do not belong, who feel as much non-human as Selina herself. It takes Selina several encounters to truly grasp the meaning of her hybrid identity, including fulfilling her wish to go back to Barbados.

Brown Girl, Brownstones, however, does not accompany Selina through the trip to Barbados. The book finishes when Selina embarks on a road that might give her some knowledge of her roots and help her find self-awareness. That is, when the book closes, she is going to Barbados, fulfilling a desire she has possessed since childhood. Selina's trip to Barbados, and the realization that her mother is part of her, is the most empowering moment Marshall shares with the readers in the

novel—an overwhelming moment due to Selina's final decisions, especially regarding her romantic relationship with Clive. Up to that instance, Selina has "been struggling throughout the novel with conflicting feelings about her Bajan heritage as well as her identity in general" (Chin 73). Although she has consistently dismissed the Barbadian Association her mother had joined, as much as she has rejected her community, an encounter with racism changes her perspective on herself and others.

Selina has a disturbing interaction with Mrs. Benton, the mother of one of her white college acquaintances, and this encounter gives her another perspective of her identity as a black woman. During their exchange, Mrs. Benton seems to acknowledge Selina's ethnicity, claiming that there is something different between "Negroes from the West Indies" from other Blacks, primarily black Americans in this case (Marshall, *Brown* 249). Afterward, Mrs. Benton tells Selina about a servant from the West Indies who "was wonderful … I've never been able to get another girl as efficient or reliable as Ettie. When she cleaned, the house was spotless" (249). This encounter shows that Mrs. Benton's recognition of the ethnic difference separating Selina from other black people concerns only their efficiency in cleaning her house. Her ideas only imply that West Indian blacks are better servants than black Americans, besides the fact they have a "delightful West Indian accent" (249). The fact that race only arises when discussing the dichotomy between blacks and whites confirms Gilroy's definition of the black Atlantic. It does not matter if one is born in an African American community or a Bajan community, one is still black, and that entails the intersectionality of race, gender, and class issues embedded in social interactions.

After this incident, Selina can understand "the full meaning of her black skin" (Marshall, *Brown* 250). She feels like her color defines her by all the white people surrounding her. As Clive states, "I'm afraid we have to disappoint them by confronting them always with the full and awesome weight of our humanity until they begin to see us and not some unreal image they've super-imposed" (257). Clive suggests that being black means always to be trying to convince people of your humanity, which makes Selina sense that her whole life will be a struggle to prove her humanity—a battle so tiring she might not have the strength to do anything else, get an education, get married, dance, or love (257). Selina realizes this is Silla's struggle as well, and she thinks about her mother and wonders how she could bear so many years of such unpleasant remarks and humiliation.

When Selina faces the "white-man-world" her family and the Barbadian Association always talked about, her certainties are disrupted. She decides not to use the money she gets from the Association to run away with her boyfriend Clive, as she had intended. She decides she must go away by herself to figure out who she is. Like her mother, who once abandoned Barbados "as a girl of eighteen" and went to the United States to be independent, she decides she must go away and live by herself (265). In the end, things become clear to Selina. She sees how similar she and her mother are, stating, "everybody used to call me Deighton's Selina but they were wrong. Because you see I'm truly your child" (265). This remark shows how Selina finally finds peace with her mother and is ready to find her place in the world, away from her close-knit community. Her rupture is an indication that Marshall does not seem to be concerned about the reassertion of authentic Caribbean identity, as this is not the reason why Selina goes back to Barbados. Marshall seems more focused on constructing an individual identity beyond characterization, a dynamic and diasporic identity that recognizes the hybrid condition of living within and without a community.

Therefore, when the novel closes, Selina has decided to go to Barbados, as she feels an urge to understand her past, navigating and accepting a split, fluid, hybrid identity. She realizes that she is "whole" when she accepts her in-betweenness, which comes with her awareness of being black in the United States. Although not completely satisfied with Selina's stubbornness, her mother eventually tells her to go and do what she has to do because "two head-bulls can't reign in a flock" (266). Silla's final line also recognizes how much she and Selina are alike and how she is done ruling Selina's life as she tried to do throughout the novel. In the end, Silla acknowledges Selina's independent thinking and her willingness to become a solo traveler, which they both have in common.

Another pair of mother and daughter who go through a similar journey of self-recognition is Pilar and Lourdes in *Dreaming in Cuban.* As mentioned in the previous section, Pilar and Lourdes had a significant moment of self-recognition during the bakery party when Lourdes defends Pilar's painting. Their road to bonding takes both to Cuba. This trip connects them, showing Pilar how much she is similar to her mother. Lourdes and Pilar visit Cuba together because of a dying wish from Lourdes's father since Lourdes had never desired to go back there. Pilar, on the other hand, had always felt nostalgic about Cuba. As previously stated, Pilar has even once tried an escape to Cuba, though she only made it as far as Miami. Pilar's return to Cuba represents an attempt to

reconnect to her heritage and re-establish a connection with Aruebla Celia and the motherland. She does not immediately realize that the trip is also a way for her and her mother to reconnect. This bonding happens when Pilar pieces together her mother's story and the traumatic experiences she lived in Cuba.

Lourdes continues with her rupture to Cuba while she is there, finding that fruits are not "as sweet as" she remembered, cars do not have enough colors or decent design, in a necessity to self-affirm how much the country does not mean anything to her and how much better the United States is (García, *Dreaming* 219). Hearing her mother's criticisms, Pilar realizes "we're all tied to the past by flukes" (220). Throughout the novel, Pilar has reflected on the meaning of history and how, if she were a historian, she would only record what happens, such as the "life stories of prostitutes in Bombay," other than nonsense battles that teach people nothing (28). The question of who decides what is essential to learn is always in Pilar's mind. Lourdes has dictated what matters to share with Pilar, and her memories of the motherland have been kept quiet to suppress her traumas of the past. Throughout her visit to Cuba, Pilar must face her lack of knowledge about her family and herself to find a way to reconnect and reconcile with the past.

While Pilar wants to remember and reconnect, her in-betweenness is something she cannot disregard. Since she has been living in the United States since she was two years old, with a mother who did not do anything to help her feel connected to her heritage, Pilar is an outsider in Cuba. When Pilar goes dancing with her cousins, everybody notices her clumsiness, how "she dances like an American" (224). Even her mother would dance, having "her body remember what her mind had forgotten" and wishing she could show Pilar "the artistry of true dancing" (224). Pilar has grown accustomed to the American way of life, where she can have everything at her fingertips. Although "everyone seems to have the bare necessities" in Cuba, the country is "much tougher than [Pilar] expected," and she cannot help but wonder "how different [her] life would have been if [she'd] stayed with [her] grandmother" (235). Not surprisingly, the island soon becomes an object of voyeurism for Pilar. She notices the "billboards advertising the revolution," the shades of blue, her grandmother Celia's movements, and the women's apparel on the streets, among other foreign elements to her (217). Unlike her mother, who always looks for something she could observe and criticize, Pilar seems to be studying Cuba, imagining "the voyages to old colonies. Ocean liners gliding toward Africa and India" (219).

Pilar feels like she does not belong in Cuba, and her body also screams she is an outsider, with her ex-punk style and her "ears pierced in three places" (235). Everyone notices her displacement, but she feels like an outsider most of all. Pilar, who had always dreamed of Cuba, realizes the Cuba she dreamed of only existed in her imagination. In *Traveller's Tales*, Robertson et al. affirm that "the imperative to travel signifies the quest for the acquisition of knowledge and a desire to return to a utopian space of freedom, abundance, and transparency" (5), and this is visible in Pilar's journey to Cuba. Pilar imagines what she does not know about Cuba; her invention of the motherland is her attempt to reclaim her history, primarily through painting, which resembles her struggle to connect with her mother—that is, by learning about what Lourdes has experienced in Cuba.

Still, it is undeniable that the trip bonds Pilar with her grandmother and with her motherland because it puts her at the front with everything that she has lost in her bicultural Cuban American existence—the rupture with her grandmother, her language, and a sense of "belonging" (Payant 170). Her experience in Cuba starts with a shopkeeper telling her she is "a daughter of Changó" and that she "must finish what [she] began" (García, *Dreaming* 200). Pilar wants to get back to her room and bathe with the herbs the shopkeeper gave her, bringing back memories from her early infancy, still on the crib, during a thunderstorm, and her nanny saying, "it was only the temperamental Changó, god of fire and lightning" (201). Pilar's connection with Santeria and supernatural memory are just a few of the things that intensify as she rediscovers her Cuban identity.

Nonetheless, Pilar's final epiphany can be considered a reconnection with her other/mothers, both Lourdes and the United States. Through Celia, Pilar learns more of Cuba, realizing that it is "much tougher" than she expected, although everyone seemed "to have the bare necessities" (234-35). Ultimately, Pilar wonders how her life would have been if she had never left Cuba, recognizing and accepting how "American" she is (235). When she asks Celia if she could paint whatever she wanted in Cuba, Celia tells her she could, but only if it did not "attack the state" (235). Celia tries to explain that Cuba is "developing" and that everything against the government is counter-revolutionary, so they arrested poets (235). Pilar wonders what El Líder would think of her paintings, "Art, I'd tell him, is the ultimate revolution" (235). These small realizations change Pìlar's discourse about Cuba. She goes from despising her mother's capitalist ideals to agreeing to

return with Lourdes to New York, which involves acceptance that some of her mother's beliefs live within her. She does not entirely reject Cuba, but she starts regarding the island as an exile, both geographically and politically. Pilar wants an imaginary Cuba—one in which she can feel connected to her past. However, the real Cuba gives her a sense of past and a sense of loss, making her realize that she is not entirely Cuban. A significant part of Pilar is "American," and she decides—right there on the island—she is not going to fight it anymore. She belongs to Cuba and New York, but more to New York (236).

Not so differently from Pilar, Sophie clings to Haiti as a place of renewal and safety. In *Breath, Eyes, Memory,* Sophie goes to Haiti twice. Firstly, she needs time off from her marital sexual problems, and she flies to Haiti to have some time for herself and her five-month-old daughter Brigitte. Suffering from sexual phobia due to the testing and the trauma from her conception, which she inherits from her mother, Sophie learns to *double* while having intercourse with her husband. In her own words,

> there were many stories about our ancestors having *doubled*. It was said that most of our presidents had actually been split in two: part flesh and part shadow. That was the only way they could murder and rape so many people and still go home to play with their children and make love to their wives.
> After my marriage, whenever Joseph and I were together, I *doubled*. (Danticat, *Breath* 155).

In the first paragraph of the quote, Sophie's suggestion of the evilness of doubling contrasts with her re-signification of it in the second. It is suggested that both Sophie and her ancestors need doubling to survive and fulfill their duties. While Sophie's ancestors served the country throughout the violent Haitian history, Sophie's duty is that of a wife. She feels obligated to sleep with Joseph because he is her husband.

Martine and Sophie meet again in Haiti two years after Sophie elopes with Joseph, following their fight due to Sophie's failing her mother's virginity test. Martine's going to Haiti shows her willingness to reconnect with Sophie and the other women of the Caco clan. However, that costs her severe mental stress. While in Haiti, she cannot sleep, a condition that also complicates her life in New York, but it is even more acute in Haiti. Martine explains that her nightmares are as if she is being raped every night. She wishes to reconnect with Sophie because Sophie "saved [Martine's] life many times when [she] woke [her] up from those nightmares" (173). Therefore, Haiti has

become a three-fold place in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*; it serves as a location to reunite the Caco clan, find oneself, and revive traumas.

Nevertheless, both Sophie and Martine look foreign to the island's people. Upon her arrival, Sophie interacts with the taxi driver, in which she must impose her belongingness to that space. The driver, who is enchanted by Sophie's "charcoal-cloaked beauty" (92), says her Creole is flawless as if he did not expect her to speak Creole at all. "I was born here," Sophie soon replies (93). The driver explains that "people who have been away from Haiti fewer years… return and pretend they speak no Creole" (93). Sophie does not blame people who believe they must forget Creole, people who, very much like her mother, would never want to go back to Haiti. At the same time, she wishes to remember and rediscover where she belongs.

Martine, on the other hand, seems even more foreign to Haiti. She has lived in the United States longer, and her assimilation process is much deeper than Sophie's. In Martine's first interaction with her mother, the old woman notices how her face is much lighter than everyone else's. Though Martine argues it is due to the cold temperatures in New York, her lack of pigmentation is probably more due to the cosmetics she has been using since she moved to the United States. Consequently, Martine feels her whole body is a foreign space. In her words, "I am a fat woman trying to pass for thin. A dark woman trying to pass for light. And I have no breasts. I don't know when this cancer will come back. I am not an ideal mother" (192). This passage shows how uncomfortable she feels on her skin, to the point that she no longer feels fit to be a mother. Martine has always tried to stay one step away from a mental institution, culminating in her suicide while attempting to terminate her pregnancy. Therefore, her going to Haiti only seems to worsen her mental illness, while it is a very transforming and healing moment for Sophie.

In *Breath, Eyes, Memory,* Sophie's journey of self-discovery starts upon reconnection with both her mothers (mother, grandmother, and aunt) and the motherland, Haiti. Sophie's sexual phobia is intrinsically related to the traumas of her conception and her mother's "testing" of her virginity. Hence, Sophie starts making sense of her life and traumas when she physically and psychologically restores ties with her aunt, grandmother, mother, and Haiti. The violence of her conception—a child of rape—and the poverty and sexist beliefs surrounding the characters, which make mothers test their daughters, correlate with their colonial experience; their violation mirrors the violation of the land under colonial exploitation. Therefore, as explained by Susheila Nasta,

"The land and one's mothers are … co-joined" (xxv), and through understanding the repression of the past, they can break from it and transform their present.

Sophie claims that she belongs to Haiti when she returns, and her husband Joseph questions this assumption. When Sophie calls after taking off with their infant child and tells Joseph she had been "home," referring to Haiti, he asks,

> "You call it home?" he said. "Haiti."
> "What else would I call it?"
> "You have never called it that since we've been together. Home has always been your mother's house, that you could never go back to." (Danticat, *Breath* 198).

Joseph's remarks show how Sophie had felt reluctant to call Haiti home before her trip. While there, Sophie reconnects to a Haitian part of her—her bonding with her mother, aunt, and grandmother. Their bonding is officially recognized in the papers that say her grandmother's piece of land is also Sophie's and her daughter Brigite's. Sophie's final realization is that something essentially Haitian connects her to that land and her ancestors. In her own words,

> it was neither my mother nor my Tante Atie who had given all the mother-and-daughter motifs to all the stories they told and all the songs they sang. It was something that was essentially Haitian. Somehow, early on, our song makers and tale weavers had decided that we were all daughters of this land. (235).

Sophie realizes part of her is Haitian during her mother's funeral, and this realization helps her understand that her mother is now free, and she can let her go peacefully. Martine is no longer suffering or hearing voices and can now fly like a butterfly back to Sophie's life, "brave as starts at dawn" (239). Her final words to her mother "give wings to [her] feet" (239).

Besides the necessity to travel, Selina, Pilar, and Sophie also face repudiation of their ideas of going back to their motherlands by their mothers. Silla constantly reminds Selina of the harsh life she had in Barbados. In *Dreaming in Cuban*, Pilar is reprimanded continuously for her desire to go to Cuba—which she cannot do up to the end of the novel when traveling between the United States and Cuba becomes permitted. Still, while Pilar and Lourdes are visiting the island, Lourdes keeps scorning people for their ways of living, calling them "odious armchair socialists" and often commenting that "*Socialismo es muerte"* (García, *Dreaming* 223; 222). On the other hand, Martine says she only wanted to go back to Haiti to be buried, although she travels back to make amends with Sophie. This trope, which is also present in other novels discussed in this study, such as

Americanah, repeats itself in novels that deal with migration—often bringing the idea that migrants should not go back to their motherlands.[69] This confirms Fanon's remarks concerning the colonizer's prejudiced notion that the colonizer's nation is more civilized. The colonizer creates an entire mindset of submission and inferiority on the part of the colonized, extending that inferiority to the colonized country and all countries considered more developed economically.

This chapter has analyzed how Selina, Pilar, and Sophie can only navigate their spaces with their identities in a more empowering way once they can re-establish a connection with their mothers and motherlands. They use language, food, and memory to establish a connection with their motherlands. However, these characters only empower themselves when they accept that part of their hybrid identities is related to their mother's past. By making characters recognize this position while also returning and reconnecting to their motherlands, Paule Marshall, Cristina García, and Edwidge Danticat—as well as Yaa Gyasi, Eliana Alvez Cruz, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Joan Riley, among many others—contrapose colonized minds' values and construct decolonizing narratives. Marshall, García, and Danticat present characters willing to resignify their identities and relationships with their mothers and motherlands by simultaneously embracing something unique concerning their nationalities in conjunction with a diasporic understanding of negotiating their spaces in society.

[69] As mentioned before, in *Americanah*, people have also reacted negatively toward Ifemelu's decision to go back to Lagos at the beginning of the novel, exposing their beliefs that the United States is always in a pedestal when compared to Nigeria.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This dissertation has discussed mother-daughter relationships in the diaspora, analyzing how migration affects daughters' relationships with their mothers and motherlands. Included in this study is Christina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* within the context of black women's writing following the broad political understanding of the word "black," as used in Britain and Brazil (*negro/negra*), while its equivalent in the United States would be "people of color." As put by Susheila Nasta, "despite important differences between the writings of women of colour who have suffered the effects of a double colonization brought about by history and male-dominated social and political systems," it is necessary to draw links among these works, as well as establish boundaries and differences, as to better understand the plight of black women novelists (*Motherlands* xviii). Therefore, this study contributes to the growing scholarship on black women studies and diaspora studies.

I started the analysis with Gyasi's *Homegoing* and Cruz' *Água de Barrela,* highlighting the importance of female authorship and the value of oral traditions in black women's writings, as they take blood and soul family bonds as a way to reconcile past and present. Secondly, I selected three works that bring black women solo travelers whose struggles position themselves in-between two worlds while showing the significance of female bonding for identity formation. The works discussed were Kincaid's *Lucy*, Riley's *The Unbelonging*, and Adichie's *Americanah*. Finally, I focus more directly on mother-daughter relationships and the necessity daughters feel to reconnect to their past. Though they often connect this search to a return to the motherland, their empowerment comes with reconciling with their mothers and accepting their hybrid identities. The works discussed in this section were Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, García's *Dreaming in Cuban*, and Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. All these works, despite their differences, are concerned with investigating black women's diasporic identity formations, which may involve assimilating into the adopted country or returning to the motherland, always involving an acceptance of hybridity.

Combining the issue of mother-daughter relationships and migration is challenging, especially given the lack of vocabulary to identify some of the struggles mothers and daughters go

through and the diversity of relations that fit into a mother-daughter rhetoric. Throughout writing this dissertation, I often would stop and ask myself what it means to be a mother and a daughter. I have plenty of experience with the latter—as I consider many women to be mother figures in my development as a woman and a scholar. However, the former is still a mystery for me, mainly because I have refuted the biological trait of this role in my personal trajectory, as some of the characters in these novels also have. My understanding of motherhood breaks bodily constraints, and it does not necessarily mean growing a child in a womb. Women play the role of mother to one another and pass on their understanding of womanhood, both in ways that set free and imprison other women.

Therefore, this dissertation re-evaluates the concepts of mother, daughter, and motherland. I refute a biological notion of these three concepts, and my understanding of them emphasizes how they break physical limits. At the same time that being a mother does not necessarily mean growing a child in the womb, daughters do not only see the women who have given birth to them as mothers. The same could apply to motherlands, which might not be where one is born, but a place chosen for self-identification, which helps to reconcile past and present, roots and migrations. Because of this re-evaluation, I chose works that challenge traditional concepts and embrace more fluid social roles, showing different women playing different roles in specific moments of their lives.

While learning more about each text and the women who populate them, motherhood and daughterhood became two particular states. Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* and Eliana Alves Cruz's *Água de Barrela* show that being a mother figure is not always related to blood ties but spiritual ties. While the father figure is not always present, motherhood becomes an essential source of power in the face of slavery and migration. It is also determinant in the composition and maintenance of the black community. Being a mother, in this context, is sometimes related to the preservation of life despite injustices, which may be read as cruelty. Characters like Umbelina in *Água de Barrela* resemble Ma Aku in *Homegoing* and Eva Peace in *Sula.* Their love is tough, and their daughters must realize such love's existence by the simple fact that they are alive. For this reason, *Água de Barrela* and *Homegoing* opened this study—they reveal the multifaceted state of being a mother and a community while transforming the family tree into a nation, a "motherland."

Still, there is considerable symbolism on the biological pregnancy, that is, being a "mother" in the biological sense, with motherland and mother tongue in some of these novels. According to Simone Alexander, "the mother in motherland is symbolic of the land, the body, the connecting bridge" (*Mother Imagery* 7). We can observe this in chapter three especially, with the characters of Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth from *Lucy*, *Americanah*, and *The Unbelonging*. Lucy's rejection of her mother mirrors her rejection of the motherland. As Nasta affirms: "Colonised nations have frequently been represented by Europeans as 'female' requiring 'paternal governance' by the dominant power" (*Motherlands* xiii). In this sense, a birth mother carries on with creativity and culture, though still constrained by the ruling power of masculinity, the fatherland or colonizer. For this reason, Lucy's mother is absent geographically when Lucy migrates but very present in her colonialist practices while raising Lucy. Miss Annie has such a domineering position in Lucy's life that Lucy needs to rebel, completely detaching herself from her motherland—her community—and even stopping talking to her mother to find some degree of individualization. Ifemelu also experiences a detachment from her biological mother because of their lack of bonding and opposing views regarding religion and education. Hyacinth fantasizes about a mother figure and motherland, and the frustration caused by the rupture of her fantasies leaves her with disruptive images of herself and the black community. To understand their hybrid identities, these daughters need to rebel and travel—solo travel—and accept that fixed ideas of womanhood and belonging will not empower them.

The biological trait of motherhood is also present in the novels *Brown Girl, Brownstones, Dreaming in Cuban,* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory,* discussed in chapter four. These novels feature mothers' and daughters' struggles to connect to one another and together come to terms with their hybrid identities. Daughters can travel and dwell in their hybrid identities more freely than their mothers, and their efforts are an irrefutable consequence of their mothers' sacrifices. The fact that Selina, Pilar, and Sophie can acquire an education and live in better conditions than their mothers is one of the reasons they find time to worry about their identity struggle. Ironically, the kind of life that detached them from their mothers is precisely the kind of life made possible because of their mothers' struggles. Chapter four reveals how mothers sometimes impose their female identities on their daughters, while the diasporic condition these daughters find themselves in creates a sense of displacement and longing for other examples of womanhood, which they believe

they will find upon returning to their motherlands. While their search is not always fulfilled, their act of returning and looking for othermothers is an essential part of their identity reconstruction. Therefore, conflicts concerning gender role expectations, sexual behavior, generational and educational breaches, motherhood, and mother-daughter tumultuous relationships in postcolonial works mirror these subjects' complex relations with their geographical spaces and identities, ultimately making them challenge the systems around them in the act of resistance and reconstruction connected to a willingness to rewrite their personal stories against the mainstream narrative.

5.1 Migration

This study has revealed that motherhood and familial relations relate to identity reconstruction experiences, diminishing or enhancing feelings of displacement, depending on how positive or negative these relations play out in the lives of these characters. It has also shown that migration in post-colonial and/or developing countries follows very different patterns from traditional tourism. While tourists—predominantly white Western tourists—develop a certain kind of gaze that study developing nations or focus primarily on leisure activities at the cost of the poverty of the native population, postcolonial migrants travel because they need what is considered "better life" opportunities and/or because of a necessity to rediscover a part of their identities. The slave trade itself dispersed Africans worldwide, and the diasporic communities formed from this violence also dispersed around the countries in which these communities settled. All novels discussed emphasize this unique characteristic of the black diaspora.

This dissertation addresses a gap in works investigating travel fiction written by black women. The transnational works I investigated have particular nuances to storytelling, migration, identity, and the very conflict between mothers and daughters, which is sometimes difficult to disassociate from the very question of migration and its implications. Moreover, despite the issue of travel, diasporic works written by black women dwell in in-betweenness both in its content and critical analysis. As characters, mothers and daughters are in-between due to the intersections of race, gender, and sometimes class. In addition, the works themselves are inserted in both a postcolonial and black feminist tradition. This in-betweenness mirrors the idea of diasporic

blackness, and the works chosen exemplify this double location and resistance. The works show both a movement of people and a movement, a shift in our understanding of what it means to be black in this society.

According to Rose Scakeyfio, "Female authors have moved beyond the margins of male-authored texts to command new aspects of prominence in the African literary canon" (1). My study confirms this change, this shift in black women's writings. Many fictional works now focus on women's relationship with each other and their geographical and social spaces in the diaspora. Intersecting gender, race, and travel can take us to new spaces when dealing with identity, for it addresses the double (or threefold) consciousness of the condition of being a migrant, a woman, and a black person. In search of a way to name this three-way experience, I realized a condition not rooted in tension but rather a transversal point between parallel experiences of foreignness. In other words, the migrant develops a sense of foreignness while both in the diaspora and upon return to a supposed "motherland." This condition that I have called transversal hybridity comes with the realization that one can speak from both locations (from the diaspora and the motherland) when they acquire a political sense of blackness.

Água de Barrela and *Homegoing* start with the slave trade rupturing families and forcing people to establish new kin in a foreign and violent land. After that first rupture, geography becomes less of a concern, and the texts show how borders do not mean much and that community is what composes a "nation." When characters such as Akin/Firmino (*Água*) and Marcus (*Homegoing*) have the chance to go back "home," they realize there is no return for them. Their families migrate within the borders of their adopted countries without much attachment to things, knowing that what matters is their connection with the past and their willingness to resist barriers imposed on them.

Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth migrate for different reasons. Wishing to free herself from her authoritarian mother, Lucy seeks to determine her individuality, and for that, she becomes an au pair and a student in the United States while exploring her artistic personality in her pursuit of photography. Ifemelu migrated to the United States to attend the university since her university in Lagos experienced strikes, and she would stay at home for months without going to school. Studying abroad is regarded in Lagos as being something of great value, as it is in many other developing nations. On the other hand, Hyacinth migrates to live with her father and his family in

London, but she is sent to youth shelters after being sexually abused by her father. These women's reasons for migrating coincide with developing countries' values that living abroad enhances one's career and offers better life opportunities. Although colonization has ended by the time Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth migrate, the same power structure prevails through an imperialistic relationship between the United States and England toward developing countries, mirroring the gender and racial struggles Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth experience throughout their lives.

Selina, Pilar, and Sophie make the journey back "home," a kind of travel seen in many travel journals by black writers—traveling that aims to "find roots" and reconstruct identities. Although Selina was presumably born in the United States, Pilar and Sophie have already made the journey motherland-Untied States previously as children and attempted the reverse trip in adulthood. These three daughters' unique stories show that their journeys are related to self-discovery, a kind of thinking other characters cannot afford to have—they are too busy surviving. Still, Selina, Pilar, and Sophie's actual empowerment is their acceptance of their mothers and their transversal hybridity, for they became able to dwell in their different locations differently from their mothers, who do not find this sense of "wholeness."

5.2 Identity

Mother-daughter relationships and migration also involve the issue of identity, which is present in all of the novels. A person's sense of self is connected with the family they are born into, specifically with the mother's image. When we factor in migration in the issue of identity construction, it becomes even more complex because of the split, fragmented condition these characters need to navigate and negotiate. This study has highlighted how characters born or brought into a context of diaspora need to learn how to live in this space of tension, identifying with features from one or more cultures. Some characters navigate this reality well, while others cannot do that and even hurt themselves.

Homegoing and *Água de Barrela*, which start with life in African countries and progress through time to show descendants of enslaved and colonized people's life in the diaspora, highlight the difficulty of constructing hybrid identities. Marjorie and Marcus, in *Homegoing*, carry the weight of ancestry and need to come to terms with the fact that they are not able to recover

everything their families lost with slavery and colonization. When she becomes a character in her own work, Eliana reveals through her willingness to recover her family's history how slavery and racism can displace people in countries where there are no attempts to recover marginalized people's history and culture. At the same time, it shows the importance of female figures—mothers, grandmothers, aunts—in "mirroring and affirming identity or notions of the birth of female identity through transference to text and symbol" (Nasta, *Motherlands* xix). In other words, their willingness to tell stories and preserve history through memory and symbols becomes particularly important to the preservation and resistance of the next generation.

Lucy and Ifemelu, from *Lucy* and *Americanah*, search for their own individualized identity and need to learn how it is to live between two cultures. As Marianne Hirsch notices, black women often write daughters that construct their identities in opposition to their mothers (177). Lucy's wish to obliterate her life in Antigua and free herself from her mother's power over her might come across as resistance to gender constraints at first. However, Lucy does not achieve agency by the end of the novel, as she finds out that sexual freedom by itself is not enough to set her free, and she longs for something else, love, more specifically, what seems to be the love of a mother. Ifemelu, on the other hand, becomes an "americanah," and successfully negotiates the tensions between her Nigerian and American identities. Her return to Lagos does not mean returning to the *status quo* but a rediscovery of Lagos, herself, and her community. As for Hyacinth in *The Unbelonging*, her story shows her difficulties in finding a place where she belongs, and she can only experience "homelessness" throughout her tale, a consequence of her lack of acceptance of her hybrid condition.

In *Brown Girl, Brownstones, Dreaming in Cuban,* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory,* the issue of identity is very present, and all characters try to dwell in their hyphenated realities. Selina wishes to travel to Barbados from a young age, and by the end of the narrative, she is preparing to take the journey through which she will discover more of herself. After years of dreaming of going to Cuba, Pilar can finally embrace herself for what she is, a hybrid person who chooses to go back to New York. Sophie dwells in her Haitianess and Americaness while coming to terms with her sexual traumas with the help of Santeria. These characters can successfully accept their fluidity and become transversal hybrids because they find a way to connect with their mothers and

motherlands and are probably among the most empowered women of all the characters discussed in this dissertation.

5.3 Language

Language is another issue highlighted in this study, for it is greatly affected by migration and sometimes determines mother-daughter relationships. The first rupture colonized people and migrants suffer after a family is a rupture with the "mother" tongue. Sometimes, the only language available for expressing the struggles of migration and colonization is the colonizer's language, which has enslaved them (Kincaid, *A Small Place* 32). Slavery and colonization destroyed thousands of languages and cultures while imposing the colonizer's language on natives who survived violence and disease. Considering this ambivalence toward language, it is also important to state that it can facilitate the rapport between mothers and daughters and hinder their communication, depending on how it is used. Most of the time, language becomes a site of resistance through the act of writing and reclaiming the past.

The characters in *Homegoing* cling to their native language as much as they can to build a tangible connection with Ghana, their motherland. Marjorie, for instance, uses Twi to talk to her grandmother and feel more connected to that part of her identity while writing poetry in English. In *Água de Barrela*, some character's speech reflects Pretuguês, a term coined by Lélia Gonzalez, which refers to a specific vernacular Portuguese that is deeply influenced by African languages and is spoken by black Brazilians in communities in the big city centers, considered a mistake and/or poor language use (Bagno 16).

Lucy, Ifemelu, and Hyacinth, although migrating from places that speak English due to colonization, do not present many issues regarding communication restraints upon migration but face other problems concerning language imposition. Lucy, for instance, had to memorize poems about daffodils growing up because of a colonizing education. Back in Antiqua, she had to sing "Rule, Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves; Britons never, never shall be slaves," when she was not from Britain, and her ancestors had been enslaved people (Kincaid, *Lucy* 135). The imposition of standard English through poems and songs that have nothing to do with Lucy's postcolonial experience is an assault on Lucy's identity, and she feels violated by having to go through that

kind of situation. Ifemelu, like Lucy, watched her father grow anxious when speaking in "perfect" English. Notwithstanding, she also experiences the growing anxiety to fit into North American society and experience less xenophobic situations. She, therefore, adopts an "American" accent, abdicating part of her identity as a Nigerian woman—something she profoundly regrets once she establishes a healthier relationship with her experience in the adopted country and embraces her foreignness. Hyacinth's fantasizing about Jamaica trespass language imposition because she fears school and the professors in England. Sometimes, this fear is pronounced in her words, which she tries to enunciate politely to avoid punishment, especially around white people (Riley, *The Unbelonging* 70).

Language acquisition is also a significant concern in *Brown Girl, Brownstones, Dreaming in Cuban,* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. Marshall's writing aesthetic uses language as a major tool in *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, primarily through the character of Silla, whose acid remarks are part of the design of the novel, while it also represents a certain kind of speech. Silla's voice is also filled with metaphors and hyperboles, which create an aesthetic that mimics Bajan women's dialects. In *Dreaming in Cuban*, Pilar communicates telepathically and through letters with her grandmother Celia, while Lourdes has difficulties communicating with her daughter and mother due to their opposing political views and past traumas. In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the use of Creole connects the Caco women, while the adopted language, English, serves as a metaphor for the lack of communication between Sophie and Martine.

5.4 Storytelling and Memory

Finally, in the novels discussed, mother-daughter relationships are mainly constructed through storytelling and memory. This storytelling is not often described as conversation, but the act of passion on stories from generation to generation and creating a collective memory. It also happens when daughters can connect with their mothers' stories through traveling. This travel serves both as a way for daughters to continue their self-discovery and see how their lives could be if they (or their parents) had not migrated. Restoring connection with mothers and motherlands does not resolve the daughters' inbetweeness, but it can help them keep African oral traditions alive and

preserve their mothers' and grandmothers' memories. Storytelling and memory preservation are essential for constructing the identity of some of these characters living in diasporic situations.

Storytelling in *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* happens in two ways, determining these texts' double resistance. At the same time, characters—especially women—in both works pass on stories from generation to generation; the authors themselves went through processes of collecting stories to compose their narratives. Yaa Gyasi traveled to Ghana and learned about many stories she had never heard before, incorporating them into her novel. Eliana Alvez Cruz interviewed her relatives, especially her grandmothers and aunts, to compose her text. *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela,* therefore, represent the materiality of storytelling and the importance of preserving the memory of the black diaspora.

While storytelling is not a strong feature in *Lucy, Americanah,* and *The Unbelonging,* the very lack of it can be identified as one of the reasons these women feel detached from their communities. Lucy's lack of knowledge of what her mother has gone through might be her lack of empathy and unwillingness to forgive Miss Annie for preferring Lucy's male siblings. While Ifemelu's knowledge of colonialism and how it transformed her parents sends her searching for a different kind of life, Hyacinth's lack of awareness of her family history can be the reason for her utter displacement.

On the other hand, memory and storytelling highly influence daughters in *Brown Girl, Brownstones, Dreaming in Cuban,* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory.* Selina can piece together her mother's history by the end of the novel and realize how similar they are, therefore becoming ready to make the journey by herself. Pilar's story combines what she knows about her mother, grandmother, and motherland. She can only make sense of whom she is when she faces all the facets of her story. Sophie and the Caco women also need to accept the past and communicate with each other to make sense of their own identities and start healing their traumatic experiences.

The feelings of "homelessness" significantly affect diasporic bodies, shaping and changing female characters' identities throughout their lives. Therefore, migration transforms them into transversal hybrids. Rather than merely complicating women's relationships with their bodies, identities, and familial bonds, upon migration, characters become able to construct a fluidity in their social interactions. Instead of resolving and making them "whole" women, this fluidity complicates their identities and provokes tension in their communities, for they become foreigners

both in the diaspora and upon returning. Being a transversal hybrid does not erase the significance of the motherland and adopted country because it is more about acceptance than denial. Characters like Ifemelu, Marjorie, Pilar, Sophie, and Selina learn to positively embrace their foreignness—both in the diaspora and as returnees. While others like Lucy and Hyacinth remain in denial of their condition and, therefore, never feel empowered, Ifemelu, Marjorie, Pilar, Sophie, and Selina accept that they might never feel genuinely and entirely at "home"—in a traditional sense of belonging exclusively to one single place. However, embracing this foreignness means challenging traditional ways of understanding identities as fixed. Migration, therefore, makes mother-daughter relationships more complicated because migrants are multifaceted people, embracing the mutability of our postmodern world and presenting fluid, entangled relationships with their bodies, identities, geographical spaces, and maternal bonds.

5.5 A Note on Genre

The themes of mother-daughter relationships in the diaspora and how they intersect identity, language, and memory, are on the surface of stories of female empowerment, which these women achieve when they accept their fragmented, hybrid identities. More than stories about identity construction, however, the composition of these texts presents structures and genres that critics find challenging to punctuate. Fiction about migration often raises different interpretations regarding the authors' literary tradition and their locations. In an urge to set boundaries and invisible lines to literary traditions, as it has often been done with identity itself, literary texts are sometimes seen as stable, following this-or-that conceptualization. The question of identity construction and the search for stability that leads to the characters' acceptance of hybrid identities mirror many critics' search for stability when analyzing these texts.

For instance, *Homegoing* has been characterized as a neo-slave narrative by Lisa Ze Winters. According to Winters, the neo-slave narrative intersects history, memory, and trauma, attempting to reconstruct history by using memory to understand the past, and black women's voices are prominent in this type of literary production (Winters 338). Other examples of neo-slave narratives would be Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Anne Sherley Williams' *Dessa Rose*, which are stories set in the Antebellum South that deal with the struggles of enslaved people. Another novel that could

fall into this category is Octavia Butler's *Kindred*, although it is generally more characterized as "Afrofuturism" [70] and/or science-fiction for its non-mimetic construction. Theoretically, *Homegoing*, and *Água de Barrela*, for that matter, would fit the conceptualization of neo-slave narratives; after all, they start with enslaved characters.

However, both *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* have another approach to slavery. They focus on female authorship to tell stories of the black diaspora, from slavery to contemporary times. *Homegoing* and *Água de Barrela* use collective memory of chattel slavery, segregation, and migration to show generational traumas and reinforce the importance of historical revision. Gyasi and Cruz contribute with a re-construction of history that—instead of claiming a center, directs its eyes to the margin and recreates history from this location, in a collection process that Cruz calls "small pieces of life" ("pedaços miúdos de vida," *Água* 305). These small pieces are embedded in the design of the novels, with each chapter or section referencing one character or a specific historical event in the span of three hundred years. The texts highlight the act of remembering to re-establish a bond with the motherland and resist countless attempts by the dominant group to erase their history. Therefore, what Gyasi and Cruz accomplish are not neo-slave narratives; they are something else. An attempt to name it certainly should emphasize the legacy of slavery and the black diasporic trait of their narratives. The lack of vocabulary to characterize what Gyasi and Cruz are doing reflects the inventive nature of their texts.

Homegoing and *Água de Barrela* join a pile of works whose genres could be contested, including many works discussed in this dissertation—works that challenge boundaries of the genre just like their characters challenge identity boundaries. Critics such as Pascal P. Buma comment on the difficulty of assigning a genre and a literary tradition to *Brown Girl, Brownstones*. In Buma's words, "it is not even clear whether *Brown Girl, Brownstones* would be an African-American novel or an Afro-Caribbean novel" (304). This difficulty in situating *Brown Girl, Brownstones* only confirms its complexity, demonstrating that "Paule Marshall did not simply

[70] The term Afrofuturism also generates discussion among fantasy and science fiction black authors. Nnedi Okorafor claims that Afrofuturism does not describe what she does, and proposes the term Africanfuturism, a sub-category of science fiction "that respectfully acknowledges the seamless blend of true existing African spiritualities and cosmologies with the imaginative" (Okorafor). Furthermore, she explains that Africanfuturism relates to Afrofuturism in the sense that black people are connected by "blood, spirit, history and future," with a difference that Africanfuturism is more directly anchored in "African culture, history, mythology, and point-of-view" as it expands out "into the Black Diaspora, and it does no privilege or centers the West" (Okorafor).

want to write the story of a black girl's coming of age and her quest for a wholesome selfhood" (304). It is a disclaim of wholeness itself. We can see that through the complexities of identity and gender dynamics in the novel, as Selina grows and abandons the certainty of her youth years and embraces the ambiguity and uncertainties of adulthood (304).

Furthermore, Dorothy Hamer Denniston comments on the genre misplacement of *Brown Girl, Brownstones,* stating, "On one level... *Brown Girl, Brownstones* is a *Bildungsroman*. On another level, it is a *Kunstlerroman*. On still another, more comprehensive level, the novel chronicles African-Caribbean culture thriving in an environment hostile to its mores and beliefs"—therefore, a novel that "moves beyond Western literary paradigms to unveil a distinctly African orientation" (7). That is because Marshall "explores diaspora themes as an evolving aesthetic in the genre" (Sackeyfio 120). I would add that Marshall explores diasporic themes in the construction of the novel itself that migrates from the many diasporic experiences of the text through the characters, culminating in Selina's intention to migrate back to Barbados.

Another example is *Dreaming in Cuban,* which raises questions regarding genre and the literary tradition in which the novel can be included. Ralph Dalleo's "How Cristina García lost her Accent, and Other Latina Conversations" states that García chooses to position her text in a Latinx Literature conceptualization instead of a more fluid migrant perspective. In Dalleo's words, she writes in a Latina tradition that Sandra Cisneros has helped create as a member of the ''Latina-Caribbean generation of the 1990s, a group that includes García'' (6). According to Juan Flores's essay "The Latino Imaginary": "The role of the social imagination and the imaginary in the self-conception of nationally, ethnically, and 'racially' kindred groups is, of course, central… but … assessed with a view toward how they are being imagined" (193). Framed another way, Latinx identity can be considered real because it is imagined through cultural practices and experiences. Certainly, however, this concept is not stable but rather fluid, influenced by local, cultural, and individual experiences. As expected, however, critics do not deny the presence of assimilation in these novels and the lives of the authors themselves.

Cristina García's name is an example of such assimilation and adequacy for the North American publishing market. As pointed out by Dalleo, in García's first two novels, her surname was spelled with an accent, García (4). However, her surname lost the accent, Garcia, which is how most critics refer to her. Daello suggests this is no mere misspelling. It means "assimilating

the name to English-language norms, the North Americanized orthography of García's name is in keeping with *Dreaming in Cuban's* overall orientation towards the United States" (4-5). At the same time, however, the novel shows how possessing a hybrid, hyphenated identity involves gains and losses, which contradicts Dalleo's conclusion that García "chooses to think of herself as a Latina writer" (5). Perhaps, as much as Pilar, García embraces a non-conceptualization of her identity, an in-betweenness yet to be appropriately named. In Annabel Cox's examination of *Dreaming in Cuban,* in which she responds to Dalleo's text, Cox believes that Dalleo's use of the hyphenated "Latina-Caribbean" under-prints the complex "Latina" label. According to Cox, "postmodernism and magical realist aspects are … present in the novel, and these may link García with a postcolonial migrant and Cuban-American, Caribbean, and Latina identity" (358). Therefore, Cox argues that the Latinx concept is not static and should be constantly re-evaluated to include, for instance, migrants to the United States (359).

Black woman writers have fluid, fragmented characters whose shifting boundaries correspond to genre fluidity. Considering novels that mainly deal with the issue of diaspora, we perceive a tendency to write against static states and spaces, focusing on an intersection of borders and identities that shifts readers' expectations and extrapolates Western conceptions of genre. Rose A. Sackeyfio notices that,

> "New developments in the contemporary African novel may be conceptualized as growing pains that shift the boundaries of an evolving aesthetic of literary production. The transcontinental gaze of female authors who live between worlds as diaspora subjects has actualized literary transitions and multilayered themes that span postcolonial, postmodern, and contemporary landscapes" (117).

Sakeyfio speaks not only of themes but also genre and structure in this segment. She speaks of works such as *Homegoing* and *Americanah,* which transcends our notions of neo-slave narratives and historical fiction, a *bildungsroman*, and gives us something new, fresh, for which labels are yet to be created. Therefore, these works should not be identified as stable, geographically, or nationally confined writing genres but within a series of border intersections (Davies 3).

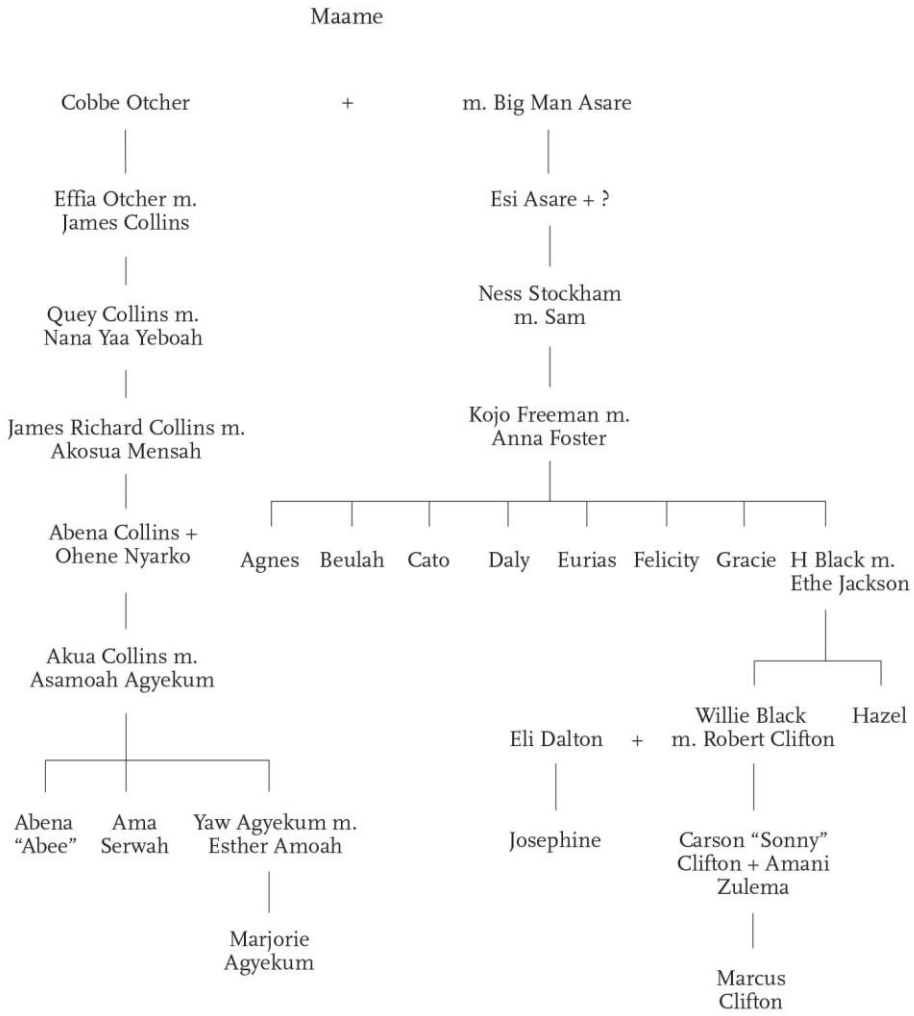
The works discussed in this study exemplify the richness of black cultures and how much still there is to rediscover about them. After all, this has always been one of the major concerns of black women's writing traditions across the Atlantic—the reconstruction of identity notions through remembering stories silenced in mainstream discourses. As Alice Walker identified her

grandmothers, “they dreamed dreams that no one knew—not even themselves, in any coherent fashion—and saw visions no one could understand… They forced their minds to desert their bodies and their striving spirits sought to rise, like frail whirlwinds from the hard red clay” (402). Walker’s search for her grandmothers’ artistic spirit exemplifies what Cruz, Gyasi, Kincaid, Adichie, Riley, Danticat, Marshall, and García have done—a search for the strength of black heritage that goes back to Africa and propagates across new spaces and cultures. The importance of novels like the ones discussed here is precisely how they allow us the possibility of an identity, genre, and mother-daughter relationships revision through the eyes of postcolonial subjects, in a dislocation from the center to the margin that contributes to the emergence of a non-imperialist literary culture. These works derive from the necessity of highlighting and recovering a past marked by slavery, oppression, and colonization, while reconstructing a black diasporic identity as a political stance to help create a more just society.

APPENDIX A.

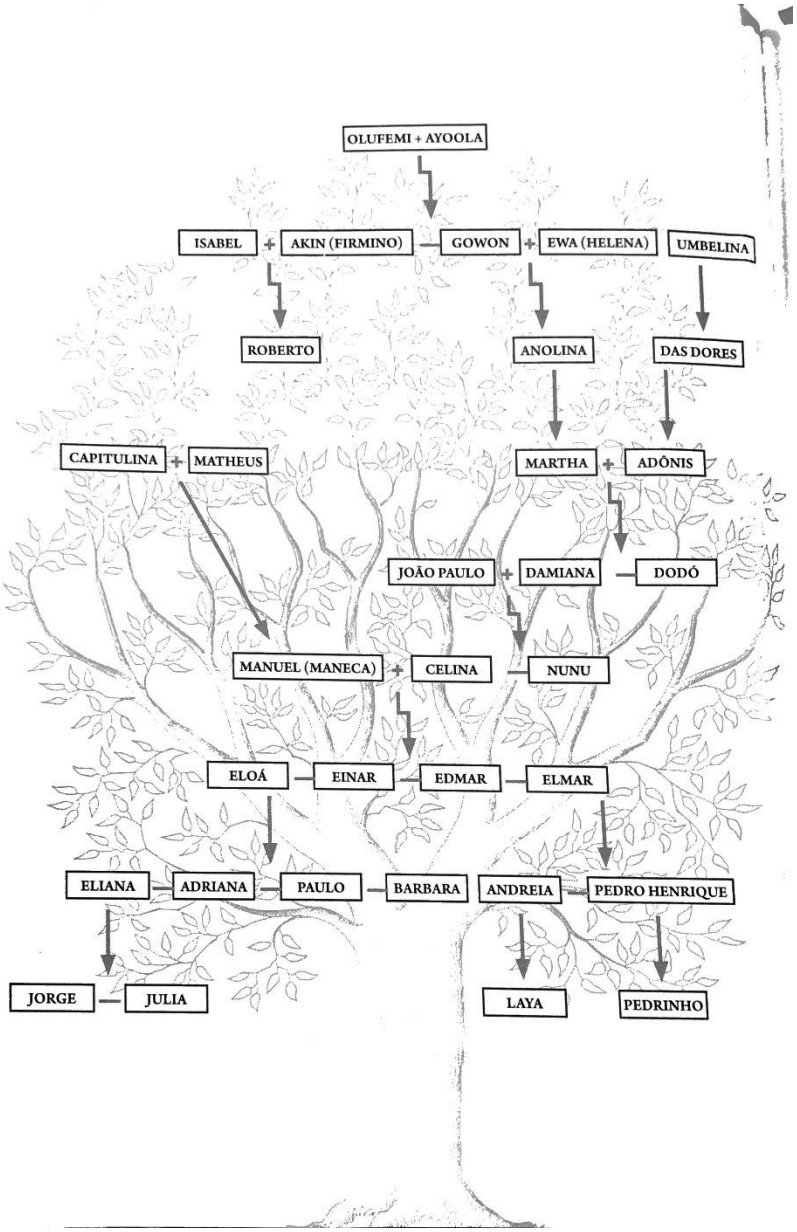
Reads: “Casa de engenho Nossa Senhora da Natividade (Plantation Nossa Senhora da Natividade).

APPENDIX B.



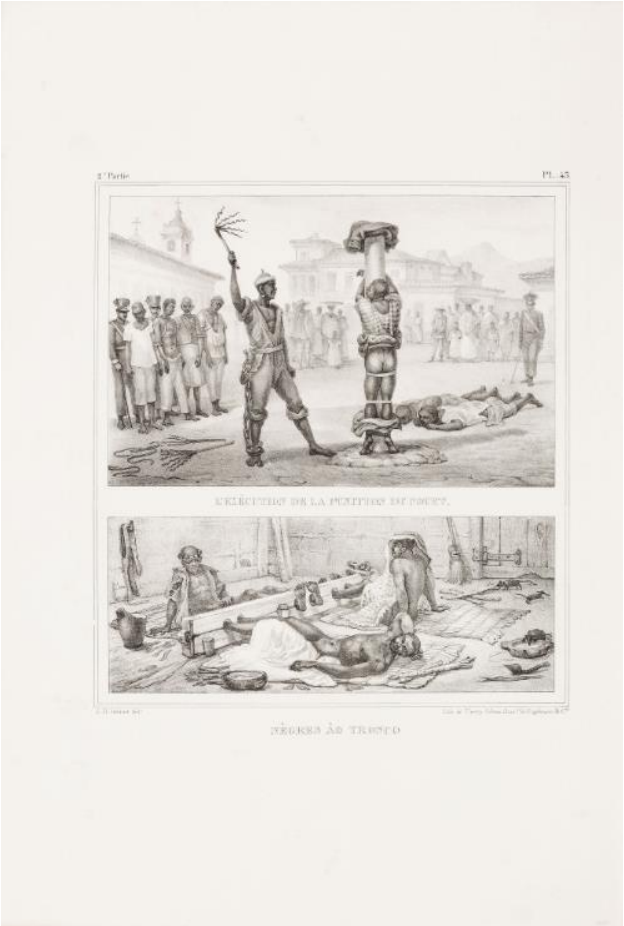
Family tree of Gyasi's *Homegoing*.

APPENDIX C.



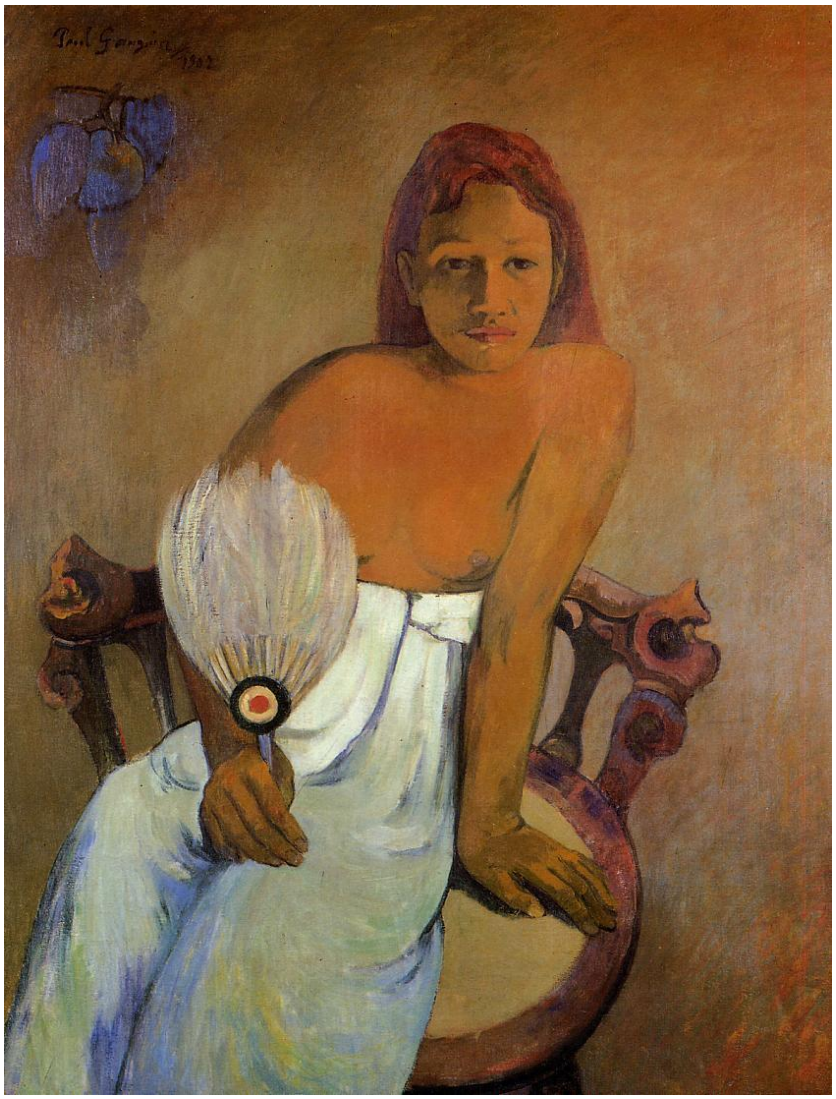
Family tree of Cruz's *Água de Barrela.*

APPENDIX D.



Reads: “L’exécution de la punition du fouet” and “Nègres ào tronco.” The first on the top shows the “Pelourinho,” a whipping post. The picture on the bottom shows the “tronco,” used in Brazil, resembling the same notion of the pillory. Both illustrations were done by the French Jean-Baptiste Debret and date back to 1835 (Acervo da Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Brasil/ Coleção Brasiliana / Fundação Estaduar, 2007).

APPENDIX E.



Paul Gauguin, *Girl with a Fan* (1902)

WORKS CITED

"About the Foreign-Born Population." *United States Census Bureau*, 28 April 2022, https://www.census.gov/topics/population/foreign-born/about.html.

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. New York: Anchor Books, 1994.

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Americanah*. New York: Anchor Books, 2013.

---. "The Danger of a Single Story." *TED: Ideas Worth Spreading*, July 2009, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.

Aidoo, Ama Ata. *No Sweetness Here*. London: Longman, 1988.

Alexander-Floyd, Nikol G., and Evelyn M. Simien. "Revisiting 'What's in a Name?': Exploring the Contours of Africana Womanist Thought." *Frontiers (Boulder)*, vol. 27, no. 1, U of Nebraska P, 2006, pp. 67–89, https://doi.org/10.1353/fro.2006.0011.

Alexander, Simone A. James. *Mother Imagery in the Novels of Afro-Caribbean Women*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2001.

---. "M/othering the Nation: Women's Bodies as Nationalist Trope in Edwidge Danticat's 'Breath, Eyes, Memory.'" African American Review, vol. 44, no. 3, Saint Louis University, 2011, pp. 373–90, https://doi.org/10.1353/afa.2010.0032.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. U of Minnesota P, 1996.

Auster, Michelle Denise. *England, My England": Re-Imagining Englishness in Modernist and Contemporary Novels*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2005.

Bagno, Marcos. *Preconceito Linguístico*. São Paulo: Parábola, 2015.

Banks, Ingrid. *Hair Matters: Beauty, Power, and Black Women's Consciousness*. New York, NY: New York U P, 2000, https://doi.org/10.18574/9780814739457.

"Barrela, N." *Michaelis*, 2022, https://michaelis.uol.com.br/moderno-portugues/busca/portugues-brasileiro/barrela/.

"Barrela, N." *Dicionário informal*, 2022, https://www.dicionarioinformal.com.br/barrela/.

Batalha, Maria Cristina. "Relatos e Travessias Em Eliana Alves Cruz." *PragMATIZES - Revista Latino-Americana De Estudos Em Cultura*, vol. 10, no. 18, 2020, p. 246–265.

Bell-Scott, Patricia et al., editors. *Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers & Daughters*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1991.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Bobo, Jaqueline et al. *The Black Studies Reader.* London: Routledge, 2004.

Braunstein, Tamara. "Sexual Feelings: Reading Anglophone Caribbean Women's Writing through Affect." *Transnational Literature*, vol. 7, no. 2, Research Centre for Transcultural Creativity and Education (TRACE), 2015, p. 1–3.

Braziel, Jana Evans. "Daffodils, Rhizomes, Migrations: Narrative Coming of Age in the Diasporic Writings of Edwidge Danticat and Jamaica Kincaid." *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, vol. 3, no. 2, Indiana U P, 2003 2003, pp. 110–31. doi:10.1215/15366936-3.2.110.

Brinker-Gabler, Gisela., and Sidonie. Smith. *Writing New Identities Gender, Nation, and Immigration in Contemporary Europe.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997.

Brown, Nadia E., and Danielle Casarez Lemi. *Sister Style: The Politics of Appearance for Black Women Political Elites*. New York, NY: Oxford U P, 2021.

Brown-Guillory, Elizabeth. *Women of Color: Mother-Daughter Relationships in 20th-Century Literature.* 1st University of Texas Press ed. Austin: U of Texas P, 1996.

Buma, Pascal P. "Paule Marshall's 'Brown Girl, Brownstones': A Nexus Between the Caribbean and the African-American 'Bildungsromane.'" *CLA Journal*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2001, pp. 303–16.

Butler, Kim D and Petrônio Domingues. *Diásporas Imaginadas: Atlântico Negro e Histórias Afro-brasileiras.* São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2020.

Byerman, Keith E. "Gender, Culture, and Identity in Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*." *Gender and Genre in Literature: Redefining Autobiography in Twentieth-Century Women's Fiction*. Ed. Janice Morgan and Colette T. Hall. New York: Garland, 1991. 135–47.

Carling, Jørgen, et al. "Central Themes in the Study of Transnational Parenthood." *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2, Feb. 2012, pp. 191–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.646417.

Castro, Ángela. "Power-in-Passivity: A Study of the Body and the Female Recognition in Jamaica Kincaid's Lucy." *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2017 Fall 2017, pp. 19–28.

Cheng, Shu-Ju Ada. "Right to Mothering: Motherhood as a Transborder Concern in the Age of Globalization." O'Reilly, pp. 640–648.

Chin, Timothy S. "Caribbean Migration and the Construction of a Black Diaspora Identity in Paule Marshall's 'Brown Girl, Brownstones.'" *NWIG: New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids*, vol. 80, no. 1/2, 2006, pp. 63–81.

Christian, Barbara. "But Who Do You Really Belong to - Black Studies or Women's Studies?" *Women's Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1-2, Taylor & Francis Group, 1989, pp. 17–23, https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.1989.9978786.

Christol, Helene. "Paule Marshall's Bajan Women in *Brown Girl, Brownstones*." *Women and War: Th e Changing Status of American Women from the 1930s to the 1950s*, edited by Maria Diedrich and Dorothea Fischer-Hornung, St. Martin's P, 1990, pp. 141–55.

Cixous, Hélène, and Catherine Clément. *The Newly Born Woman.* Translated by Bestsy Wing, Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986. Theory and History of Literature 24.

Clarke, Robert, editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2018. Cambridge Companions to Literature.

---. "History, Memory, and Trauma in Postcolonial Travel Writing." Clarke, pp. 49–62.

Cole, Johnetta B. Preface. Bell-Scott et al., pp. xiii-xv.

Collado, Alicia. "El retorno al hogar: La hibridez cultural de Pilar en Dreaming in Cuban." *Revista de Culturas y Literaturas Comparadas*, vol. 6, Dec. 2016. *revistas.unc.edu.ar*, https://revistas.unc.edu.ar/index.php/CultyLit/article/view/16383.

Collins, Patricia Hill. "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought." *Social Problems*, vol. 33, no. 6, 1986, pp. S14–S32. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1986.33.6.03a00020.

---. "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother-Daughter Relationships." Bell-Scott, pp. 42-60.

Cox, Annabel. "Cristina García's Dreaming in Cuban: Latina Literature and Beyond?" *Latino Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, Oct. 2009, pp. 357–77. https://doi.org/10.1057/lst.2009.24.

Cruz, Eliana Alves. *Água de Barrela.* Rio de Janeiro: Male, 2018.

---. "Entrevista com Eliana Alves Cruz." Interview by Carolina Freitas da Cunha. *Medium*, May 2020. https://medium.com/@cfdacunha/entrevista-com-eliana-alves-cruz-59f1213704c5. Interview.

---. *O Crime do Cais do Valongo.* Rio de Janeiro: Malê, 2018.

Cuban, Sondra. "'Any Sacrifice Is Worthwhile Doing': Latina Au Pairs Migrating to the United States for Opportunities." *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2018, pp. 235–54, https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2016.1263775.

Dalgas, Karina Märcher. "Filipino Au Pairs on the Move: Navigating Strong and Weak Ties in the Search of Future Paths." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, vol. 6, no. 4, Helsinki U P, 2016, pp. 199–206, https://doi.org/10.1515/njmr-2016-0028.

Dalleo, Raphael. "How Cristina García Lost Her Accent, and Other Latina Conversations." *Latino Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, Palgrave Macmillan, Apr. 2005, pp. 3–18. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.lst.8600130.

Danticat, Edwidge. *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. New York, NY: Soho, 1994.

Davies, Carole Boyce. *Black Women Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject.* London: Routledge, 1994.

Davis, Rocjo G. "Back to the Future: Mothers, Languages, and Homes in Cristina García's `Dreaming in Cuban'." *World Literature Today*, vol. 74, no. 1, Winter 2000, p. 60–68. https://doi.org/10.2307/40155309.

Day, Iyko. *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the logic of Shelter colonial capitalism.* North Carolina: Duke U P, 2016.

De Abruna, Laura Nielson. "The Ambivalence of Mirroring and Female Bonding in Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*." *International Women's Writing: New Landscapes of Identity*, edited by Anne E. Brown and Marjanne E. Gooze, Greenwood P, 1995, pp. 245–52.

Denniston, Dorothy Hamer. *The Fiction of Paule Marshall: Reconstructions of History, Culture, and Gender*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1995.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. 1st American ed., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1976.

Devulksy, Alessandra. *Colorismo*. São Paulo: Jandaíra, 2021. Femininos Plurais.

Dickerson, Glenda. "The Cult of True Womanhood: Toward a Womanist Attitude in African-American Theatre." *Theatre Journal (Washington, D.C.)*, vol. 40, no. 2, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1988, pp. 178–87, https://doi.org/10.2307/3207655.

Donnell, Alison. "Dreaming of Daffodils: Cultural Resistance in the Narratives of Theory." *Kunapipi*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1992, pp. 45–52. https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol14/iss2/9.

Doyle, Jacqueline. "Developing Negatives: Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*." 466200, edited by Katherine B. Payant and Toby Rose, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999, pp. 59–71.

Du Bois, William E. B. *The Negro American Family*. New York: Negro U P, 1969.

Eaton, Kalenda. "Diasporic Dialogues: The role of gender, language, and revision in the neo-slave narrative." *Language Value*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2012, pp. 1–22. https://doi.org/10.6035/LanguageV.2012.4.2.2.

Edwards, Justin. "Postcolonial Travel Writing and Postcolonial Theory." Clarke, pp. 19–32

Ellingson, Ter. *The Myth of the Noble Savage.* California: U of California P, 2001.

Fanon, Frantz, et al. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove P, 1965.

Federici, Silvia. *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle.* California: PM P, 2012.

Flores, Juan. *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity*. New York: Columbia U P, 2000.

Foner, Nancy, et al. "Introduction: Immigration and Changing Identities." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, vol. 4, no. 5, 2018, pp. 1–25. https://doi.org/10.7758/rsf.2018.4.5.01.

Fornet, Ambrosio. "Cuba: Nation, Diaspora, Literature." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 35, no. 2, Jan. 2009, pp. 255–69. https://doi.org/10.1086/596642.

Foucault, Michel. "The Order of Discourse." In *Untying the text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, edited by Robert Young, London: Routledge, 1981, pp. 48–78.

Franklin, Ruth. "Homeland Truth: A Young Woman from Lagos Upends her False American

Freyre, Gilberto. *Casa-Grande & Senzala: Formação Da Família Brasileira Sob o Regime Da Economia Patriarcal*. 17 ed. São Paulo: Livraria José Olympio Editora, 1975.

Friday, Nancy. *My Mother/my Self: The Daughter's Search for Identity*. New York, NY: Delacorte P, 1977.

Fulani, Ifeona. "Gender, Conflict, and Community in Gayl Jones's Corregidora and Jamaica Kincaid's Lucy." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2011, p. 1–30. doi:10.5250/fronjwomestud.32.2.0001.

Furman, Nelly. "The Politics of Language. Beyond the Gender Principle." In: *Making a Difference Feminist Literary Criticism*, edited by Greene, Gayle, and Coppélia. Kahn, London: Routledge, 2005.

Gagiano, Annie. “Women Writing Nationhood Differently: Affiliative Critique in Novels by Forna, Atta, and Farah.” *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2013, p. 45–72. https://doi.org/10.1353/ari.2013.0004.

Galeano, Eduardo H., and Cedric. Belfrage. *Open Veins of Latin America Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent.* 25th anniversary ed., New York, NY: Monthly Review P, 1997.

Gallego, Mar. “Sexuality and Healing in the African Diaspora: A Transnational Approach to Toni Morrison and Gyasi.” *Humanities*, vol. 8, no. 4, Dec. 2019, 183. https://doi.org/10.3390/h8040183.

Gandhi, Leela. *PostColonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. New York, NY: Columbia U P, 2019.

Gates, Henry Louis. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism.* New York: Oxford U P, 1998.

García, Cristina. “Cristina García by Chris Abani.” *Bomb*. https://bombmagazine.org/articles/cristina-garc%C3%ADa/. Interview.

---. *Dreaming in Cuban.* New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2017.

Gichanda Spencer, Lynda. “‘Abagyenda Bareeba. Those Who Travel, See’: Home, Migration and the Maternal Bond in Doreen Baingana’s Tropical Fish.” *African Studies: Eastern African Interventions in African Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. 75, no. 2, 2016, pp. 189–201.

George, Rosemary Marangoly. *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard U P, 1993.

Giorgio, Adalgisa. *Writing Mothers and Daughters: Renegotiating the Mother in Western European Narratives by Women.* E-book ed., New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2002, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.08657.

Gonçalves, Ana Maria. *Um Defeito de Cor*. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2006.

Gonzalez, Lélia. “A categoria político-cultural de amefricanidade.” *Tempo Brasileiro*, vol. jan./jun., n. 92/93, 1988, p. 69–82.

Grillo, R. and Mazzucato, V. “Africa < > Europe: a double engagement.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 34, no.2, 2008, pp. 175–198, 10.1080/13691830701823830.

Grosby, Steven Elliott. *Nationalism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford U P, 2005.

Guimarães, Antonio Sérgio. "A Democracia Racial Revisitada." Afro-Ásia, no. 60, Universidade Federal da Bahia – Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais, 2020, https://doi.org/10.9771/aa.v0i60.36247

Gyasi, Yaa. "A conversation with Yaa Gyasi on Ghana, displacement and her debut novel, *Homegoing*." Interview by Olga Segura. *American Magazine*, July 2016. https://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/displacement-identity-and-going-home-conversation-yaa-gyasi. Interview.

---. *Homegoing*. New York, NY: A. A. Knopf, 2016.

---. *Transcendent Kingdom.* New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2020.

Halberstadt-Freud, Hendrika C., and Marjolijn. De Jager. *Electra Vs Oedipus: The Drama of the Mother-Daughter Relationship*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, pp. 222–237.

---. *Essential Essays. Volume 1, Foundations of Cultural Studies*, edited by David Morley, North Carolina: Duke U P, 2019.

---. *Essential Essays. Volume 2, Identity and Diaspora*, edited by David Morley, North Carolina: Duke U P, 2019.

---. "Negotiating Caribbean Identities." In *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology*. Gregory Castle (ed). New Jesey: Blackwell, 2001, pp. 280–292.

---. "Race, Culture, and Communications: Looking Backward and Forward at Cultural Studies." *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1992, pp. 10–18.

Hallemeier, Katherine. "'To Be from the Country of People Who Gave': National Allegory and the United States of Adichie's *Americanah*." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2015, pp. 231–45. doi:10.1353/sdn.2015.0029.

Harbawi, Semia. "Against All Odds: The Experience of Trauma and the Economy of Survival in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*." *Wasafiri*, vol. 23, no. 1, Mar. 2008, pp. 38–44. https://doi.org/10.1080/02690050701778058.

Harkins, Patricia. "Family Magic: Invisibility in Jamaica Kincaid's Lucy." Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts, vol. 4, no. 3 [15], *International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts (IAFA)*, 1991 1991, pp. 53–68.

Heinz, Sarah. "Beyond Sedentarism and Nomadology: Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* and the Ambivalent Desire for Home." *Kulturwissenschaftliche Zeitschrift*, vol. 5, no. 1, Oct. 2020, pp. 119–32. https://doi.org/10.2478/kwg-2020-0030.

Hirsch, Marianne. *The Mother/daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. Indiana: Indiana U P, 1989.

hooks, bell. *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*. London: Routledge, 2004.

Hurston, Zorah Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* New York, NY: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006.

Institute of International Education, "International Student Enrollment Trends, 1948/49-2020/21." *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange,* 2021. Retrieved from http://www.opendoorsdata.org

Japtok, Martin. "Paule Marshall's Brown Girl, Brownstones: Reconciling Ethnicity and Individualism." *African American Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1998, pp. 305–15. https://doi.org/10.2307/3042127.

Jesus, Carolina Maria de. *Child of the Dark: The Diary of the Carolina Maria de Jesus.* Translated from the Portuguese by David St. Clair. New York, NY: Signet Classics, 2003.

Joseph, Betty. "Gendering Time in Globalization: The Belatedness of the Other Woman and Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 21, no. 1, U of Tulsa, 2002 Spring 2002, pp. 67–83. https://doi.org/10.2307/4149216.

Kelly, Robin D. G. Foreword. Walia, pp. xv-xix.

Kincaid, Jamaica. *Annie John. Farrar.* New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1985.

---. *A Small Place*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998.

---. *At the Bottom of the River.* New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1993.

---. *Lucy*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990.

---. "Paradise with Snake." Interview by Susan Kenney. *The New York Times*, 7 April 1985, http://movies2.nytimes.com/books/97/10/19/home/kincaid-annie.html. Interview.

---. "On Seeing England for the First Time." *Transition*, no. 51, Oxford U P, 1991, pp. 32–40, https://doi.org/10.2307/2935076.

---. "'Our Sassy Black Friend' Jamaica Kincaid." Interview by Hannah Levintora. Mother Jones, https://www.motherjones.com/media/2013/02/interview-jamaica-kincaid-see-now-then/. Interview.

Knudsen, Eva Rask, and Ulla Rahbek. "An Afropolitan Literary Aesthetics? Afropolitan Style and Tropes in Recent Diasporic African Fiction." *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, May 2017, pp. 115–28. doi:10.1080/13825577.2017.1344473.

König, Reinhilde Sotiria, and Marina de Regt. "Family Dynamics in Transnational African Migration to Europe: An Introduction." African and Black Diaspora, vol. 3, no. 1, Taylor & Francis Group, 2010, pp. 1–15, https://doi.org/10.1080/17528630903368232.

Latchman, Renee. "A Critique on the Tradition of "Testing." In Yenika-Agbaw, V., & Mhando, L. (Eds.). *African youth in contemporary literature and popular culture: Identity quest.* 2013, pp. 53–62.

Landry, Ava. "Black Is Black Is Black?: African Immigrant Acculturation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*." *MELUS*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2018, pp. 127–47.

Lee, Elaine. *Go Girl!: the Black Woman's Book of Travel and Adventure*. Portland, Or: Eighth Mountain P, 1997.

Li, Stephanie. "Introduction: What Is Twenty-First-Century African American Literature?" *American Literary History*, vol. 29, no. 4, Oxford U P, 2017, pp. 631–39, https://doi.org/10.1093/alh/ajx035.

Lins, Paulo. *City of God.* Translated from the Portuguese by Alison Entrekin. New York: Black Cat, 2002.

Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Berkeley: Crossing P, 1984.

MacLeod, Lewis. "'You Ain No Real-Real Bajan Man': Patriarchal Performance and Feminist Discourse in Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*." *Ariel*, vol. 37, no. 2–3, Johns Hopkins U P, 2006, pp. 169–187.

Majerol, Veronica. "Jamaica Kincaid's 'Lucy' and the Aesthetics of Disidentification." *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2007, pp. 17–27.

Manizza Roszak, Suzanne. "Blurring Boundaries: Women's Work and Artistic Production in Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* and Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban*." *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, vol. 28, no. 4, Oct. 2017, pp. 275–95. https://doi.org/10.1080/10436928.2017.1379844.

Marouan, Maha. *Witches, Goddesses, and Angry Spirits: The Politics of Spiritual Liberation in African Diaspora Women's Fiction*. Ohio State U P, 2020. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv16qk3kd.

Marshall, Paule. "A MELUS Interview: Paule Marshall." Interviewed by Joyce Pettis. *MELUS*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1991, pp. 117–29. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/467272.

---. "From the Poets in the Kitchen." *Callaloo*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2001, pp. 627–633.

---. *Brown Girl, Brownstones*. New York, NY: Dover, 1959.

Masterson, John. "Bye-Bye Barack: Dislocating Afropolitanism, Spectral Marxism and Dialectical Disillusionment in Two Obama-Era Novels." *African Identities*, vol. 18, no. 1–2, Apr. 2020, pp. 18–40. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, doi:10.1080/14725843.2020.1773236.

McGill, Lisa D. "Thinking Back Through the Mother: The Poetics of Place and the Mother/Daughter Dyad in *Brown Girl, Brownstones*." *The Black Scholar*, vol. 30, no. 2, June 2000, pp. 34–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2000.11431089.

Mehni, Masoumeh. "Analyzing the Problematic Mother-Daughter Relationship in Edwidge Danticat's 'Breath, Eyes, Memory.'" *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2011, pp. 77–90.

Melancon, Trimiko, and Joanne M. Braxton. "9. 'Ou Libéré?' Sexual Abuse and Resistance in Edwidge Danticat's Breath, Eyes, Memory." *Black Female Sexualities*, edited by Melissa Harris-Perry et al., New Jersey: Rutgers U P, 2019, pp. 129–40.

Mitchell, David T. "National Families and Familial Nations: Communista Americans in Cristina García's Dreaming in Cuban." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 15, no. 1, U of Tulsa, 1996, pp. 51–60. https://doi.org/10.2307/463972.

Morais, Juliana Borges Oliveira de, and Karina Almeida Moura. "Identity Trajectories, Memory and Trauma in The Novels *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *The Scorpion's Claw*." *REVISTA Scripta Alumni*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2021. https://doi.org/10.5935/1984-6614.20210008.

Mercer, Kobena. *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Morrison, Toni. *Sula*. London: Picador, 1973.

---. *Tar Baby*. New York, NY: Vintage International, 2004.

Motahane, Nonki, et al. "Rooting Routes to Trans-Atlantic African Identities: The Metaphor of Female Descendancy in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*." *African Identities*, vol. 19, no. 1, Jan. 2021, pp. 17–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2020.1788505.

Murthy, Pashmina. "Uneasy Returns: The Literary Turn to the South." In *The Global South and Literature*, edited by Russell West-Pavlov and Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2018.

Nagel, James. "Desperate Hopes, Desperate Lives: Depression and Self-Realization in Jamaica Kincaid's Annie John and Lucy." In *Traditions, Voices, and Dreams: The American Novel since the 1960s*, edited by Melvin J. Friedman and Ben Siegel, Newark, Delaware: U of Delaware P, 1995, pp. 237–53.

Nasta, Susheila. *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean, and South Asia.* New Jersey: Rutgers U P, 1992.

Neal, Marc Anthony. "The Birth of New Blackness: The Family Stand's Moon in Scorpio." In *Rip It Up: The Black Experience in Rock N Roll*, edited by Kandia Crazy Horse, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 121–27.

Nixon, Rob. "Refugees and homecomings: Bessie Head and the end of exile" Robertson et. all. pp. 114-130.

Oczkowicz, Edyta. "Jamaica Kincaid's Lucy: Cultural 'Translation' as a Case of Creative Exploration of the Past." *MELUS*, vol. 21, no. 3, Oxford U P, 1996, pp. 143–57. https://doi.org/10.2307/467979.

Ogbe, Yemisi. "Americanah and Other Definitions of Supple Citizenships." Rev. of Americanah, *Book Forum*. June 2013.

Okolocha, Oby H. "Negotiating Race, Identity & Homecoming in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah & Pede Hollist's So the Path Does Not Die." *ALT 34 Diaspora & Returns in Fiction: African Literature Today*. Boydell & Brewer, 2016, p. 143–163.

Okorafor, Nnedi. "Africanfuturism Defined." *Nnedi Wahala Zone Blog: The Adventures of writer Nnedi Okorafor and her daughter Anyaugo Okorafor.* 19th October 2019, http://nnedi.blogspot.com/2019/10/africanfuturism-defined.html

Okudzeto, Senam. "Emotive Histories: The Politics of Remembering Slavery in Contemporary Ghana." *Atlantic Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2012, pp. 337–361. https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2012.698098.

O'Reilly, Andrea, editor. *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings.* Ontario, Canada: Demeter, 2007.

---. *Mother Outlaws: Theories and Practices of Empowered Mothering*. Minnesota: Women's P, 2004.

Owusu, Portia. *Spectres from the Past.* London: Routledge, 2020.

Parry, Shirley C. "Female Sexuality and Community in 'Brown Girl, Brownstones.'" *The Black Scholar*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2000, pp. 41–46. https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2000.11431090.

Payant, Katherine B. "From Alienation to Reconciliation in the Novels of Cristina García." *MELUS*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2001, pp. 163–82. https://doi.org/10.2307/3185562.

Pettis, Joyce. *Toward Wholeness in Paule Marshall's fiction.* Charlottesville, Virginia: U P of Virginia, 1995.

Phillips, Caryl. "Necessary Journeys." *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/dec/11/society2.

Photopoulos, Cornelia C. *"Home Is Where You Feel a Welcome": Homemaking as National Belonging in 20th and 21st c. Black British Novels*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2020.

Pittmann, Cynthia S. "A Refusal to Negotiate: Transgression and Transformation in Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John, Lucy* and *The Autobiography of My Mother*." *Sargasso: A Journal of Caribbean Language, Literature, and Culture*, vol. 2, Universidad de Puerto Rico a Rio Piedras, 2004-2005 2004, pp. 71–79.

Pollock, Griselda. "Territories of Desire: Reconsiderations of an African Childhood." Robertson et. al., pp. 61–87.

Prager, Jeffrey. "Danger and Deformation: A Social Theory of Trauma Part II: Disrupting the Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma, Recovering Humanity, and Repairing Generations." *American Imago*, vol. 72, no. 2, Johns Hopkins U P, 2015, pp. 133–55, https://doi.org/10.1353/aim.2015.0008.

Pratt, Annis. *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction.* Indiana: Indiana U P, 1981.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Rabaka, Reiland. "The Souls of Black Radical Folk: W. E. B. Du Bois, Critical Social Theory, and the State of Africana Studies." *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 36, no. 5, 2006, pp. 732–763. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934705285941.

Ravi, Srilata. "Diasporic Returnees and Francophone Travel Narratives." Clarke, pp. 65-78.

Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. 10th anniversary ed., New York, NY: Norton, 1986.

Riley, Joan. *The Unbelonging*. Minnesota: Women's Press Ltd, 1985.

Rohde-Abuba, Caterina, and Olga Tkach. "Finding Oneself Abroad: Au Pairs' Strategies of Self-Positioning in Hosting Societies." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, vol. 6, no. 4, Helsinki U P, 2016, pp. 193–98, http://doi.org/10.1515/njmr-2016-0027.

Robbe, Ksenia. "Performances of Motherhood and Migration: Addressing the Silences of Gendered Waiting in Two South African Plays." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 55, no. 4, 2019, pp. 498–511. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2019.1602845.

Rooks, Noliwe M. *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture, and African American Women*. New Jersey: Rutgers U P, 1996.

Robertson, George et. al. *Traveller's Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement.* London: Routledge, 1994.

Rosa, Guimarães João. *Grande Sertão: Veredas.* Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2006.

Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. Crawfordsville, IN: Penguin Random House, 1997.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta in Association with Penguin, 1992.

---. *Midnight's Children.* New York, NY: Avon Books, 1995.

---. *The Satanic Verses.* New York, NY: Randon House, 1989.

Rushdy, Ashraf H. A. *Neo-slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form*. New York, NY: Oxford UP, 1999.

Sackeyfio, Rose, editor. *African Women Writing Diaspora: Transnational Perspectives in the Twenty-First Century.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021.

Saez, E. M. "The Global Baggage of Nostalgia in Cristina Garcia's Dreaming in Cuban." *Melus*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2005, pp. 129–47, https://doi.org/10.1093/melus/30.4.129.

Safran, William. "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1991, pp. 83–99. https://doi.org/10.3138/diaspora.1.1.83.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York, NY: Random House, 1993.

---. *Orientalism.* 25th Anniversary edition / with a new preface by the author. London: Penguin Books, 2003.

---. *Out of Place: A Memoir.* London: Granta, 1999.

Salazar, Inés. "Can You Go Home Again?: Transgression and Transformation in African-American Women's and Chicana Literary Practice." In *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*, edited by Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt. Jackson, Mississippi: U P of Mississippi, 2000, pp. 388–411.

Sandapen, Sheila Francoise Theresa. *Being Black, Becoming British: Contemporary Female Voices in Black British Literature.* ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2009.

Santos, Renato Emerson Nascimento dos and Inti Maya Soeterik. "Scales of Political Action and Social Movements in Education: The Case of the Brazilian Black Movement and Law 10.639." *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2016, pp. 30–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2015.1051000.

Sarup, Madan. "Home and Identity." Robertson et. al., pp. 93–104.

Schneider, Deborah. "A Feminine Search for Selfhood: Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*." *The Afro-American Novel Since 1960*, edited by Peter Bruck and Wolfgang Karrer, Amsterdam: B.R. Gruner, 1982, pp. 53–74.

Schwarz, Bill. "England in Europe: Reflections on national identity and cultural theory." Cultural Studies, vol. 6, no. 2, 1992, pp. 198–206. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502389200490091.

Selasi, Taiye. "Bye-Bye Babar." In *The Passport that does Not Pass Ports*, edited by Isabel Balseiro and Zachariah Rapola, East Lansing, MI: Michigan State U P, 2005, p.3.

Seyferth, Giralda. "Colonização, Imigração e a Questão Racial No Brasil." *Revista USP*, no. 53, 2002, 117, https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2316-9036.v0i53p117-149.

Shaw, Barbara L. *(Re)mapping the Black Atlantic: Violence, Affect, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Caribbean Women's Migration Literature*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2007.

Shringarpure, Bhakti. "Digital Forms, Migrant Forms: Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*." *Postcolonial Text*, vol. 15, no. 3&4, 2020, pp. 1–22.

Smith, Barbara. "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism." *The Radical Teacher*, no. 7, 1978, pp. 20–27.

Smith, Ian. "Misusing Canonical Intertexts." *Callaloo*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2002, pp. 801-820.

Stecher, Lucía, and Elsa Maxwell. "Michelle Cliff's 'Into the Interior' and the Trope of the Solitary Female Immigrant." *Callaloo*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2013, pp. 811–21. https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.2013.013.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty and Rosalind C. Morris. *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea.* New York, NY: Columbia U P, 2010.

Suaréz, Isabel Carrera. "Absent Mother(land)s: Joan Riley's fiction." Nasta, pp. 290–309.

Suárez, Lucía M. "*Breath, Eyes, Memory*: Rape, Memory, and Denunciation." *Journal of Haitian Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2003, pp. 111–25.

Sewell, Christopher J. P. "Mammies and Matriarchs: Tracing Images of the Black Female in Popular Culture 1950s to Present." *Journal of African American Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3, Springer, 2013, pp. 308–26, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-012-9238-x.

Survival International. "Povos indígenas do Brasil," https://www.survivalbrasil.org/povos/indios-brasileiros.

Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club.* London: Penguin Books, 1989.

Tao, Annie, et al. "Chinese American Immigrant Mothers' Discussion of Emotion With Children: Relations to Cultural Orientations." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2013, pp. 478–501. https://doi.org/10.1177/002202211245331.

Tiffin, Helen. "Cold Hearts and (Foreign) Tongues: Recitation and the Reclamation of the Female Body in the Works of Erna Brodber and Jamaica Kincaid." *Callaloo*, vol. 16, no. 4, Johns Hopkins U P, 1993, pp. 909–21, https://doi.org/10.2307/2932217.

Trinh, T. Minh-Ha. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Indiana: Indiana U P, 1989.

Turner, Patricia A. *Ceramic Uncles & Celluloid Mammies: Black Images and Their Influence on Culture.* New York: Anchor books, 1994.

Walia, Harsha. *Border & Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism.* Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2021.

Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. San Diego, California: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.

Young, Roberto J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race.* London: Routledge, 1995.

Youngs, Tim. "African American Travel Writing." Clarke, pp. 109–123.

Washington, Mary Helen. *Black-eyed Susans: Classic Stories by and about Black Women.* New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1975.

Winters, Lisa Ze. "Fiction and Slavery's Archive: Memory, Agency, and Finding Home." *Reviews in American History*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2018, pp. 338–344. https://doi.org/10.1353/rah.2018.0051.

Zentgraf, KristineM., and NormaStoltz Chinchilla. "Transnational Family Separation: A Framework for Analysis." *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2, London: Routledge, Feb. 2012, pp. 345–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2011.646431.

VITA

Education:

B.A., English, 2012, Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Brazil.

M.A., English, 2016, Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Brazil.

Research Interests:

Contemporary black women literature, diaspora studies, postcolonial and black feminist studies.

PUBLICATION

Faria Ribeiro, Ane Caroline and Jose Paiva Santos. "Rethinking Motherhood and Motherly Love in Toni Morrison's Sula and Gloria Naylor's The Women of Brewster Place." *Ilha do Desterro*, vol. 70, no. 1, 2017, pp. 69–80.

Ribeiro Costa, Ane Caroline "There are so Many of Them": Gendered Spaces and Isolation in Faulkner's Sanctuary." *Em Tese*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2018, pp. 113–123.