

Queer Marronage and Caribbean Writing

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Acknowledgements

It is perhaps fitting to invoke my own relationship to marronage here... now... as an affective offering. If the journey to this point involved movement from home — from spaces of safety to spaces of uncertainty — then in my own way and in various moments, I have forged maroon relations, friendships, affiliations with those who were a part of this sojourn.

Vagrants. Troubadours. Maroons all.

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These affective bonds, and others, have enabled my survival in the queer time and space that is a PhD.

Abstract

This thesis focuses on the writings of Michelle Cliff, Dionne Brand, Patricia Powell and Shani Mootoo and their representations of queer marronage. In the texts discussed, I examine how these writers draw on the trope of marronage to call attention to ongoing neo-colonial, power structures, sexual hegemonies and the various strategies of social negation which curtail and regulate queer Caribbean lives. In my readings of these texts, I pay particular attention to their narration of queer experience in relation to the time of prohibition, crisis and social death which gave rise to New World Maroon communities in the context of slavery.

In bringing these two moments into conversation, these texts not only map the operations of parallel and persisting structures of power, they also narrate and acknowledge shared responses across time. In doing so they open up a critical space into which this work intervenes. This thesis seeks to outline the shared practices of resistance by queers and maroons, their strategies of community, their conditions and politics of belonging and their practices of survival.

Queer Marronage and Caribbean Writing

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Notes on Terminology:

— Throughout this thesis I use Maroon (with a capital M) as a noun to refer to specific groups of Maroons or in discussions of Maroon identity. In other cases, such as the use of the word as an adjective or verb, I use the common form.

— This thesis primarily focuses on Anglophone Caribbean writing or Caribbean writing in English. In my discussions I often use ‘Caribbean writing’ as a preferred term of reference. My thinking in this regard is influenced by Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson-Welsh’s Introduction to *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, in which they argue for the use the term Caribbean as ‘it is more suggestive of a literature freed from the (re-)centring tendencies of a colonial and Commonwealth framework’ (1996: 5). While they discuss the choice of this term in opposition to the concept of ‘West Indian literature’, I want to argue here that in discussing marronage, a term and practice that crosses colonial frontiers, the elasticity of the term Caribbean acknowledges conversations about marronage across Caribbean linguistic divisions. Critics writing about marronage have consistently drawn on discussions from different Caribbean linguistic and literary traditions. In Antonio Benitez-Rojo’s work, for instance, he draws heavily on Kamau Brathwaite’s writing, allowing us to mark the presence and persistence of dialogues about marronage across colonial linguistic areas. This lack of investment in maintaining the idea of stable linguistic areas — even more so as translations of texts facilitate increased dialogues across the region — is not only evident in writings about marronage but also writings about queerness. Thomas Glave’s recent anthology *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Gay and Lesbian Writing from Across the Antilles* (2008) includes work from the Spanish, Dutch, and French Caribbean translated into

English. I also tend towards the use of the term 'Caribbean' as opposed to 'Anglophone Caribbean' because of the pervasive use of Creole in many of the texts that I discuss. Alison Donnell highlights this fact in her more recent work *Twentieth Century Caribbean Literature* (2006) where she uses the neologism 'Anglocreole' to describe these texts. This once again calls attention to the complex language situation and the critical perils that accompany the use of the term Anglophone to describe these texts and voices.

Introduction

The concept of queer marronage brings together two terms, which have largely been examined, in different critical contexts. Queer Studies and maroon studies now exist as established areas of academic study. Yet the intersections between them have been seldom considered and little analyzed. This thesis examines how both these critical fields have impacted on, but have also been impacted by, recent Anglophone Caribbean writing. The readings of Caribbean texts offered in this discussion mark areas of interface as well as convergences, but also demand that we consider how situating these critical fields in relation to each other facilitates a necessary acknowledgement of ruptures and contestations which provide an opportunity for rethinking the limits and possibilities of queer theory, as well as re-examining some of the critical frameworks that have structured maroon discourse.

The emergence of the field of maroon studies, like that of queer studies, is hard to summarize or to specifically locate.¹ Richard Price in his Preface to the 1996 edition of the important collection of essays *Maroon Societies* offers one account of

¹ The difficulty in accounting for the development of queer theory has been amply rehearsed by critics such as Annamarie Jagose (1996), Sharon Marcus (2005), Michael Warner (1993), Cathy Cohen (2005), among others. Several of these discussions have focused on the very indeterminacy of the concept 'queer', which is explored in the later sections of this discussion. Michael Warner has, for instance, argued that '[t]he appeal of "queer theory" has far outstripped anyone's sense of what exactly it means' (1993: 3). Annamarie Jagose has in turn noted that 'there is no critical consensus on the definitional limits of queer –indeterminacy being one of its widely promoted charms—its general outlines are frequently sketched and debated' (1996: 3). Cathy Cohen further links the problem of sketching its outlines to the question of its complex origins in her assertion that 'the first canonical works of "queer theory" [were produced by scholars] working from a variety of postmodern and poststructuralist theoretical perspectives' (2005:22).

its development. Price situates the emergence of the field primarily in relation to the establishment of ethnic studies departments, particularly in the US academy, during the period of the 1970s — a moment of critical academic engagement with questions of identity and political concern with issues of rights in the wake of the impact of the civil rights movements in 1960s America. But Price's book also points to a long tradition of writing about marronage, dating back to Robert Dallas's *The History of the Maroons* published in 1803, Edward Long's *The History of Jamaica* (1774) and Bryan Edwards's *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (1794), some of the earliest written texts on the subject. Yet if Price's discussion can be said to direct our attention to a major moment in the consolidation of the field, his primary focus on the North American academy means that he overlooks and elides the growing critical interest in maroon discourses in other spaces, particularly in the Caribbean, which contributed to the growth and consolidation of the field.

The period of the 1960s in the Caribbean, and the interest in marronage generated by the independence and nationalist movements, is significant to the development of maroon studies.² Throughout the Caribbean, marronage offered a narrative of resistance to colonization that became important to the emerging nation-states defining themselves in opposition to their now former colonial powers. Alvin Thompson (2006) notes how in Jamaica, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Haiti and Guyana, maroon figures have all been installed as national heroes, and the erection of public statues and monuments in their honour has served to keep their stories alive

² The nexus between nationalism, resistance and maroon discourses might be even further explored through a look at the negritude movement of the 1930s and 1940s and the work of Francophone Caribbean writers such as Aimé Césaire. Their articulation of a link between marronage and black consciousness might be said to influence and preempt its significance for Anglophone Caribbean nationalist discourse. C.L.R James, the Trinidadian scholar and writer is also worth mentioning here. Although his book *The Black Jacobins* (first published 1938) is not primarily about the Maroons, they are certainly part of his story of revolution and resistance.

in the national consciousness. In Caribbean writing, Namba Roy's 1961 novel *Black Albino* (identified by Kamau Brathwaite in 1974 as the only novel known to be written by a Maroon descendant) and Carey Robinson's historical study *The Fighting Maroons of Jamaica* (1969) bookend a decade which saw the Maroons emerge as important figures in Caribbean national narratives and increasingly hailed as important figures in Caribbean history (Brathwaite 1974: 88).

The significance of Price's edited collection for the field of maroon studies however cannot be overlooked. *Maroon Societies* brings together essays on marronage from different territorial and linguistic regions of the New World. The book includes essays on the Spanish Americas, the French Caribbean, the United States, Brazil, Jamaica, and the Guianas. It thus significantly serves to highlight the extensive dimensions and geographical reach of marronage. It has also, since its publication, facilitated considerable comparative work on maroon practices. Yet as Charles Carnegie points out, the organization of these essays according to stable geographical areas of focus has largely served to ensure that 'marronage continues to be discussed and theorized in relation to circumscribed colonial and neonational territorial spaces and in terms of essentialized racial categories' (2002: 118). Thus in many ways, *Maroon Societies* fails to capture and account for the multiple paths of crossing between and across territorial frontiers and under-represents the multiple ways in which runaways challenged the colonial divisions that structured regional and international geopolitics during the era of mercantile colonialism. Carnegie's observations alert us to a necessary instability of the field that is linked to the very nature of marronage. The attempts to narrate and discuss marronage must necessarily engage with its multiple flows, infinite crossings, unstable crosscurrents and its transgression and renegotiation of multiple frontiers of belonging.

In discussing the field of maroon studies one is not only faced with unruly and divergent temporal and spatial demarcations, but one also encounters a field that crosses and unsettles disciplinary limits. Alvin Thompson points out that ‘Maroon societies have fascinated writers from almost every discipline — history, sociology, politics, linguistics, anthropology, folklore, music, medicine, journalism and fiction’ (2006: 1). *Queer Marronage and Caribbean Writing* does not aim to offer a narrative account of the development or to outline the limits of maroon discourse. In many ways it is precisely the transgressive dimensions and possibilities of marronage, its unstable confluences, border crossings and its unsettling of binaries and categories, that I wish to highlight and engage. I take contemporary Anglophone Caribbean writing as a specific point of focus, but one which allows us to think about the varied social and discursive renegotiations and relations that marronage facilitates. The texts and narratives discussed in this thesis are located in relation to various temporal and spatial circuits of movement, connections, and crossings that call attention to unexpected moments and sites of intimacy, transformative and convivial interrelations, as well as departures, separation, and distance.

The critical strategy of situating maroon discourse in relation to queer studies is one that is meant to further call attention to the transgressive limits and possibilities of marronage. William Turner in *A Genealogy of Queer Theory* suggests that ‘[q]ueerness indicates merely the failure to fit precisely within a category’ (2000: 8). Indeed, the term queer, as used in the critical formulation ‘queer marronage’, is meant to signal ‘the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning’ (Sedgwick 1993: 8) that become apparent in thinking about and discussing marronage in as much as they have also been foregrounded in discussions of the term queer. In his examination of the field of queer theory, Turner argues that ‘[i]f queer theorists have anything in common it

might be that they consistently celebrate the unformed, inchoate, provisional character of the field' (2000: 9). This work calls attention to these features as part of the discourse of marronage. That said, queer theory arguably differs from maroon theory in that maroon theorists have tended to less enthusiastically or less openly acknowledge this dimension of marronage. This difference might well be attributed to what Price outlines as the early critical impetus of the field, its emergence at a moment that was marked by discussions of identity politics and rights, its rooting in black studies departments and its foregrounding of a politics of resistance, often articulated within an oppositional frame.³ Yet the repeated attempts to define and delineate practices of marronage and engage with questions of maroon ethnicity and identity reveal the complex, unruly and provisional nature of the field and of marronage itself.

The iconic image and most widely held notion of the Maroons is that they were runaway slaves who fled plantation slavery to form rebel communities that subsequently waged guerrilla attacks as part of an oppositional struggle against Plantation society. However, as Price's 1996 discussion demonstrates, this view of marronage with its focus on Plantation/Maroon binary relations has been consistently challenged and re-imagined by succeeding generations of scholars who have, in turn, examined the complexities of relations between as well as within Plantation and maroon spaces. In outlining some critical shifts in the field since the original publication of *Maroon Societies* in 1973, Price notes how the ongoing study of

³ In many ways the emergence of queer theory is linked to a challenge to identity politics. While the term queer itself has been mired within discussions of identity, it also has been utilized as a strategy to resist the disciplining and homogenizing effects of identity discourses. The uses of queer as a challenge to identity politics are for example explored in my discussion of Jasbir Puar's work in later sections of this Introduction. In bringing queer and maroon together I also want to explore 'practices of marronage' as a way of rethinking and re-examining the focus on ethnicity and identity within maroon studies. As Charles Carnegie notes 'maroon practices can just as readily endorse views of identity and political affiliation less dependent on primordial notions of race and place' (Carnegie 2002: 118).

marronage has prompted the rethinking of several early approaches to maroon studies. Most notably he discusses Barbara Kopytoff's re-examination of 'ethnicity as an organizing principle' (Price 1996: xxi) in her 1976 essay 'The Development of Jamaican Maroon Ethnicity'. Kopytoff challenges straightforward discussions of 'the amalgamation of African derived populations of the Caribbean' (1976: 33), and instead foregrounds questions of heterogeneity and 'ethnic diversity among the Jamaican Maroons of the early 18th century [and] the problems the diversity caused' (1976: 33) for maroon community formation and cultural cohesion. Her work raises important questions about, and offers challenges to, monolithic constructions of African cultural norms and continuity. The work of Gordon K. Lewis (1983), Antonio Benítez-Rojo (1996), José Juan Arrom (1986), among others, has also served to examine the contributions of Amerindian populations to maroon life, and have significantly helped to diversify and complicate homogenous representations of maroon community formation. Like Benítez-Rojo, Lewis foregrounds the confederative possibilities of marronage in his description of maroon communities as 'a living and vibrant Afro-American cultural system' (1983: 230). According to Lewis '[t]heir material culture mixed both African and Amerindian elements with elements borrowed from the white plantation economy' (1983: 230). Building on the work of these earlier scholars and their acknowledgement of the complex dimensions of marronage, Alvin Thompson in *Flight to Freedom* has also, more directly asserted that '[t]here was always a nexus — perhaps a better word is symbiosis — between the slaveholding and Maroon areas' (2006: 14, 15).⁴ These discussions, urge us to

⁴ Maroon scholars have pointed to different kinds and moments of collaboration between Plantation and Maroon society. While marronage was a feature of all Plantation societies in the New World, it involved varying levels of contact and strategies of negotiation with Plantation society. The most contentious and often discussed instance of Maroon/Plantation collaboration is in the account of the Maroon treaties. These were signed between colonial powers and Maroons in Jamaica, Brazil and Suriname in the latter half of the 18th century. Carey Robinson (1993) in discussing the case of the Jamaican Maroons and the conditions of the 1739 treaty which ended the First Maroon War, notes that, as part of the terms of the treaty, Maroons hunted and returned runaways in exchange for

think about the conceptual and lived relations between marronage and Plantation society as irresolvably unstable and complex.

Price's discussion additionally highlights how feminist scholarship has served to critique and address the problem of the obscuring of women's lives in early ethnographic and historical research on marronage. The work of Lucille Mathurin-Mair (1975), Barbara Bush (1990), Hilary Beckles (1990) and Jenny Sharpe (2003) have prompted maroon scholars to pay greater attention to questions of gender, and have enriched our knowledge and discussions about the roles women played in resistance to slavery. Significantly, not only has feminist scholarship contributed to the discursive shaping of Maroon studies, but marronage has also been important to women's writing and feminist theorizing in the Caribbean. Hilary Beckles notes the centrality of the figure of Nanny of the Maroons in the articulation of what he terms a 'heroic feminism within a radical tradition' (1998: 46). Jenny Sharpe, in turn, has called attention to Nanny's significance to Caribbean women's literature and history noting that she 'appears in more fiction plays and poems than any other Afro-Caribbean woman who lived during the era of slavery' (2003: 1). Kathleen Balutansky, in her discussion of Caribbean women's writing, further links practices of marronage to the theorization of gender resistance through her use of the concept of 'marooning' — a term she borrows from Aimé Césaire's work — to describe women's social and narrative negotiations of alternatives to and resistance within 'the ongoing neo-colonial Master-Narrative' (Balutansky 1998: 15).

My use of queer throughout this work in relation to marronage is meant to further amplify and extend the acknowledgement and discussion of these questions

payment. The case of Three Finger Jack, the outlaw who was captured by the Scotts Hall and Moore Town Maroons, provides one famous instance of Maroon/Plantation collaboration. The consideration of these factors in the formulation of a Maroon discourse necessitates the articulation of a more complex intersection. The spatial and relational dynamics of marronage resists and complicates easy binary constructions to include moments of convergence, collusion and collaboration.

of gender, heterogeneity and diversity within maroon studies, and to deepen some of the insights which have been facilitated by these critical shifts and developments. In linking queer and marronage, I also broaden the conceptualization of marronage beyond the focus on the historical site of the plantation, discussions of maroon ethnicity, its centrality to Caribbean nationalist imaginings, and its contribution to Caribbean gender theorizing to call attention to its significance to ongoing representations and discussions of questions of sexual hegemony and sexual difference in the Caribbean.

Desiring Shadows:

Marronage and Decolonizing the Sexual Body in Caribbean Literary Discourse

The examination of the intersections between queer theory, maroon studies and Caribbean writing undertaken in this thesis is informed by key developments in each of these individual fields, particularly over the last two decades. In Caribbean discourse, critics such as Ian Smith (1999), Timothy Chin (1997), M. Jacqui Alexander (1994), and Rosamond King (2002) have highlighted and critiqued the reluctance — exhibited by Caribbean writers and critics for much of the twentieth century — to explore questions of sexual difference as an integral part of the decolonizing agenda of Caribbean literary and critical practice. In his provocative essay ‘Critics in the Dark’ — a title which might be read as implying a need for ‘coming out’ — Ian Smith takes Caribbean critics and writers to task for what he describes as a ‘self regulatory response to compulsory heterosexuality’ (1999: 3)

which has functioned to negate direct engagement with the region's sexual hegemony. Smith argues that '[t]he critical geography seems to have no place to situate sexuality — specifically the homoerotic — within a postcolonial discourse, replicating an imperial dislocation, a tendency that can be described as a neo-colonial sexual semiotic' (1999: 4, 5). The decolonizing thrust of Caribbean discourse, Smith suggests, is significantly undermined by the lack of attention to questions of sexuality.

But if the work of these scholars, published at the close of the last century, served to call attention to a reluctance to engage with questions of sexuality and critiqued the operations of heterosexuality as a 'surrogate for "colonial" in an equally fierce programme of abjection and control' (Smith 1999: 5), in more recent times, Caribbean writers have drawn on the discourse of marronage, among other tropes, to challenge this pattern of neo-colonial, heteronormative dominance. Writers such as Michelle Cliff (1984), Dionne Brand (1996), Patricia Powell (1994), and Shani Mootoo (1996) have referenced the historical relationship between the Plantation and maroon communities as part of their examination of regional sexual politics. Their work has served to challenge the cultural and ideological construction of heterosexuality 'as simply there, invisible, beyond question, not requiring explanation' (Smith 1999: 5), and have called attention to multiple ways in which this heteronormative dominance has contributed to the marginalization of alternate sexual identities and practices of relations. In a critical move which resonates with Smith's call to come out of the dark, Rosamond King describes this period since the 1980s in Caribbean literary discourse as a period of 'coming to light' (2002: 31). According to King, 'writers increasingly have focused on aspects of sexuality that were previously silenced or kept in the dark. In particular, authors have exploded silences around the socialization of women and attitudes around sexuality' (2002: 31,

32). This thesis similarly attends to this shift in Caribbean discourse which has facilitated increased attention to questions of sexual difference. However, I also want to suggest that the focus on marronage, which is foregrounded here, unsettles both the teleological narrative of linear progression that King offers, as well as challenges the primary focus on ‘coming out’ as social, literary and critical praxis.

Alison Donnell suggests that one has to ‘look critically at the particular visions and blind spots that characterize the practice of reading Anglocreole Caribbean writing in the present’ (2006: 2). The focus on ‘coming out’ and visibility, as a methodology for reading Caribbean’s literature’s writing of sexuality and queer gender representations, has particular blind spots. While much is illuminated by King’s work, it also casts shade on a longer tradition of writerly signification of sexual difference, and obscures some of the other less direct ways in which writers have grappled with this issue. Ian Smith’s readings of Samuel Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners* and V.S Naipaul’s *The Enigma of Arrival*, for instance, demonstrate how masking and repression, anxious disavowals, and the presence of homoerotic subtexts, all function simultaneously as part of the literary inscription and disavowal of sexual difference in an earlier generation of Caribbean writing.⁵ While Smith calls for critics to come out of the dark, his work also importantly highlights some of the critical and tactical manoeuvres which are often possible and necessary in darkened spaces hidden from full view or recognition. Smith’s work, I suggest, not only maps a continuum of sexual possibilities and a polyphonous and ‘polydialectal’ discourse of sexual expression through his use of the concept of ‘sexiolects’ (Smith 1999: 8) (a

⁵ Smith discusses Selvon’s book first published in 1956. He highlights, not only the homosocial nature of the community that Selvon narrates, but also signals moments of homoeroticism. One example is the story of Cap’s encounter with a transvestite, which is followed shortly in the narrative, by the announcement of his marriage. By paying attention to the subtexts that emerge in their acts of storytelling, Smith reading of Selvon’s book highlights ways in which it disrupts the teleological narrative which King offers. Similarly, in their work, Timothy Chin (1997), Jennifer Rahim (2005) and Rhonda Cobham-Sander (2000) also discuss homoeroticism and same-sex intimacies in earlier Caribbean writing dating back to the 1920s and 1930s.

neologism he develops through his discussion of Caribbean Creole linguistic theory), but also explores various linguistic possibilities for signifying sexual difference in less direct ways than the dialect of coming out.⁶

In their use of marronage, the writers discussed in this thesis also explore the tactical, social and discursive possibilities of obscured and darkened spaces. The Maroons were known for their open resistance to plantation slavery, as evidenced in the various wars and periods of struggle fought between colonial powers and maroon warriors. But at the same time, the historical narrative of marronage also traces moments of collusion between Plantations and the Maroons as well as the strategic use of guerilla tactics of warfare, sabotage, malingering and the mobilization of attacks and plantation raids under the cover of darkness. In invoking the trope of marronage to narrate queer lives and experiences, these texts firstly call attention to the neo-colonial system of relations which Smith and others highlight. But the representation and discussion of queer marronage as social praxis also serves to foreground the politics and practices of spatialization and strategies of visibility and invisibility which characterize the experience of gays and lesbians and other sexual minorities in their engagement with normative heterosexual dominance and Caribbean heteropatriarchy.

The stories in the novels discussed here do not always advocate or privilege coming out. Rather, they often narrate what I would like to term guerilla practices and subjectivities. They depict maroon tactics of visibility and invisibility, strategic

⁶ Drawing on Caribbean Creole linguistic theory, which examines ‘the plurality and availability of “lects”’ as an alternative to prescriptive notions of standard English as good language, Smith proposes a concept of sexiolects. He discusses how this offers a theoretical framework for rethinking hegemonic notions of heterosexuality as ‘good’ sexuality (1999: 8). In Smith’s work, sexuality is variously situated along a continuum and theorized in terms of ‘a plurality of desires that combine and recombine according to individual sexual formation’, displacing notions of a ‘homo-hetero’ binary and polarities of good/bad sexuality. Instead it incorporates what he terms ‘a plurality of sexiolects’ (1999: 8).

moments of revelation, practices of mobility which enable survival and which also function as strategies of community. In decentring the focus on coming out, these texts challenge the dominance of the trope of the closet as the structuring metaphor of queer relations. They also force us to re-examine ‘the Enlightenment-inspired bifurcation between the invisible and the visible, between private and public expressions of desire in which invisibility and privacy are linked to oppression while access to visibility and publicity is aligned with empowerment’ (Tinsley 2010: 25). They make visible, as Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley suggests, the ways in which ‘the “dark” or semivisibility of Caribbean same-sex sexuality can be something other than a blackout’ (Tinsley 2010: 104). But my discussion of queer marronage and its attention to the mobilization of guerilla tactics should also not be read as a rejection of the possibilities of coming out. Rather I suggest that its consideration serves as one way of unsettling the binary relationship and unilateral directionality constructed between dark and light which is reflected in Smith’s and King’s outlined teleological progression from being in the dark to coming into light.

Aimé Césaire’s *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* inhabits and outlines the complex, non-linear relationship between light and dark that I wish to invoke here. It allows us to see the relationship of being in the dark to coming to light as a discontinuous one. His text inhabits a stillness ‘at the end of daybreak’ which we might describe, following Achille Mbembe and Jasbir Puar, as a ‘time of entanglement’ (Puar 2007: xvii). In his reading of Césaire’s now classic work, E. San Juan Jr. calls attention to ‘the neologistic poetics of “marronage”, that informs the architectonics of Césaire’s *Notebook*’ (2000: 13). While San Juan Jr. is primarily concerned with Césaire’s ‘poetics of fugitive intervention’ (2000: 13) — as he terms it — paying attention to the thematic concerns of the book and to its linguistic marooning, I am primarily interested here in the ‘architectonics’ of the text, a term

which he invokes but does not fully explore. In particular, I want to call attention to the spatio-temporal moment in which Césaire grounds his work.

Much of the early section of the book sets the scene. The very first words in Césaire's prose poem are 'At the end of daybreak...' (2001: 1). The words stand on their own, followed by an ellipsis. The writer thus urges the reader to pay attention to these words and to pause to consider this invocation of time and space. The words are also located in a discontinuous relationship with the description of the moment that follows. The text is located in and calls attention to a break between the moment of dark and light. It does not perform a rush or uninterrupted movement towards daybreak. The phrase 'at the end of daybreak' is repeated at several junctures in the opening section (though without the ellipses) and becomes central to the reader's conceptualization and experience of time and space. Césaire's text evokes a moment that moves toward the possibility of light and visibility, but which does not construct the light beyond as an already determined destination. The relationship to coming out and practices of visibility that I wish to offer as part this discussion of queer marronage is bound up with this sense of interrupted teleology. Unlike Smith and King, I do not invoke 'coming out' as a prescribed or desired destination.

The discontinuous relationship to linear temporality enacted by Césaire's ellipses informs my exploration of queer marronage throughout this thesis. As discussed in forthcoming chapters, marronage is marked by strategies of contingency and survival. It is an experience of time which 'invite[s] futurity even as it refuses to script it' (Puar 2007: xix). Its relationship to the past is also a discontinuous one, shaped by absences, presences, shadows and hauntings. Rather than invoking a discourse of unilateral directionality for reading Caribbean literature's engagement with discourses of sexuality, or a teleos that traces movement from being in the dark

to coming into light, in examining queer marronage I consider the ways in which, as Kenneth Bilby suggests, marronage represents ‘a potentiality that may be activated anywhere, at any time given the proper circumstances’ (2006: 21). This study calls attention to complex temporal convergences and spatializing practices. It invokes what Bilby, in discussing maroon ‘ritual interaction’, terms ‘a past that is felt to be alive in the present’ (2006: 21) but also pays attention to the ways in which the present allows us to re-engage the past. These glances backward trace an arc of possibilities for contingent futures.

The work of Michelle Cliff, Dionne Brand, Patricia Powell, and Shani Mootoo complexly map some of these convergences between past and present. In particular, my reading of Cliff’s work in Chapter One pays attention to how her novel *Abeng* multiplies the images of discontinuous time associated with marronage. It represents marronage as an intervention in Jamaica’s slave past, but also as a recursive force in the politics of the present which recalls and re-situates the past as intimate time and space, rather than relationally distant. In the early pages of the novel, the description of the people gathered at the Tabernacle where the ‘dark outlines of the foothills of the Blue Mountains were shadowed’ (Cliff 1985: 11), signals how marronage continues to cast a present shadow. Cliff tells us, the ‘crevices of the Blue Mountains was the headquarters of the Windward Maroons’ (1985: 14). In this image the maroon past is narrated as observable presence.

Cliff’s novel also importantly explores how contemporary sexual hegemonies are historically and structurally linked to plantation regimes of power. Various modes of regulating and policing intimacies are seen to parallel and reproduce plantation hierarchies and regimes. The narratives of Cliff’s contemporary characters and their experiences of sexual, social and bodily regulation are interwoven with the stories of figures such as Nanny of the Maroons and Mma Ali, and their practices of

embodied resistance. Cliff traces intimacies and connections between the lives of those living in the context of Caribbean plantation societies and those who inhabit its still haunting shadows. These acknowledgements of interconnections between past and present imaginatively link historical marronage and queer practice. Cliff, as well as other writers discussed in this thesis, narrate these practices as interlinked forms of resistance, mobilized at different temporal moments. Their work at once re-imagines historical marronage as queer practice but also narrates marronage as a practice which queers — those who construct their lives in direct tension with ‘regimes of the normal’ (Warner 1993: xxvi) — mobilize at different historical junctures.

On the Homo-Erotics of Marronage

The turn in Caribbean literary discourse to examine the link between marronage and discourses of sexuality, evidenced in Cliff’s work, also coincides with critical shifts within the field of maroon studies which have facilitated reflections on the homoerotics of marronage. The year 1995 marked the tricentennial commemoration of the destruction of the legendary maroon settlement of Palmares in Brazil. At the time of its fall, Palmares was led by Zumbí, the famed leader who had seized power in 1678 and led the confederated eleven *mocambos* that comprised Palmares until the time of his own death in November 1695.⁷ The tri-centenary was marked by several

⁷ Palmares (often referred to as the Kingdom of Palmares) was made up of eleven smaller maroon settlements, called *mocambos* or *palenques* that were confederated. They evolved a complex system of governance and developed and sustained interconnected communication and supply networks. Palmares lasted for almost a hundred years up until the time of its fall.

events commemorating and remembering Palmares as well as celebrating Zumbi who is seen as a hero and regarded as an ancestral spirit by most Afro-Brazilians. However, 1995 is also remembered for the controversy that erupted surrounding anthropologist-historian Luiz Mott's assertions about Zumbi's sexuality. In an interview cited by Pedro Paulo Furani and Aline Vieira de Carvalho in their essay 'Gender Relations in a Maroon Community, Palmares, Brazil', Mott summarizes some of these now infamous claims.⁸ According to Mott:

Zumbi's nickname was *sueça* (Swedish woman), he never had a wife, he came from the Angolan ethnicity of 'quibanda', where homosexuality was institutionalized, he was raised by a priest in Alagoas who called him 'my little nigger' and when he was assassinated in 1695 his penis was cut off and shoved in his mouth (interview given to the journalist Flavio Simpiao — *Istoe* magazine online no date). (Furani and Carvalho 2011: 259)

Mott's work was met with national fury and even with violent reactions. Furani and Carvalho note that his house was spray-painted, the windows of his car smashed, and his life threatened. There seemed to be widespread indignation both within and outside the academy at the idea of a maroon leader's assumed homosexuality.

This notwithstanding, Mott's work has since prompted other historians writing about marronage in Brazil to further explore this issue of Zumbi's sexuality and to reread the archives and narrate his life story with greater sensitivity to questions of homosocial and homoerotic connections. Mary Karasch, for example, notes that '[t]here is one glimpse in the documents of a young Zumbi continuing to maintain a relationship with the priest who had raised him in his household, risking capture on three separate occasions to bring him gifts' (2002: 111). Karasch asks about this ongoing relationship between these two men: '[w]ere Zumbi's furtive visits those of an adopted son to a beloved father or as a Christian to a respected

⁸ In the absence of a full translation, I have relied on Furani and Vieira de Carvalho's translation of Mott's interview. Discussions of Mott's work can also be found in Mary Karasch (2002) and in Randy Conner and David Sparks's work (2004).

priest? Or was there a forbidden sexual relationship between the priest and the young Zumbí?’ (2002: 111). In engaging Mott’s questions, through further archival research, Karasch explores the possibilities for the archives to tell other stories beyond the narrative of the presumed and often taken for granted heteronormativity of maroon communities.

A year before the airing of Mott’s controversial work, the literary scholar, A. James Arnold, discussing Creolist writing in French Caribbean literature, had also raised questions about the homosocial networks of marronage. In a 1994 article, Arnold focuses attention on the dominance of masculine and masculinist representations of marronage in the works of Caribbean Creolite writers such as Glissant, Chamoiseau, Bernabé, and Confiant. In reading these texts, Arnold highlights what he terms the ‘erotics of colonialism’ (1994: 6); a relational dynamic in which the male maroon figure emerges as one embodiment of ‘masculine desire’. If, in the dynamics of colonial relations, the colonizer and colonized (both imagined as male in Arnold’s formulation) are positioned as dominant and subjugated, the Maroon becomes a symbol of resistance that makes possible another kind of narrative of black masculinity which differs from the image of the feminized (i.e., subjugated) ‘other’ posited within colonial erotics. According to Arnold:

Analyzing this model of the erotics of colonialism puts us in a better position to understand why and, more importantly, how the figure of the (male) Maroon has emerged as the absent but necessary hero of West Indian history. He is necessary precisely because he has been absent. He will be represented as the super-male, more masculine than the Other, because the erotics of male heterosexual desire permits no other representation. (1994: 9)

Arnold’s reading of the Maroon as an embodiment of ‘the erotics of male heterosexual desire’ is interestingly situated against, or perhaps I should say ‘within’, his analysis of the homosocial literary culture of the Creolite movement from which

these writings emerge. He notes for example that the movement is marked by a ‘sharply gendered identity’ that ‘permits only male talent to emerge within the movement [and] to carry its seal of approval’ (Arnold 1994: 5). On the other hand ‘it pushes literature written by women into the background’ (Arnold 1994: 5). In focusing on this gender dynamic and its implications for imaginings and representations of marronage, Arnold's analysis allows us to observe the figure of the maroon as framed within an economy of male desire, which extends and destabilizes the concern with 'male heterosexual desire' highlighted in the quotation above. In fact, we might usefully consider Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept of a continuum of ‘male homosocial desire’ (1985: 2) — which is not the antithesis of ‘male heterosexual desire’ (Arnold 1994: 9) but rather signifies a complex and often ‘discontinuous’ terrain of social and sexual relations and desires between men — as one way of framing and engaging with the multiple and varied desirings between men evident in Arnold's discussion. In its signification of a spectrum of male homosocial relationships and desires, Arnold's work offers us instances of engagement, not only with male heterosexual desire but also with the homoerotics of marronage. Yet in his work this engagement remains obscured existing in a discontinuous relationship of presence and absence, much like the figure of the male Maroon he discusses.

But if these discussions within Afro-Brazilian and French Caribbean discourses of marronage have differently engaged with the question of marronage and the homoerotic, maroon scholarship in Anglophone Caribbean discourse has more generally tended to avoid this issue. Alvin Thompson's historical study, *Flight to Freedom* (2006) can perhaps be read as symptomatic of this trend. Even in writing about Zumbí, Thompson never raises the question of homoeroticism. At the same time, Thompson's work does however signal ways in which homosocial relations

and an unarticulated homoerotic subtext invariably proves significant to the examination of marronage. In highlighting the gender disparity between the numbers of men and women as a feature of maroon communities established in the New World, Thompson notes that:

The gender imbalance in most Maroon communities has led some writers to conclude that women were not as interested as men in absconding. The common view is that the female adult population in Maroon communities comprised largely women who were abducted, mainly to satisfy the biological and social needs of male Maroons. (2006: 67)

Like Arnold, Thompson offers us a discussion of marronage that focuses on men and relationships between men. It is also marked by a reluctance to open up for consideration the varied kinds of intimacies between men, which are potentially mobilized by flight, and marronage. The exploration or even the possibility of male-male intimacy and desire is foreclosed in favour of a focus on heteronormative relations. Women are brought into view in so much as they make possible the construction and persistence of a narrative of heteronormative relations that frames the male maroon more firmly within the 'erotics of male heterosexual desire' (Arnold 1994: 9).

Marronage as Queer Relationality

In contrast to many of these readings and observations, which at once bring into view, but are also marked by a reluctance to explore connections between marronage and queerness, this thesis seeks to shift the frame of analysis by considering marronage as queer relationality. In discussing queer marronage, I do not so much focus on the homoerotics of marronage, although this does provide one useful point of entry into the discussion. Rather, building on discussions of queer as ‘resistance to regimes of the normal’ (Warner 1993: xxvi) and as potentially creating and mobilizing ‘space in opposition to dominant norms’ (Cohen 2005: 22), I use the concept to explore how marronage, its processes of flight and negotiation of alternative communities and intimacies, resisted and disrupted the logics of the Plantation — the dominant regulating structure within early capitalism.⁹ While it might on one level seem anachronistic to qualify marronage as queer, this critical formulation is deliberately deployed to signal how the logics of late Western capitalism (its regulation of the reproductive body, the discourses of comparative

⁹ In many ways the consideration of marronage as relational, and its complex relationship to the Plantation, builds on Edouard Glissant’s *Poetics of Relations* in which he discusses errantry, marronage, chaos, as part of his theory of Relation. In Glissant’s work, space is important to his understanding of Relation. He argues that ‘[d]istancings are necessary to Relation and depend on it’ (Glissant 1997:157). By way of defining ‘Relation identity’ (1997:144), Glissant tells us that it:

- is linked not to a creation of the world but to the conscious and contradictory experience of contacts among cultures;
- is produced in the chaotic network of Relation and not in the hidden violence of filiation;
- does not devise any legitimacy as its guarantee of entitlement, but circulates, newly extended;
- does not think of a land as a territory from which to project towards other territories but as a place where one gives-on and with rather than grasps. (1997:144)

Glissant’s delineation of relation here, not only focuses on the question of space but also engages with the question of time. His work notably extends Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of rhizomes. He examines their work in his articulation of errantry. Like Deleuze and Guattari, Glissant seeks to supplant the idea of filiation. Relation is offered as an alternative to the linear logic of genealogical time. For Glissant, ‘Memory [...] is not a calendar memory; our experience of time does not keep company with the rhythms of month and year alone; it is aggravated by the void, the final sentence of the Plantation; our generation are caught up with in an extended family in which our root stocks have diffused’ (1997:72). In my discussion of marronage as queer relationality, the dynamics of time and space are also important. Like Glissant, I also raise questions about linear sequentiality as the maroon’s relation to time and seek to unsettle the temporal markers and the narratives of moments of exceptionality, which have structured our relationship to time.

human value which render certain categorized bodies as expendable, the drive towards futurity, inheritance and wealth accumulation) which queer theorists have variously highlighted, deconstructed and critiqued also operated within the context of the rise of Western capitalism and the Plantation.¹⁰ Yet even within the workings of the ‘Plantation machine’ (Benítez-Rojo 1996: 8), marronage made visible as well as made possible other circuits of relation.¹¹ The slave’s act of flight was an entry into another space of relation to the social order of the Plantation. It opened up possibilities for communities of belonging constituted by what Antonio Benítez-Rojo has termed a ‘confederation of fugitives’ (1996: 250) — a queer assemblage.

My use of ‘assemblages’ to describe these gatherings draws on Jasbir Puar’s *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, in which she uses the term to describe ‘an affective conglomeration that recognizes other contingencies of belonging (melding, fusing, viscosity, bouncing) that might not so easily fall into what is sometimes denoted as reactive community formations — identity politics’ (2007: 211). Puar deploys the concept to rethink intersectional approaches and identity politics and their reliance on what she terms ‘separable analytics’ and on ‘knowing, naming and thus stabilizing of identity across space and time’ (2007: 212).

¹⁰ My argument here represents a provocation to further consider a vexed relationship to the category ‘human’ within the context of Plantation slavery. While Michel Foucault’s work, for instance, focuses on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London, and the diagnosis of the category of the homosexual, the work of Orlando Patterson (1982) and Hortense Spillers (1987) have shown how the Plantation, and slavery were built on and refined particular discourses of the ‘normal’. This meant that certain bodies were distanced from this category of normal. They were effectively marked as abject. In Chapter three, I explore how those excluded from the ‘normal’ and from the category of human — existing in a condition of social death — negotiated other (queer) ways and spaces to be. One might also within this context think about the operations of gender. Spillers has for example outlined how the category of woman often excluded black bodies. I am not here suggesting the plantation as a site for the invention of white femininity. However white femininity operated within the context of plantation society to define womanhood. The solidification and reinforcement of particular categorical hierarchies within the plantation thus created norms as well as mobilized alternatives.

¹¹ Drawing on Antonio Benítez-Rojo’s (1996: 8) use of the concept of the ‘Plantation machine’ in *The Repeating Island*, I use the term to signify a normative mode of reproduction and relationship to power that was challenged and reconfigured through processes of marronage. Yet as Benítez-Rojo (1996: 250) also reminds us, marronage never operated fully outside the context of the Plantation machine.

However, here I am more interested in how assemblages offer an alternative to narratives of genealogical belonging in the context of marronage. If contemporary maroon ethnographies often rely on distinctions between Maroons and non-maroons, and foreground the function of narratives that distinguish between Maroons and the descendants of slaves, throughout this thesis I repeatedly return to the context of slavery and the moments of establishment of maroon settlements to highlight the porous (yet persistent) nature of these distinctions. I consider how marronage opened up convivial and contingent networks of relations that were not necessarily structured in fixed ethnic terms.

Puar's description of assemblages as an 'affective conglomeration' (2007: 211) and her accompanying notion of 'contingencies of belonging' (2007: 211), provide conceptual tools which not only allow us to rethink identity politics in the contemporary moment but which also call attention to the multiple and varied ways in which marronage offered possibilities and strategies of coming together and pulling apart, negotiating contingent freedoms and moments of belonging in the context of Plantation societies. In this regard, her discussion of assemblages potentially adds much to our conceptualization of marronage, and significantly helps to outline parallels between queerness and marronage.

In discussing assemblages, Puar focuses on the affective turn in queer theorizing. She asks us to consider what is mobilized by thinking about affective politics '[r]ather than rehearsing the pros and cons of identity politics' (Puar 2007: 215). Her methodological project might be understood through her discussion of queerness itself as an assemblage. She argues we should view 'queerness as not an identity nor an anti-identity, but an assemblage that is spatially and temporally contingent' (Puar 2007: 204). According to Puar:

Queerness as an assemblage moves away from excavation work, deprivileges a binary opposition between queer and not-queer subjects, and, instead of retaining queerness exclusively as dissenting and resistant and alternative (all of which queerness essentially is and does) it underscores contingency and complicity with dominant formations. (2007: 205)

In invoking Puar's discussion of assemblages, I am interested in both the affective possibilities as well as the spatial, temporal, political and conditional contingencies which she outlines as important to our understandings of the term and to our understanding of queerness. In elaborating the concept, she also importantly highlights acts and moments of complicity with dominant regimes of power, a perspective that rethinks Michael Warner's mapping of queerness in primarily resistant terms.¹² According to Puar, 'assemblages allow for complicities of privilege and the production of new normativities even as they cannot anticipate spaces and moments of resistance, resistance that is not characterized by oppositional stances' (2007: 222). In Puar's work, assemblages are rendered as 'mutually implicated and messy networks' (2007: 211).

In further examining these 'spatial, temporal and corporeal convergences, implosions and rearrangements' (2007: 205), I want to consider Puar's discussion of queerness as an assemblage alongside writings by two scholars who discuss marronage as assemblages. The chapter which opens 'Part One' of Barbara Lalla's *Defining Jamaican Fiction: Marronage and the Discourse of Survival* is titled 'An Assembly of Strangers' (1996: 23). In it Lalla focuses on nineteenth-century narratives set in Jamaica, which invoke the figure of the maroon. She examines how these narratives contribute to the development of an understanding of '[t]he maroon

¹² In this discussion, I do not wish to privilege the politics of resistance traced out in Warner's work and his focus on counterpublics. Yet at this same time, I also do not want to focus on the politics of complicity highlighted by Puar's work. Rather my aim here is to highlight how both these practices operated within the context of historical marronage as well as how both continue to inform practices of queerness in the contemporary Caribbean. In my reading of these texts, I highlight and explore moments on contestation of and complicity with heteropatriarchy and its governing norms.

as fictional type (not necessarily tied to the Maroon as a sociohistorical entity)' (2006: 54, 55). But if Lalla's work focuses on isolation and distance (examined as spatial, temporal and emotional distance from an idyllic or idealized past or home) as a key part of the experience of these maroon characters, the title of her chapter calls attention to convergences that result from these experiences of estrangement.¹³ Lalla discusses a range of character types: 'visitors and adventurers' (2006: 28), 'fugitives and romantic warriors' (2006: 36), 'rebels and obeah men' (2006: 44) who all came together on the island and who populate these narratives. In her work, these relations and encounters are significantly not rendered as oriented towards the future but are instead discussed as contingent. She argues, for instance, that 'commitment to selfhood continues inevitably color coded' (Lalla 2006: 55). The achievement of community is thus not synonymous or continuous with the act of assembly.

Lalla not only describes this group as 'an assembly of strangers' (1996: 23) but also comments on its 'strangeness' (1996: 34). In her discussion of Mayne Reid's novel *The Maroon* (1862), she highlights and discusses moments such as the meeting between Herbert Vaughn, the young Englishman, who is the central character in the story, and Cubina, the maroon figure, who relates to Vaughn the narrative of Quaco, the ancient Maroon who inspires the title of the book. Lalla describes the moment of their meeting (and the resulting convergence of characters and narratives) as a 'queer encounter' (1996:43). Her description draws on the very term which Reid himself employs in the novel. She notes that this meeting occurs at a moment when Vaughn

¹³ In her book *Strange Encounters* Sara Ahmed urges that in the use of the term 'stranger' we should be mindful of the 'different forms of displacement to be gathered together in the singularity of a given name' (2000: 5). She argues that '[s]uch an erasure of differences is implicated in any attempt to define the stranger as one who leaves home and moves to a different place' (2000: 6). Lalla's work evidences elements of this use of the term. Even while noting the usefulness of Lalla's discussion, I certainly do not want to erase a consideration of these differences. In fact I suggest it is necessary to consider and explore these varied histories and the question of the conditions of how these various characters came to be together in the same place. As Ahmed notes, it is these 'very forms of difference that render impossible the very formation of an inclusive community' (2000: 6).

is '[i]solated by the death of his father and his uncle's rejection, alone on a strange island, lost in the forest, is vulnerable to exploitation by the Jew, susceptible to compassionate maidens, and open to the friendships of the inhabitants of the wilderness' (1996: 43). This 'queer encounter' is therefore framed within an experience of genealogical and spatial disruption and distance. While Lalla primarily focuses on isolation, withdrawal and distance as defining elements of the maroon character, her work also invariably traces out how experiences of estrangement and distance open up various possibilities for 'queer encounters' and 'friendships of the inhabitants of the wilderness' (1996: 43).

Antonio Benítez-Rojo in *The Repeating Island*, offers another view of marronage as an assemblage. In a chapter titled 'Nino Aviles, or history's libido', he includes a section titled 'Of Palenques and Cimarrones' — an extended meditation on marronage — in which he writes:

Yes, the runaway slave's flight to "freedom" has no frontiers unless they are those of the meta-archipelago. One day, when the global investigation of this theme are undertaken, the Caribbean will astonish everyone by how close it came to being a confederation of fugitives, of outlaws. I am not exaggerating; in the last decade of the eighteenth century there were slave rebellions and massive escapes in literally all of the region's islands and coasts. One might think there was a huge conspiracy, of which the Haitian Revolution was only a part, the part that triumphed visibly. Furthermore, there seems to have been mysterious personages who travelled here and there carrying secret words and letters. (1996: 254)

This passage, like Puar's work, describes strategic acts of assemblage negotiated with varying degrees of success, contingency, permanence as well as visibility. Unlike Lalla, who examines assemblages in relation to (as well as in distinction to) community, both Puar and Benítez-Rojo explicitly link these acts of assemblage to militarization. But if Puar's discussion focuses on contemporary geo-politics and on

the ‘convivial relations between queernesses and militarization, securitization, war, terrorism, surveillance technologies, empire, torture, nationalism, globalization, fundamentalism, secularism, incarceration, detention, deportation and neoliberalism’ or what she terms ‘the tactics, strategies and logistics of our contemporary war machines’ (2007: xiv), Benítez-Rojo’s work also traces out the operations of these convivial, contingent, militarized networks in eighteenth-century marronage. While some of the terms which constitute Puar’s extensive list, are useful for framing a discussion of Benítez-Rojo’s maroon assemblages, he also adds to this list; confederation, fugitives, rebellion, escapes, conspiracy, revolution, as terms which help to shape our understanding of assemblages at particular moments.

In situating both Benitez-Rojo’s and Lalla’s work alongside Puar’s, I aim to call attention to their shared mappings of the ‘queerness’ of marronage and their examinations of its discontinuous, contingent encounters and strategies. However their work also effectively serves to reframe and extend the focus on the present in Puar’s work. Both Lalla and Benítez-Rojo offer a wider context for examining the usefulness of ‘assemblage as a pertinent political and theoretical frame within societies of control’ (Puar 2007: 205). By broadening this temporal focus, they not only prompt an acknowledgement of ‘marronage as assemblages’ but even more importantly, they urge an understanding of assemblages as practices of marronage. This reformulation has key implications for reading Puar's work. In considering assemblages as marronage we might, for instance, reread Puar’s writing in light of the past, rather than with a view fixed firmly on the present, as she invariably invites us to do.

In the concluding chapter of her book, Puar offers the following statement which epitomizes her attempts to mark out the temporal dimensions of her work:

These are queer times indeed, temporal assemblages hooked into an array of enduring modernist paradigms (civilizing teleologies, Orientalism, xenophobia, militarization, border anxieties) and postmodern eruptions (suicide bombers, biometric surveillance strategies, emergent corporealities, counterterrorism in overdrive). [...] Queer times require even queerer modalities of thought, analysis, creativity, and expressions to elaborate upon nationalist, patriotic and terrorist formulations and their imbricated forms of racialized perverse sexualities and gender dysphorias. (2007: 204)

While Puar's book is focused on American post-9/11 geo-politics, I would argue that it also describes aspects of the temporal and political moment that gave rise to maroon communities throughout the Americas — a moment which was marked by ‘civilizing teleologies’, militarization, the rise of border anxieties between colonial powers and the mobilization of biometric surveillance strategies against racialized, commodified bodies lodged in the grip of empire. Rather than endorsing a view of its exceptionality, the consideration of assemblages as marronage immediately reframes Puar's theoretical mapping of the contemporary moment and its practices of queerness and militarization in terms of relationality.

This thesis invites us to consider the Plantation colonial past and how this also required and mobilized 'queer modalities of thought, analysis, creativity, and expressions' (Puar 2007: 204). In reading assemblages as marronage, we also reframe temporal narratives which separate ‘modernist paradigms’ and ‘postmodern eruptions’ (Puar 2007: 204) to consider other temporal logics such as Charles Carnegie’s examination of marronage as ‘postnationalisms prefigured’ (2002) and Benítez-Rojo’s discussions of ‘circular destinies’ and ‘pendular presents’ (2007: 249, 251). Queer marronage as a concept offers an invitation to think relationally about the contemporary moment and its strategies of queerness, in as much as it urges us to recall the workings of empire and colonialism and the queer encounters and modalities of relations that it set into motion.

But while Puar's discourse of assemblages offers useful terms for thinking about queerness in relation to marronage, in this thesis I extend the linguistic and theoretical resources for talking about queer maroon relations by paying close attention to the metaphors and images offered by the texts and writers I discuss. In Chapter Two, I examine Dionne Brand's discourse of the junction as one way of marking acts and moments of convergence, collaboration and confederation. In Brand's novel *In Another Place, Not Here*, the junction functions as a key metaphor for narrating various affective encounters and relations negotiated between characters who are brought together by practices of maroon flight. The junction is however not an intersection. In other words, it is not a site that can be straightforwardly mapped along identity gridlines (race, sex, nation). Rather, it is a location where various displaced bodies and spirits cross and collide. In Brand's text the junction is associated with locations of 'not here'. If Puar critiques intersectional politics as reliant on 'knowing, naming and thus stabilizing of identity across space and time' (2007: 212), Brand's novel narrates the junction and marronage in terms of flight and departures from the known and the familiar. In its invocation of locations of 'not here', the text marks a refusal to deploy the language of identity discourses or to fix coordinates of flight and crossing. Marronage is instead rendered in terms of departures from narratives of cultural, genealogical, and temporal continuity and discourses of identity. Maroon flight opens up habitations and spaces of dislocation which might best be described as 'neither here nor there, this nor that — a kind of shifting comma of possibility on a dimension at once outside and within known reality' (Forbes 2005: 32, 33). In arguing for an understanding of marronage as queer relationality, I call attention to its usage as a trope in the narration of intimacies that depart from and disrupt normative and known locations of belonging. However, my discussion also pays attention to the materiality of marronage as historical practice.

My discussion of historical marronage, its spatial and affective contingencies, locations and proximities not only offers a metaphor for discussing contemporary performances of queerness, but also significantly offers a relational account that revises and challenges the discourses of exceptionality which often mark discussions and representations of queerness in our contemporary moment.

Feeling Maroon

The consideration of the material effects of marronage and the discussion of Puar's work alongside maroon writings by Lalla and Benítez-Rojo feeds into a broader statement on queerness and marronage in which I do not only argue that we can read marronage as queer. This thesis also aims to highlight the fact that several practices which have been read and theorized as queer are also already maroon. This idea can be teased out by looking at the 'affective turn' in queer studies. Several of the concerns and critical strategies which have been foregrounded in recent queer theory have been anticipated, if not exhaustively discussed, within maroon studies.

Puar's discussion of assemblage as 'an affective conglomeration' and her exploration of the uses of affect vis-à-vis identity politics builds on and seeks to extend the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003), Sara Ahmed (2004), Ann Cvetkovich (2003) José Esteban Muñoz (2000), who have all variously examined the uses of feeling, emotion and affect as part of their 'continuing efforts to elaborate different and alternative modalities of belonging, connectivity and intimacy' (Puar 2007: 208). But if Puar's examination of this affective turn in queer theory leads her

to wonder if there is ‘something specific about our contemporary moment that makes the turn to affect that more urgent, more efficacious, more pertinent’ (2007: 208), I would argue that in engaging with this question we are further faced with the need to complicate the focus on the present. A relational reading of queer theory and marronage would deepen our understanding of the uses of affect. I want to argue, by returning to Richard Price’s *Maroon Studies*, that maroon theory offers a consideration of ‘feeling’ as one way of theorizing marronage and outlines aspects of its usefulness as a strategy negotiated in response to the ‘necropolitical, anatomical, sensorial forms of domination and oppression’ (Puar 2007: 208) which operated under the exigencies of slavery. Price’s book significantly predates the emergence of queer theory and the affective turn in contemporary theorizing. Yet it offers us ways of thinking about marronage through affect, which deserve more sustained critical reflection within the broader field of maroon studies. Queer theory, when situated alongside maroon studies, might reinvigorate these discussions of feelings, alienation, loss, and belonging, within the realm of maroon studies. The consideration of maroon studies and its uses of affect might also serve to enrich these ongoing discussions within queer studies.

In his 1973 introduction to *Maroon Societies*, Richard Price notes that: ‘Maroons drew on their diverse African heritages in building their cultures’ (1996: 28). Price’s pluralization of the terms ‘African heritages’, on one hand, and ‘their cultures’, on the other, points to the need to unpick fixed or linear narratives of cultural heritage or identity in accounting for the development of Maroon societies in the New World (1996: 28). Price moves away from the question of tracing African cultural continuities, offered by critics such as Kamau Brathwaite (1974) and Gordon Rohlehr (1992) to advocate an even more provocative way of thinking about Maroon culture. In examining various attempts by scholars to trace Maroon cultures back to

Africa, Price offers the following insightful critique of Roger Bastide's work. Most notably, he discusses Bastide's idea of Maroon communities as 'mosaic cultures' noting that:

Bastide's belief that these are 'cultures in mosaic' or 'mosaic cultures' is also misleading and contains more than a hint of old-fashioned, mechanistic thinking about the nature of Culture itself. [...] I would suggest that by focusing on the diverse African origins of various 'culture-traits', Bastide has failed to see the principles that integrate these societies and give them their characteristic shape. (Price 1996: 27)

In challenging Bastide's focus on 'culture-traits' in accounting for the development of Maroon societies, Price highlights the need to consider discontinuities rather than continuities. He discusses maroon culture as forged through processes of change, and as dynamic rather than fixed, immutable or simply transferred (2007: 212). In contrast to Bastide's search for traceable or identifiable origins of 'broken' segments which constitute the 'mosaic' (Price 1996: 27), Price offers the following discussion of maroon communities which proves instructive in examining queerness and marronage. Price argues that:

such communities are uncannily "African" in feeling even if devoid of any directly transplanted systems. However "African" in character, no maroon social, political, religious or aesthetic system can be reliably traced to a specific tribal provenience; they reveal, rather, their syncretic composition forged in the early meeting of peoples bearing diverse African, European and Amerindian cultures in the dynamic setting of the New World (1996: 28, 29)

In the quotation above Price significantly invokes 'feeling' as one of the primary 'principles that integrate these societies' (1996: 27). This is situated in contrast to, or certainly highlighted as another way of engaging with, questions of belonging and relation. A straightforward discourse of cultural transference is transplanted by a notion of affective relations. Naturalized discourses of cultural and genealogical reproduction and continuity and notions of linearity, coherency and permanency are unsettled. What are instead brought into view are relations structured around what

contemporary queer theorists have described as an ‘archive of feeling’ (Love 2007: 4).

The concept of an ‘archive of feeling’ has been useful to critics such as Ann Cvetkovich and Heather Love in their explorations of feelings of loss, trauma, melancholy, nostalgia and their examination of how these impact on questions of queer community and communal memory. The term is of course related to Raymond Williams’s exploration of ‘structures of feeling’ (1985: 132). Love notes how Williams’s influential work ‘offers a crucial link between cognition and affect’ (2007:11) which allows for the analysis and discussion of ‘experience at the juncture of the psychic and the social’ (2007: 12). Cvetkovich’s thinking about archives of feeling, loss and trauma is significantly informed by the AIDS crisis and AIDS activism. She notes for instance how ‘[q]ueer activism insisted on militancy over mourning, but also remade mourning in the form of new kinds of public funerals and queer intimacies’ (2003: 5). She importantly questions this hierarchy of response turning her focus instead to trauma and mourning.

Cvetkovich’s discussion of the tensions between signifying and mourning loss and highlighting presence, continuity and militancy, played out in the responses to the AIDS crisis, is extended by Heather Love in her ambitious examination of queer history and politics and its responses to loss. In *Feeling Backward*, Love uses the concept of an ‘archive of feeling’ (2007: 4) to talk about queer history, not as a linear temporal formulation or progression but one that is haunted by absence, loss and melancholia. She argues that ‘the history of Western representation is littered with the corpses of gender and sexual deviants’ (Love 2007: 1). It is for this reason that she focuses on the importance of mourning, feelings of loss or what she terms ‘negative feelings’ (2007: 2). She situates her work in conversation with critics who

‘investigate the darker aspects of queer representation and attend to the social, psychic and corporeal affects of homophobia’ (2007: 2). Much like Cvetovitch, she notes how ‘[t]he emphasis on damage in queer studies exists in a state of tension with a related and contradictory tendency — the need to resist damage and affirm queer existence’ (2007: 3) and argues that in the turn to ‘the politics of feeling’ queer critics must also ‘pursue a fuller engagement with negative affects and with the intransigent difficulties of making feeling the basis of politics’ (2007: 14).

There are key differences between Price’s work and those of the critics mentioned above. Price, for instance, discusses loss, but also engages with the question of how shared experiences of loss open new possibilities for community and affiliation, while Love focuses on ‘disconnection, loss and the refusal of community’ (2007: 146), choosing to remember those who weep alone in the dark. This difference is perhaps most vividly played out in their approaches to questions of temporality. Both Love and Price signal discontinuous relationships to futurity. However, Love’s rethinking of affirmations of futurity (which is importantly not a rejection of the question of the future as Lee Edelman advocates in *No Future*) results in a gaze ‘fixed on the past’ (2007: 146). She describes this as a ‘backward turn’ (Love 2007: 5). Price focuses less on the past. Instead, he foregrounds the present-future possibilities of marronage as they are mobilized at a particular moment. His discussion highlights how maroon bonds function as strategies of survival that intervene in a present scarred by loss. But I also want to argue that these maroon bonds and strategies of affiliation do not restore any firm promise of futurity. They instead mark out what might best be described as ‘contingent futures’. Feeling maroon is, at once, a discontinuous relationship to the past, but also a contingent relationship to futurity.

Despite these notable differences, Love, Cvetkovich, and Price each examine the issue of how to represent the past, its losses and discontinuities. If Love and Cvetkovich engage with the implications of this question for queer studies, the discussion between Price and Bastide, referenced above, highlights how, some of these very tensions between remembering and acknowledging loss and negation and signalling continuity and presence have also been important to maroon studies. Price's work, and that of scholars such as A. James Arnold, calls attention to how absence functions as a structuring presence in maroon scholarship and histories. Barbara Lalla has also examined alienation, 'withdrawal, displacement, exile and isolation' (1996: 2) as important themes in the maroon narrative. Marronage, one might argue, names a practice of absencing. Yet in their engagement with questions of loss, many maroon scholars often seek to retrace the journeys of those who passed through 'the door of no return' and attempt to bridge the losses of the Middle Passage.¹⁴ Like Bastide, they seek to trace a line of history and genealogy and look for fragments washed ashore which connect New World maroon settlements to the material existence of strangers across the void.

Price's invocation of feelings represents one response to the critical impulse of tracing connections. In many ways it forms a useful precursor to Love's and Cvetkovich's examinations of how 'feelings are tied to the experience of social exclusion' (Love 2007: 4) and their admonitions to embrace loss, backwardness,

¹⁴ The 'door of no return' is the name given to the site on the Cape Coast of Ghana which was the point of departure for many Africans who were transported across the Middle Passage. However as Dionne Brand argues, 'the door of no return' is both 'real and metaphorical as some places are, [and] mythic to those of us scattered in the Americas today' (2001: 18). In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand urges us to think about multiple rather than singular sites of discontinuity. She also links these varied sites with 'feeling marooned'. In the latter pages of the text, Brand describes those who live in the wake of passage through the door as '[m]arooned on salted highways', '[m]arooned in the mouth where things escape before they are said', '[m]arooned in the realms of drift, massacres of doubt', '[m]arooned in outcropping, up-crops of cities already abandoned', '[m]arooned in music, dark nightclubs of weeping, in never-sufficient verses, uncommunicated sentences' (2001: 216). Brand's mapping of the door thus signals both discontinuous pasts and futures.

trauma in the face of a less abject (which is not to say restorative) present. Price's description of maroon communities contemplates and explores loss, haunting, and melancholia as part of maroon history. His use of 'uncannily' to describe the feelings evoked by these communities also signals a haunting from the past which cannot be fully apprehended in material terms, but which nonetheless persists. But Price does not only focus on loss and haunting. His discussion of marronage also calls attention to the 'syncretic composition' of these communities 'forged in the early meeting of peoples bearing diverse African, European and Amerindian cultures in the dynamic setting of the New World' (Price 1996: 28, 29). His work demonstrates how losing one's mother (a trope which Judith Halberstam, following Saidiya Hartman, invokes to describe forgetting and genealogical disruption) or experiencing what Orlando Patterson describes as 'natal alienation' (1982: 5) actually enables a 'relation to other models of time, space, place and connection' (Halberstam 2011: 124) beyond linear generational logics and temporalities.

Marronage in Price's formulation might be equally understood through excesses, overflows, and practices of moving beyond bounds — spatial, genealogical, temporal. In this regard, his use of 'uncannily' urges us to think about marronage in terms of recursive flows, oscillating and 'pendular presents' (Benítez-Rojo 1996: 251) and reanimation of ghosts. Indeed, to even trace the very term 'maroon' is to encounter multiple convergences, multiple relationships to temporality and the effects of the uncanny. In the Preface to the 1996 edition of *Maroon Societies*, Price writes:

Since the original publication of *Maroon Societies*, the Cuban philologist José Juan Arrom has pushed back the origins of the word *maroon* beyond the Spanish *cimarron* that was first used in Hispaniola to refer to the Spaniards' feral cattle, then to enslaved Amerindians who escaped to the hills and by the early 1530s mainly to the many Africans

who were escaping from slavery on the island. That New World Spanish word — which spawned the English *maroon*, as well as French and Dutch *marron* (and English *Seminole*) — actually derives he now argues from an Amerindian (Arawak/Taino) root making it one of the earliest linguistic coinages in the postcolumbian Americas. (Price 1996: xi, xii)

Price's discussion of the etymological tracing of the root of the word 'maroon' and the act of 'push[ing] back the origins of the word' (1996: xi), does not only reveal encounters with losses, gaps and hauntings. Although it does highlight these (importantly recalling the decimation of the Amerindian population), it also configures marronage as a series of moments of coming together marked by the forging of political intimacies at various sites of encounter. The investigation of marronage in Price's work (and in Arrom's work) does not construct a linear history or single line of inquiry, but rather reveals multiple, labyrinthine, contingent, promiscuous possibilities and dimensions. In examining these simultaneous disjunctures and overflows of marronage we can invoke M. Jacqui Alexander's discussion of Atlantic crossings and their histories of losses and encounters where Alexander points out that because of the experience of loss, our narratives 'weave a discontinuous thread to the present' (2004: 14). However, in engaging with the watery archives of the Atlantic we also encounter a past that 'overflows with memory' (2004: 292).

Price's focus on feelings and affect as central to our understanding of marronage is perhaps most clearly evidenced in his discussion of the *mati* relations which emerged during these Middle Passage journeys. In responding to Bastide's work and its concern with signifying and recalling African heritages, Price notes that 'some characteristic modern forms of Afro-American social relations are coterminous with the Middle Passage itself' (1996: 27). He discusses how '*mati* or *sibi* forms of "ritual kinship", implying strong solidarity — referred originally to the

experience of having shared passage on the same slave ship' (1996: 27, 28). The Middle Passage not only represents a site of traumatic rupture and separation but its currents also charted queer intimacies. Price discusses mati as based on affective bonds and non-genealogical belonging. The rest of his work extends this idea. In Richard and Sally Price's *Two Evenings in Saramacca*, mati is described as 'a highly charged volitional relationship' (1991: 3). While in their seminal book *The Birth of Afro-American Culture*, Sidney Mintz and Richard Price define 'mati', as a 'special, non-biological symbolic connection between two people of the same gender' (1976: 44).

This decentring of heterosexual relations and the accompanying disruption of genealogical narratives of continuity is central to my conceptualization of queer marronage in this thesis. In Chapter Three I extend the discourse of mati relations, offered by Price and others, through an examination of Patricia Powell's novel *A Small Gathering of Bones*. I call attention to how critics have struggled to describe the bond between Powell's main characters. These men, I argue, are maroon mates. They are not bonded by genealogy nor are their relationships solely erotic (although some of them are). Their intimacies are a manifestation of mati relationships based on volitional bonds. Powell's novel examines how their experiences of social death and natal alienation (a discontinuous relationship to the past) and their experiences of physical death and reiterations of their expendability (contingent relationships to the future) result in necessary and timely supportive relationships. Their acts of gathering are a response to conditions of death.

Powell's book focuses on the early days of the AIDS epidemic in Jamaica. While her work movingly depicts this specific time and space, the novel (like several others which I discuss), through its use of maroon references narrates this moment

relationally. Using Orlando Patterson's concept of 'social death', explored in his landmark study *Slavery and Social Death*, I examine how the relationships between Powell's characters, living under the spectre of the AIDS epidemic, and their complex relationships to death, might be understood in relation to the discourses and practices of expendability that framed the slave's existence and which gave rise to maroon practices and mati relations in the historical context of slave societies. Tracing out these comparative relations and relational comparisons, I describe the temporal moment narrated in Powell's text as a queer time and space of marronage as well as examine the liminal, transient use of spaces that result from this maroon relationship to time —a contingent relationship to futurity.

Price's discussion of mati has also significantly influenced more recent theoretical work by scholars such as Gloria Wekker (2006) and Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley (2008, 2010) who have examined relationships and disjunctures, between queer theories and Caribbean contexts. Although neither Wekker nor Tinsley explicitly ground their work in maroon studies, they do draw on maroon discourses in their discussions of mati. Tinsley in particular develops many of the suggestive possibilities offered in Price's discussion for thinking about mati as queer and as based on affective bonds. Her description of mati as based on '*feeling and feeling for*' (2008: 192) echoes Price's examination of 'feeling' as central to maroon community formation. Like Price, she also discusses mati as forged in Middle Passage crossings. In her 2008 article 'Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic', which focuses on the material, social and emotional effects of transatlantic slave journeys, Tinsley argues that:

queer relationships emerged in the holds of slave ships that crossed between West Africa and the Caribbean archipelago[...] During the Middle Passage, as colonial chronicles, oral tradition, and anthropological studies tell us, captive African women created erotic

bonds with other women in the sex-segregated holds, and captive African men created bonds with other men. In so doing, they resisted the commodification of their bought and sold bodies by *feeling* and *feeling for* their co-occupants on these ships. (2008: 192)

In queering these accounts of crossing, Tinsley importantly resists a narrative of origins. In the quotation above, she describes the Middle Passage as a site of emergence and expounds on this idea in her self-conscious reflective statement that:

I evoke this history now not to claim the slave ship as the origin of the black queer Atlantic. The ocean obscures all origins, and neither ship nor Atlantic can be a place of origin. (Tinsley 2008: 192)

Yet if Tinsley is keen to highlight the fluidity of these crossings, and their obscuring of origins, this moment becomes a key site of focus in her work to which she continually returns even while narrating other points of emergence.

In her later book *Thieving Sugar: Eroticism Between Women in Caribbean Literature*, Tinsley reminds us that ‘[s]hipmate relationships were in fact a widespread response to the first venture in European globalization, the triangle trade’ (2010: 35). This recounting of Middle Passage mati relations prefaces her examination of another significant moment of visibility of mati relationships in the Caribbean — one set against the backdrop of ongoing European capitalist endeavours at the turn of the twentieth century. Tinsley notes that in Aruba and the Netherland Antilles in the late 1800s, the ‘discovery of rubber and gold attracted Dutch, German, and North American investors — a second wave of globalization’ (2010: 36). Once again a demand for labouring bodies created migratory dislocations which disrupted heteronormative social regimes. As the twentieth century dawned, ‘rubber and gold mining drew city dwelling Afro-Surinamese men back to the interior to bleed trees and to mine, leaving women the overwhelming majority of the black population in Paramaribo’ (2010: 36).

The colonial archives of the time reveal an increased interest in mati

suggesting greater social visibility and perhaps even greater social presence. These archives also betray an underlying perception of mati as a threat to the stability of the colonial order. Tinsley notes that ‘[i]n 1912, mati’s erotic relationships entered written colonial records as a social ill needing immediate redress’ (2010: 36). But if at the start of the twentieth century mati had gained some measure of notorious social visibility, Tinsley’s work issues a call to remember mati and other networks of intimacy (some of which are overlooked in the political focus on gay and lesbian identity discourses) in ongoing discussions about gay rights and same-sex marriage in the Caribbean. These debates she suggests, espouse an all-too-easy narrative of European liberalism and Caribbean intolerance, and narrate same-sex intimacies as foreign to Caribbean tradition. This perspective denies a history of Caribbean same-sex sexualities and intimacies, and neglects the impact of historical dynamics of colonial relations on shaping current transnational conversations about sexuality.¹⁵

In challenging a singular focus on the present, Tinsley’s work, much like my own discussion of marronage, calls attention to a long tradition of Caribbean queerness. However, in this thesis I also aim to multiply the scenes of emergence of queer intimacies beyond those discussed by Tinsley. I call attention to various discontinuous temporal sites which evidence strategies and structures of relations based on maroon practices of ‘*feeling and feeling for*’ (2008: 192). In particular I examine how these emerge from moments of genealogical disruption and instances of distance from spaces conceived as home. In Chapter four, I discuss queer marronage alongside practices of vagrancy. My discussion takes the concept of vagrancy from the colonial archives where the term was used to describe flight from

¹⁵ One of the ways in which Tinsley demonstrates the interrelations of coloniality and questions of sexuality is in her mention of the fact that in the Dutch Colonies of the Caribbean, the laws which were passed to punish ‘maroons and sodomites were pioneered in the same years by the same governor’ (2010: 45). These laws also prescribed the same punishment for both these practices. Offenders were to be burnt alive.

the Plantations by East Indian indentured labourers. This thesis thus reaches back to signal moments of coming together by Amerindian and African populations, discussed by Price, as well as examines points of convergence and intimacies in the experiences of Afro and Indo-Caribbeans. While marronage and vagrancy have been considered as temporally distinct practices of movement negotiated in response to regimes of slave and free labour, in this discussion I suggest that these distinctions need to be viewed with much greater complexity.

Chapter four's close reading of Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* examines the novel's representation of vagrancy as well as its relational mapping of queer marronage. If critics like Sean Lokaisingh-Meighoo (2000), in discussing Indo-Caribbean culture, have highlighted indentureship journeys as sites of homosociality, homoerotics, and queer intimacies, Mootoo's novel examines other scenes of queer encounter. Her depiction of recurring practices of flight moves beyond a focus on the dislocation of ship crossings to examine other circuits of movement. In my discussion of Mootoo's work, vagrancy and queer marronage are rendered as departures from home, from structured narratives of continuity, domesticity, and heteronormativity. Yet these departures, I argue, do not resolve into stable alternatives. This thesis thus at once examines at the significance of vagrancy as political practice within the context of Plantation societies, but also investigates other resonances of the term that ensue from its etymology where it is linked to wandering.¹⁶

¹⁶ This discussion extends some of the questions raised, for example, in the work of Rinaldo Walcott. In his essay 'Going Up North: The Limit of Black Diasporic Discourse(s)', Walcott uses the concept of 'detours' as part of his examination of embodied movement, walking and maroon flight via the Underground Railroad as a counterpoint (or indeed extension) to Paul Gilroy's mapping of Black Atlantic movement and the 'chronotope of the ship'. Walcott proposes 'detours' as a 'method for thinking through the circuitous routes of black diasporic cultures' (2003: 31). The concept of vagrancy which I propose, much like Walcott's discussion of detours, moves beyond familiar vectors of maroon flight, but it also urges us to think about practices of marronage in relational terms.

The four main chapters of this thesis focus on four novels which each, in various ways, narrate strategies and sites of queer marronage. However if texts such as Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* and Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* explicitly link queerness and marronage, others like Patricia Powell's *A Small Gathering of Bones* and Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* offer less obvious connections. Yet, in their accounts of queer intimacies, they all narrate maroon practices. Although I focus primarily here on their thematic engagements with marronage, this is not the only connection explored. I also examine how these texts are marked by formal narrative strategies which might be described as maroon. They employ narrative disruptions and detours, temporal and spatial shifts, unexpected interruptions and intrusions which I read as strategies of marronage.

This thesis should not, however, be read as an attempt to definitively outline a queer maroon aesthetic. In fact, I would argue that it more directly offers an exploration of queer marronage as critical practice. I mean this in several senses. Firstly it employs strategies of tracing discontinuous disciplinary locations and temporal moments in search of connections that are obscured or shadowed. In my readings of these texts, I also focus on marginal spaces, reading epigraphs, prologues, and epilogues as spaces which might reveal other meanings. My examination of queer marronage is concerned margins, with guerilla subjectivities and intimacies which are not always visible or legible and subjects who engage diverse modes of affiliation as well as practices of distancing. I trace figures who engage in flight, who lurk in shadows and practice survival though a willingness to make friendships with inhabitants of the wild and who consistently live on the 'frontiers or margins of [...] promise' (Baker 1987: 77). But I also invoke queer marronage as critical practice in another sense. I use this phrase to call attention to an active practice of critiquing that I read as operating in these texts. In their narration

of marronage and queerness, these writers critique the heteropatriarchy of Caribbean nationalisms (Forbes 2005) and raise questions about the lionization of the Maroons in Caribbean nationalist discourse, which is often premised on and operates at the expense of a consideration of the homoerotics of marronage and its queer possibilities. I also read these texts as advancing a critique of the dominance of queer narratives of the Global North. Their discourse of queer marronage represents an attempt to foreground other narratives and practices of queerness which remain marginalized in contemporary queer theory, which continues to privilege particular sites and modes of political action and community dynamics.

Although I primarily discuss four novels in this thesis, it is important to note that these are not the only recent Caribbean texts which outline connections between queerness and marronage. Thomas Glave's allegorical essays (2005), Lorna Goodison's 'wild woman' poems (1988, 1999), Kei Miller's poetry (2007, 2010), Makeda Silvera's short stories (1991, 1994) all reference marronage in their representation of contemporary sexual politics and gender relations in the Caribbean. In discussing these four novels, I do not propose that we read them in isolation from this wider body of recent Caribbean writing. Nor are these particular texts discussed in isolation from a longer tradition of maroon writing. In presenting a discourse of queer marronage I also do not claim to offer an entirely new orthodoxy of marronage, but rather I aim to draw attention to and examine the discontinuous, layered, and precarious nature of marronage evident in these various narrative sites, while highlighting the intrinsic temporal, spatial and relational dynamics of marronage that challenge singular narratives of origin, genealogical and temporal continuity. In outlining these dimensions of marronage I highlight some of the reasons why the metaphor of marronage has proved useful to writers writing about gay and lesbian subjectivities and queerness in the contemporary Caribbean.

While the plantation as historical site of relation is undoubtedly central to understandings of queer marronage and its logics, this study is not solely focused on the past or on historical marronage. In fact it is primarily concerned with how the operations of marronage as relational dynamic in early Western capitalism continues to inform discussions of and shed light on contemporary sexual politics and social relations in the Caribbean at the end of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. This thesis is concerned with discussions and representations of sexual and gender difference and accounts of intimacies which interrogate and move beyond heteropatriarchal norms and genealogical relations. While these texts can be read as intervening in the politics of the present and contemporary discussions of sexual and gender minority rights in the Caribbean region, where, as M. Jacqui Alexander has pointed out, ‘not every body can be a citizen’ (1994: 5), they also frame the discussion of sexual politics within a wider discourse of freedom and self-determination which has been central to the Caribbean narrative. In doing so, these texts offer us a complex narrative of relationships to the past. These narratives do not only invite a comprehension of the present in light of the past. They disrupt and reorient teleological, progressive narratives of time by recalling and foregrounding the persistence of structures of dominance operating in the past which underlie and enable unequal power relationships and varied freedoms in the present. In the texts discussed here, heteronormativity and its regulation of bodies and social relations is situated alongside the regulatory and reproductive norms of the Plantation machine. The relational examination of these regulatory models makes visible the dynamics of power and the complex economies of desire which underlie these systems of relation but even more importantly indicates the queer ways in which people negotiate community and renegotiate belonging in relation to normative regimes.

Chapter One

‘Another Time of Writing’: Michelle Cliff’s *Abeng*

In ‘DissemiNation: Time Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation’ Homi Bhabha invokes Houston A. Baker’s exploration of Harlem Renaissance culture and its “radical marronage” that structured the emergence of an insurgent Afro-American expressive culture’ (1994: 145). Bhabha is primarily interested in marronage as an expression of what he terms ‘doubleness’ (1994: 141). Drawing directly on Baker’s work, he argues that this doubleness manifests itself in the ‘transgressive invasive structure of the black “national” text which thrives on rhetorical strategies of hybridity, deformation, masking and inversion’ (Bhabha 1994: 144). He goes on to link this narrative structure to ‘the guerilla warfare that became a way of life for the maroon communities of runaway slaves’ (Bhabha 1994: 144). By way of further refining his concept of doubleness and examining its implications for narratives of nation, Bhabha offers the idea of ‘double-time’ (1994: 144), a temporality which interrupts the logics of lineage and linearity. Once again, he associates this with marronage and argues that there is ‘always the distracting presence of another temporality that disturbs the contemporaneity of the national present [...] we hear the echo of another use of that word by Freud in his essay “The uncanny”’ (Bhabha 1994: 143). But I also hear in this, the echo of Richard Price’s work. Much like Price, Bhabha links marronage and the uncanny. Whereas Price is

interested in the affective dimensions and resonances of the term (or the ‘uncanny’ as a kind of feeling), Bhabha is more interested in the relationship between the uncanny and temporality. His examination of marronage leads him to suggest that ‘[w]e need another time of writing that will be able to inscribe the ambivalent and chiasmatic intersections of time and place’ (Bhabha 1994: 141).

Bhabha and Baker reference marronage and Blackness in the context of the United States (even while questioning the limits of singular narratives of nation). In extending the focus and resonance of their respective arguments, I want to consider their discussions in relation to Caribbean writing about marronage.¹⁷ This critical manoeuvre serves as one means of acknowledging the ongoing ways in which marronage enacts temporal as well as spatial crossings (moving beyond bounded national ‘historical’ time and space). While not completely abandoning a view of writings of marronage in the Black U.S context, in this chapter, I primarily explore the presence of maroon narrative structures and alternative temporal rhythms and relations in Caribbean writing. Indeed we might read what Bhabha discusses as doubleness as a key feature of marronage and maroon narratives in the Caribbean context. In my own discussions of historical marronage, I have described it as a manifestation of transnationalism within contemporary Caribbean nation states (Cummings 2010). Yet this discourse of duality does not fully acknowledge the heterogeneous dimensions of marronage or its complex relationship to various narratives of group identification (ethnicity or locational politics) at different

¹⁷ The signaling of connections between marronage in the United States and the Caribbean is also evident in Richard Price’s collection *Maroon Societies*. In Price’s book, these connections are never fully explored because of the organization of essays in terms of geographical regions and locations. However the inclusion of essays on both the Caribbean and the United States allow for comparative reflection. Alvin Thompson’s *Flight to Freedom* also explores connections between practices and experiences of marronage in different areas of the Americas. In addition to these texts, which focus specifically on marronage, there is also a tradition of writing which examines the Plantation Americas as a cultural area. Michaeline Crichlow (2009), J. Michael Dash (1998), Nathalie Dessens (2003), Valérie Loichot (2007), all discuss the Americas as a Plantation area.

temporal moments.

If the examination of the relationships between marronage and narratives of kinship, discussed by critics such as Jean Besson (1995) and discussions of marronage and the modern nation state (Bhabha 1994) lead to an understanding of relational duality, my focus on queerness and marronage in this thesis at once invokes but also reaches beyond this discourse of doubleness. In Bhabha's work, his discussion of doubleness focuses on maroon temporalities as a challenge to writing the nation as a coherent 'form of social and textual affiliation' (1994: 140). Yet what remains largely unexplored are the challenges which temporal pluralities offer for writing marronage. The time of marronage is represented as another simultaneous relation that unsettles the singularity of the present. In discussing queer marronage I want to extend Bhabha's discourse of coupling with a more promiscuous narrative of maroon temporal relations and intimacies and examine some of the other ways in which Michelle Cliff's writing has engaged with temporality and with marronage beyond the guerilla narrative structures highlighted by Bhabha.

This discussion is by no means the only attempt at elaborating Bhabha's suggestive discourse of plural temporalities. In 'Time Binds or Erotohistoriography' Elizabeth Freeman seizes on Bhabha's discussion of the *unheimlich* and its inherent suggestion that 'in the postcolony time is always several and any historical moment correspondingly consists of many' (2005: 58). Freeman discusses Bhabha's work as part of her theorization of 'deviant chronopolitics' (2005: 58). Her articulation of this 'queer' relationship to time is best encapsulated in her assertion that 'queers survive through the ability to invent or seize pleasurable relations between bodies [...] across time' (Freeman 2005: 58). Freeman's discussion of Bhabha's work, as part of her examination of queer relationships to time, indicates how his writing of temporality

and marronage not only has implications for postcolonial, national, or for maroon discourses. In fact, her work demonstrates its usefulness for examining queer relationships to time. Both marronage and queerness are marked by experiences of other temporal rhythms and resistances to capitalist narratives of development and nationalist ‘periodizing apparatuses’ (Freeman 2005: 58).¹⁸ But if Bhabha’s theorization of marronage underlines a discourse of simultaneity, Freeman’s discussion of queerness and ‘deviant chronopolitics’ (2005: 58) emphasizes queer connections across time. I want to explore how each of these temporal logics also operates as part of the discourse and practice of queer marronage.

The experience of maroon time as a complex network of relations can be glimpsed in Kenneth Bilby’s discussion of maroon ritual practice in *True Born Maroons* (2006). According to Bilby:

The ritual behavior of Maroons in such circumstances powerfully encapsulates, through symbolic means, a past that is felt to be alive in the present. Performances of distinctive music and language(s) identified with the ancestors, for instance, clearly and dramatically demonstrate this continuity between living and dead, present and past. (2006: 21)

Bilby’s examination of temporal relations between past and present, living and dead and his comments on the experience of discontinuities, as well as continuities, in maroon ritual time, might, on one hand, be read as an expression of Bhabha’s discourse of ‘double time’ (1994: 144). However, I also want to argue that his description of marronage in terms of feeling — ‘a past that is *felt* to be alive in the present’ (2006: 21) — echoes Freeman’s discourse of touching across time.

¹⁸ One way in which this difference is often expressed is in the associations between marronage and ‘backwardness’. Maroons are often linked to a national past and a discourse of kinship, and are seen as a precursor to the modern nation state. Recent studies of queer temporality have also explored notions of ‘adolescence’ (Halberstam 2005: 175) and ‘growing sideways’ (Stockton 2009: 1) as alternative relationships to temporal narratives of development.

My focus in this chapter on marronage as connections across time offers an interesting contrast to the discourse of marronage as queer relationality outlined in the introduction, and which runs throughout much of the rest of thesis, where I attend to gatherings in particular spaces and moments. However this view of marronage as temporal excess is in fact meant to reinforce an understanding of the queerness of marronage as manifested at different temporal moments and contribute to an understanding of the heterogeneous nature of these assemblages. Throughout this thesis, I aim to keep sight of these layered relationships, not only between bodies and spirits, but also between here and ‘not here’ (Brand 1996), and between the visible and the invisible which mark moments and manifestations of queer marronage. In the first part of this chapter I examine Michelle Cliff’s representation of connections across time and her signification of community between the living and the dead. Cliff’s novel *Abeng* signals how temporal relations ‘complexly exceed the present’ (Freeman 2005: 59). These connections are particularly visible in her representations of maroon rituals. But they can also be viewed in her description of various unexpected moments where past and present visibly collide and touch. Marronage in Cliff’s work is represented as a series of unexpected gatherings which evidence the signs and strategies of guerilla maskings and revelations, as well as intimacies between the living and the dead.

In the second part of this chapter I consider Cliff’s novel itself as a site of gathering. In particular I pay attention to Cliff’s references, connections and allusions to a wider body of maroon writing. If in Elizabeth Freeman’s work she directly raises questions about ‘initiations, friendships and contact with the dead’ (2005: 58), her work in this regard also builds on Carolyn Dinshaw’s ‘model of the queer touch of time, of past bodies, palpably connecting with present ones’ (Freeman 2005: 60). But Dinshaw’s work, unlike Freeman’s, also considers how writerly and

readerly desires facilitate partial communities across time. Dinshaw points out how ‘Bhabha’s concept of “affective writing” proves very fruitful for a queer project [...] as it sets up the possibility of contact between linguistic fragments across time’ (Dinshaw 1999: 21). Her own work evidences an affective engagement with Roland Barthes’s writing. Dinshaw argues ‘I want Barthes as member of my community; his non-normative sexuality is important to me as I seek to make a partial connection (not a full identification) with him across time’ (1999: 21). Yet it is the erotics of Barthes’s writing (rather than his sexuality) that she most directly explores.¹⁹ Barthes’ ‘writerly, plural text[s]’, she argues, offer a model of how ‘textual intimacy’ and ‘touching is accomplished through citation’ (1999: 49) as well as through ‘repetition’ and ‘re-enactment’ (1999: 50). In my discussion of Michelle Cliff’s *Abeng*, I examine her textual relationship with Zora Neale Hurston and in particular Hurston’s writings about the Maroons in *Tell My Horse*. The focus on these moments of touching between these women outlines a practice of queer marronage which extends Bhabha’s and Baker’s discussion of maroon textual practices.

¹⁹ In her discussion of Bhabha’s essay ‘Postcolonial Authority and Postmodern Guilt’ (1992), Dinshaw reads Bhabha’s comments on Barthes’s sexuality as a kind of ‘outing’. She notes how, in his discussion of *The Pleasures of the Text*, Bhabha describes Barthes as ‘Sliding off his banquette in a gay bar in Tangiers’ (qtd in Dinshaw 1999:20). This comment she argues is layered onto Barthes own description of himself ‘sitting in a bar in Tangiers’ (Dinshaw 1999: 20). Dinshaw suggests that ‘Bhabha outs Barthes in the first sentence of his essay despite his subjects own complex, not to say “phobic,” “relation to the act of gay self nomination”’ (20). In her work, Dinshaw is interested in Barthes as a figure that resists and complicates discourses of sexual identification. Her interest in him is affective rather than identitarian. In my own discussion of Hurston and Cliff here, I am less interested in questions of their sexuality, although these have proved central to the discussions of Cliff’s body of writing. Rather I am interested in their affective relations and the connections between their ‘affective writing’ across time.

Touching on Temporal Pluralities

Abeng tells the story of Clare Savage, whom Cliff describes as a ‘crossroads character’ (1990: 264). She represents a meeting point of various traditions and lines of relation. Clare is descended from the lineage of her father, Boy Savage, whose ancestors were plantation owners and from her mother Kitty Freeman, who is of slave and Maroon ancestry. She thus inherits a complex racial and familial legacy, and variously identifies and disidentifies with particular sites of this familial heritage. Critics such as Belinda Edmondson (1993) and Lemuel Johnson (1990) have largely focused on Clare’s complicated relationship to family, class and racial histories in their readings of *Abeng*. However, I want to also look at how the narrative touches on and examines her relationship to a community of maroon women and queer men spread across various temporal locations. These men and women are part of Clare’s maroon community. They prefigure, and help to make possible, her act of joining a Maroon community in Cliff’s sequel to this novel, *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987).²⁰

Even before you reach the first pages of the narrative, the two epigraphs of *Abeng* signal the complex temporality and narrative structure of Cliff’s text. One of these epigraphs is a gloss of the meaning of the word ‘abeng’. Cliff tells us:

Abeng is an African word meaning conch shell. The blowing of the conch called the slaves to the canefields in the West Indies. The *abeng* had another use: it was the instrument used by the Maroon armies to pass their messages and reach one another. (1984: 1)

Cliff’s definition of the *abeng* underscores a plurality of resonances. Francoise Lionnet in her discussion of Cliff’s text seizes on this suggestion of multi-vocality in

²⁰ *No Telephone To Heaven* opens with Clare, now older, riding through Jamaica’s Cockpit Country with a group of maroons, dressed in military fatigue. The book is Cliff’s second novel and a sequel to *Abeng*. It tells the story of Clare following her migration from Jamaica to the United States and her subsequent return. Not only is Clare a part of this maroon community who find refuge in the territorial lands that the Maroons occupied during the period of the Maroon Wars (and which their descendants still occupy) but also Harry/Harriet, the transgender figure who physically embodies and practices both marronage and queerness in that novel.

her description of the novel as ““double-voiced”, duplicitous and susceptible to ambiguous reception and interpretation’ (1992: 323). These terms noticeably echo Bhabha’s notion of the doubleness of marronage. Lionnet links this duplicity to the textual practice of glossing terms. The book is framed by the opening epigraph, defining the *abeng*, and a glossary of terms, at the end of the novel, which defines several Creole and Maroon words used in the text.²¹ This discursive strategy, Lionnet argues, evidences an awareness of multiple audiences. She notes that ‘[t]he story [Cliff] tells is meant to inform and educate Jamaicans and non-Jamaicans alike, and she goes to great lengths to demystify the past in order to imagine, invent, and rewrite a different collective and personal history for the protagonist’ (Lionnet 1992: 323). In Lionnet’s discussion, *Abeng* is thus seen as simultaneously engaging in decoding but also passing on messages which require deciphering. The book offers a representation, but also functions as a tool, of maroon guerilla practices of communication.

While I agree with much of Lionnet’s reading, Cliff’s definition of the *abeng* also signals a desire for connection across time.²² Moving beyond Lionnet’s focus on linguistic concerns and strategies of coding and deciphering, I want to examine not only the practices of ‘pass[ing] on messages’, but also what it means to ‘reach one another’ (Cliff 1984: 1). In her use of this phrase, Cliff signals a desire for affective connection. The phrase calls to mind what Carolyn Dinshaw has described as a

²¹ This practice of glossing Maroon terms is also evident in V.S. Reid’s Maroon novel *Nanny Town*. I am not aware of any critical work that has considered these texts in relation to each other. However several of the maroon terms, which appear in Cliff’s glossary, are also to be found in Reid’s. *Nanny Town* was published in 1983, just a year before Cliff’s novel.

²² Lionnet’s discussion of multiplicity in *Abeng* resounds with my own discussion of temporal pluralities offered here. However in linking this multiplicity to form, she describes the text as marked by ‘a textual economy of “small plots” [which] correspond to the economy of “small plot farming” that maroon slaves used to engage in’ (1992: 335). The image of separation contained in this metaphor differs from the sense of reaching across and touching that I focus on throughout my discussion of Cliff’s novel.

desire for ‘partial affective connection, for community, for even a touch across time’ (1999: 21). These affective connections, at various times, function against and in response to the wound of loss and the disruption of lineage. But to touch and to identify across time, as Cliff represents it, is not a restorative act, it is an affective connection and an experience of other temporal relations which exceed and disrupt the present.

Lemuel Johnson, argues that ‘in the resonances of the *abeng*, there enters all the necessary disconnections and connections which, nonetheless, make for affiliation’ (1990: 140). His discussion of the novel’s methods of affiliation advances the idea that ‘the narrative does so by way of a telling collusion and collision of blood/line and name’ (Johnson 1990: 120). He argues that Cliff ‘insists on a vision of history as blood/lines’ (Johnson 1990: 122). But he also outlines the process of remembering bloodlines as a complex one, noting that ‘re-memberings are necessarily multi-layered, given the dense superimposition of tropes and times: Arawak/Carib and Maroon; Great House/Plantation’ (1990: 112). While he insists on a focus on lines, Cliff’s work, as recounted here, narrates a messy, rather than a linear, set of interrelations. Johnson’s attention to the problems of tracing these bloodlines (particularly in relation to the bloody histories of gender and colonial violence) leads a focus on forgetting. In the case of Cliff’s narrative, he argues, ‘genealogy is never fully (re)membered because it finds no effective correlation in Kitty’s [Clare’s mother’s] amnesia and bitter paralysis, or in Clare’s womanhood but callow and arrested consciousness’ (Johnson 1990: 125). The present is described as an experience of amnesia and an arrested consciousness.

My reading of Cliff’s novel is also one that examines it as a narrative of affiliation — albeit one that narrates disconnection and loss. However, I do not focus

primarily on these disconnections. Indeed to emphasize losses and forgetting would also be to miss the temporal collisions, looping, shadows and spirits present in the novel. The forgetting of genealogy and the inability to trace ‘blood/lines’ (1990: 122), lamented by Johnson, leads to other relations to time. It produces alternative modes of knowing which resist ‘the positivism of memory projects and refuses a straight and Oedipal logic for understanding the transmission of ideas’ (Halberstam 2011: 69).²³ Cliff’s narrative of affiliation focuses on affective relations over filial relations. It traces intimacies between temporally distant lives.²⁴ It also privileges experiential proximity over chronologically defined ideas of proximity.

The most visible example of the maroon strategy of connecting across time and its resulting possibilities for affiliation and relation is in the novel’s recounting of the story of Nanny. Kaisa Ilmonen notes that ‘Nanny, the leader of the Winward Maroons and the great war-heroine is the central symbol in *Abeng*’ (2002: 118). Ilmonen focuses mainly on discussing Nanny’s role as warrior and healer. However, Cliff’s novel also foregrounds the fact that ‘Nanny was the magician of this revolution — she used her skill to unite her people’ (1984: 14). Like other writers

²³ Halberstam’s discussion of forgetfulness and forgetting draws on the work of writers like Toni Morrison. In her discussion of Morrison’s novel *Beloved* she notes that at the end of the novel ‘the ghost of Sethe’s child and of all the “disremembered and unaccounted for” people lost to slavery disappears and allows Sethe and Denver to enter a space of forgetfulness, a space where the horrors of slavery do not have to haunt them at every turn, where life can fill up the spaces that were previously saturated with loss’ (2011: 82). Halberstam focuses on forgetting as a willful mode of survival—a political practice. However in Cliff’s novel, forgetting is also represented as result of the pressures of the Plantation and its practices of genealogical disruption and generational violence. In my discussion of Cliff’s work and of marronage, I do not focus on forgetting as a political act. Rather I aim to examine the strategies of response to these moments of forgetting and genealogical disruption.

²⁴ The question of time is important to the form of Cliff’s novel in several ways. Belinda Edmondson has argued that in the telling of Clare’s story, Cliff ‘attempts to construct narratives that map the history of black, white, and mulatto Jamaica, mixing genres of narrative — historical, autobiographical, myth — to achieve a dialectical representation of the West Indian experience’ (1993: 182). Her attempt to understand the form of the book is thus marked by the act of grappling with time. But if Edmondson’s work points to the presence of complex temporal pluralities in Cliff’s writing, her discussion largely focuses on the questions of race and class within a dialectic frame in order to analyze Cliff’s attempts at mapping connections in the novel. I want to explore the form of Cliff’s text not in relation to particular genres, but rather as a privileging of narrative and experiential intimacy over chronological time.

discussed in this thesis, Cliff narrates marronage in terms of practices of coming together. Nanny's unifying role is signalled as discursive effect in Lemuel Johnson's assertion that she 'remains indivisibly present in the intricate weave of *Abeng's* genealogies and disconnections' (1990: 124). Nanny is an ur-matriarch who exists as a point of biological connection but also spiritual connection. Cliff tells us early in the narrative that: 'In the beginning there had been two sisters-Nanny and Sekesu. Nanny fled slavery. Sekesu remained a slave [...]. It was believed that all island children were descended from one or another' (1984: 18). This assertion leads Johnson to argue that Cliff narrative 'makes a point of tracing its genealogy [...] to a foundational memory event (1990: 124). However Timothy Chin offers the idea of being 'spiritually' related as another mode of identification. In discussing the warrior healer woman Mma Alli, Chin argues that she 'is spiritually, if not biologically related to Maroon Nanny' (1997: 137). Her narrative signals that relation to Nanny is not singularly mapped in biological terms.

Cliff's narration of spiritual relations is one response to the condition and experience of loss which often curtails the conscious dimensions (however not the possibilities) of intimacies with the past. In one scene narrating a gathering of people in a Tabernacle shadowed by the Blue Mountains — the site of historical maroon communities and battles — Cliff laments that:

The people in the Tabernacle could trace their bloodlines back to a past of slavery. But this was not something they talked about much or knew much about. [...] They did not know that their name for papaya — pawpaw — was the name of one of the languages of Dahomey. Or that the cotta, the circle of cloth women wound tightly to make a cushion to balance baskets on their head was an African device, an African word [...]. Or that Cuffee was the name of a Maroon commander — the word had come down to them as Cuffy, and meant upstart, social climber. Some of them were called Nanny, because they cared for the children of other women, but they did not know who Nanny had been. (1984: 18, 20)

It is against the background of this litany of loss that the sound the *abeng* might be most loudly heard. Cliff's novel, can be read as an attempt to teach those who 'did not know' about Nanny and to pass on the knowledge of her legacy. The account of the people gathering in the Tabernacle is constantly interspersed with the historical narrative of Nanny. The first passage, which describes her, after the introduction of the people at the Tabernacle, affirms her existence in definitive terms. In the face of this moment of negation and forgetting Cliff writes: 'There is absolutely no doubt that she actually existed. And the ruins of Nanny Town remain difficult to reach' (1984: 14). The reference to 'reach' in this passage might, at first, be read as simply a comment on spatial distance. But it also recalls the glossing of the *abeng*, at the start of the novel, and its signalling of the need to 'reach one another' (Cliff 1984: 1) across areas of temporal, cognitive and even affective distance.²⁵ The time of ritual offers some of the most direct moments of touching and reaching recounted in the novel.

While Cliff laments the fact that the people in the Tabernacle did not know who Nanny was, this ritual gathering becomes a space where, not just forgetting, but also spiritual relations are outlined. The fragmentary accounts of Nanny which accompany the account of the gathering, signal moments of connection and interrelations with spirits. The gatherings are represented as spaces where spirits attend.

During the service — every Sunday evening — someone would be seized with the spirit, and would jump up and fall down moaning or sway faster back and forth. [...] Those who were

²⁵ Some of the possibilities of thinking about distance in other than spatial terms are outlined by Barbara Lalla at the start of her book *Defining Jamaican Fiction: Marronage and the Discourse of Survival*. Lalla begins with the following passage: 'Distance. From the earliest appearance of Jamaica and Jamaican characters, a sense of distance has contributed to the definition of characters. [...] Quite apart from spatial references to the geographical distance of the island world, [...] temporal distances have been variously conveyed but are pivotal to engagement with the past, a definitive feature of Caribbean writing' (1996: 1).

possessed were almost always women. (1984: 12)

This pattern of movement ‘back and forth’, described as evidence of the workings of the spirit, is arguably also signified in the narrative organization of passages which move back and forth between time. In its constant return to the story of Nanny, within the narration of the gathering at the Tabernacle, the text narrates one moment of the past touching the present as well as dramatizes the simultaneity of the present. Yet this contact is also represented as partial in that it is affective rather than necessarily being cognitive. The fact of the difficulty of reaching, underlined in the earlier cited passage, becomes manifested as an experience of ‘partial, affective connection’ (Dinshaw 1999: 21).

The various references to reaching one another, in Cliff’s novel, can be understood in the context of what anthropologist Kenneth Bilby has termed the ‘powerful affective charge’ of the *abeng* particularly in ritual circumstances (2006: 29). Discussing marronage in its historical and contemporary configurations, Bilby argues that the uses of maroon material artifacts, such as the *abeng*, have changed since the colonial era when they functioned primarily as tools of war. While the *abeng* no longer necessarily serves a military purpose (except in ceremonial circumstances), one of its uses, in both the historical and contemporary context, is its affective power. The call of the *abeng* continues to be imbued with affective significance. Bilby’s comments, like Richard Price’s work (discussed in the introduction), are offered as a response to the question of the loss, and in particular the loss of Maroon ‘cultural distinctiveness’ (2006: 29). While the interlocutors in Price’s discussion are those who seek to restore a line of relation to Africa as a point of cultural origin, those to whom Bilby responds, are critics who seek to trace a direct line of succession between maroon identity and Jamaican nationalism and who argue for an understanding of marronage as located in the historic past. Bilby,

instead, outlines a discourse of simultaneous temporalities — a kind of ‘deviant chronopolitics’ (Freeman 2005: 58). He not only asserts the persistence of marronage but also points to ways in which it ‘disturbs’ (Bhabha 1994: 143) the present. He describes marronage in terms of a ‘past that is felt to be alive in the present’ (Bilby 2006: 21). Bilby’s articulation of marronage, in this regard, focuses on affect. Like Price, he understands feeling as important to maroon relations. He argues that rather than reading marronage as simply lost in the narrative of national development, symbols like the *abeng* signify and recall ‘[t]he “intimate culture” that remained very much alive beneath the surface [and which] carried a powerful affective charge. [...] This intangible heritage, this concealed intimate culture continues to be imparted and reproduced in Maroon communities’ (2006: 29).

Bilby’s discussion of the ritual ‘affective charge’ (2006: 29) of the *abeng* is echoed and extended in Cliff representation of rituals and touching (particularly as responses to loss). Cliff narrates moments of touching between the living and the dead, but also between ritual practitioners who convene. The story of Mma Alli and Inez is one key example. Mma Alli is a Maroon character connected to a line of warrior women extending back to Africa. In the novel she is described as:

a strange woman with a right breast that had never grown. She was a one breasted warrior woman and represented a tradition which was older than the one which had enslaved them. She said she was one of the very few of her kind in the New World [...] the slaves on the Savage Plantation respected her greatly. The women came to her with their troubles, the men with their pain. She gave them of her time and secrets. She counselled how to escape — and when. She taught the children the old ways — the knowledge she brought from Africa — and told them never to forget them and carry them on. She described the places they had all come from, where one breasted women were bred to fight. (Cliff 1984: 34)

In light of her role as teacher and counsellor, and ritual healer, it is little wonder then that she is the keeper of the *abeng*. We are told about ‘the *abeng*, that Mma Alli kept

oiled with coconut and suspended from piece of sisal and a fishhook' (Cliff 1984: 35, 36) in her cabin. Her possession of this symbol of marronage is one way in which Cliff firmly links her to a tradition of Maroon resistance despite the fact that she remains a slave on Judge Savage's plantation. While she is of course spiritually related to Nanny, as Timothy Chin points out, Mma Alli is also related to the children of Sekesu. Like Clare, she is a 'crossroads character' (Cliff 1990: 264).

In describing Mma Alli as a crossroads figure, I mean to highlight associations with Legba or Esu Elegbara — the god of the crossroads. Henry Louis Gates has argued that 'Legba's sexuality is a sign of liminality' (1988: 27). Gates goes on to point out that 'Esu is figured as paired male and female [...] or as one bisexual figure (1988: 29). I read Mma Alli as a Legba figure, although Cliff points out that 'Mma Alli had never lain with a man. The other slaves said she only loved women in that way' (1984: 35). Her one-breastedness serves as a symbol of gender 'liminality' that links her to the Legba tradition (Gates 1988: 27). The text also suggests other associations between Mma Alli and Esu Elegbara. Foremost among these is perhaps the fact that like Legba, she is both messenger and interpreter. Her role as keeper of the *abeng* is to pass on messages to the slaves. However she is also represented as facilitating contact with other temporal and spatial locations. Cliff tells us '[s]he gave them of her time and secrets (1984: 34), connecting these enslaved men and women to other times. Yet in the account of Mma Alli, this attention to touches across time is importantly not offered at the expense of attention to the connections and touching between individuals who are spatially gathered.²⁶

The account of the ritual encounter between Mma Alli and Inez is one

²⁶ This is also true of the gatherings in the Tabernacle. In her account of the services and moments of possession Cliff tells us that '[w]hen a sister got the spirit, two white-gowned sisters came forward to make sure that the jumping, or swaying, or fainting communicant would not do damage to herself. At the start of a full-fledged seizure, Brother Emmanuel would signal Sisters Icilda and Girlie to start a hymn' (1984: 12). This pattern of coupling evident in this account is also repeated in the narration of several other ceremonies, including the ceremony between Mma Alli and Inez, where two women are seen to preside.

example of how Cliff narrates marronage in terms of simultaneous connections between those who are spatially gathered as well as temporally dispersed. Inez's story is one which foregrounds various maroon circuits of movement but also pays attention to the unexpected intimacies between New World Maroon peoples at different spaces of gathering. It narrates the material effects of historically located experiences of colonial violence while also recounting instances of queer marronage as alternate logics of relation: temporal excess and genealogical disruption.²⁷ When Inez is impregnated by Justice Savage, Clare's grandfather, while on his estate, she goes to Mma Alli to help her get rid of the 'mixed-up baby' (Cliff 1984: 35). The scene of the abortion is described by Cliff in ritual detail and becomes one intimate moment of touching in the context of maroon ritual practice. In the narration of the ritual, maroon symbols such as the abeng, coconut oil, pawpaw — are used as part of the ceremony and Mma Alli presides in her role as the maroon healer.

Mma Alli kept her in her cabin overnight. She brewed a tea of roots and leaves, said a Pawpaw chant over it, and when it was beginning to take effect and Inez was being rocked by the contractions of her womb, Mma Alli began to gently stroke her with fingers dipped in coconut oil and pull on her nipples with her mouth, and the thick liquid which had been the mixed-up baby came forth easily and Inez felt little pain [...] Inez had to return to the great house. But she went there with a new found power. With Mma Alli she remembered her mother and her people and knew she would return home. (Cliff 1984: 35)

Here maroon practices are once again performed in darkness — a particular time and space associated with queer marronage. However the scene is also framed within and in relation to other temporal moments. The time of relation is not just the experience of double time that Bhabha outlines. It contains and references, other temporalities

²⁷ Like Mma Alli, Inez is associated with a tradition of marronage. We are told that '[h]er mother was a half-blood Miskito Indian, whose people had come from the mountain chain of Central America. Her father was a Maroon, an Ashanti from the Gold Coast [...] Her mother's ancestors had been among the Indians the Red Coats brought to the island to defeat the armies of the Maroons. But they went over to the Maroon side — lived among them and married with them' (1984: 33). In the story of Inez, Cliff imagines marronage as complex process of gathering with new possibilities for intimacies and other relations to time and genealogy.

— the experience of pasts, the present and possible futures are all referenced at once. Cliff tells us ‘[w]ith Mma Alli she remembered her mother and her people and knew she would return home’ (Cliff 1984: 35).

However I want to pay keen attention here to how the *abeng* is used as part of the practice of marronage in this scene as this offers us another image of touching across time — one which evokes the erotics of Dinshaw’s theoretical work but which also demands that we think about touching in spiritual as well as embodied ways. In the earlier account of Mma Alli’s cabin, the text describes, ‘the *abeng*, which Mma Alli kept oiled with coconut’ (Cliff 1984: 35). This image is followed here by the description of Mma Alli ‘gently strok[ing] her with fingers dipped in coconut oil and pull[ing] on [Inez’s] nipples with her mouth’ (Cliff 1984: 35). In thinking about these descriptions, alongside each other, I want to argue that this becomes a moment when the *abeng* is seemingly ritually made flesh and the possibilities for affective touch within maroon ritual practice is most fully, if differently, realized.

The account of this moment finds a parallel in the ritual of transubstantiation recounted earlier, in the text’s description of the Sunday Services at Clare’s grandmother’s house in St Elizabeth. As with the scene in Mma Alli cabin, two women are in attendance:

Finally the two — the sorceress and her apprentice, but she wasn’t a sorceress, just a woman who led Sunday Services — went into the dining room to prepare the communion tray. Slice of fresh loaf of hard-dough bread cut into small squares (this is my body, which is broken for you), and Miss Mattie opened her ceremonial bottle of red South African wine and poured some into small glasses which were put on a tray next to the bread (this is my blood, which was shed for you). Clare’s grandmother sang softly as she made this ritual and would not allow her granddaughter to join in. She closed her eyes briefly over the tray [...] (this do in remembrance of me) [...] The red blood-wine making a mirror in which Clare could detect her own reflection. (Cliff 1988: 14)

Both these scenes, like the accounts of the people in the Tabernacle, demonstrate how Cliff's writing draws on ritual as one way to signal the presence of multiple temporalities and other times. Past present and future are invoked at once, particularly in the last quoted line of each of these passages. However in the narration of the scene in Mma Alli's cabin, I want to also argue that Cliff draws on the 'erotic aura' (Dinshaw 1999: 83) of transubstantiation to explore the affective power and intimacies of maroon ritual time.

In *Getting Medieval*, Carolyn Dinshaw reads transubstantiation as a queer mode of touching across time. She discusses, for instance, the Lollard's claim that 'the groups of men touching this supposed body are themselves thought to include or to be sodomites' (1999: 87).²⁸ In both ritual scenes cited above, Cliff focuses on couplings of women. She thus re-imagines the traditional gender dynamics of the Eucharist as discussed by Dinshaw in keeping with, what I read as, her focus on female maroon homosociality. However, whether or not we read the scene in Mma Alli's cabin as a literal moment of transubstantiation (as the Lollards perversely read the Eucharist), I am drawn to the scene's representation of the transformative power of touch and its suggestions of tactile relations as part of the practice of marronage, and I want to invoke its suggestions of the possibilities of touching and of reaching one another across time as a queer maroon practice.

²⁸ The Lollards were followers of John Wycliffe — a theologian and religious reformer in late Medieval England. They were a diverse group, as Dinshaw notes, but despite their differences, there was 'a coherence in the Lollard's creed' (1999: 57). She argues that 'the doctrine of transubstantiation [...] was the specific locus of Wycliffe's heresy' (1999: 63). Among their ideas was the notion that 'transubstantiation conduces to idolatory' (1999: 58).

Another Writing of Marronage (or 'Looking for Zora')

The other epigraph to Cliff's book is an extract from a poem by the Jamaican writer Basil McFarlane. 'The Final Man' is a poem about time.

To know birth and to know death
 In one emotion,
 To look before and after with one eye...
 To know the World and be without the World:
 In this light that is no light,
 This time that is no time, to be
 And to be free...²⁹

Cliff's glossing of the *abeng* has led critics such as Lionnet to focus on the question of language in the examination of her work. However, the significance of this other epigraph has been often overlooked. McFarlane's juxtaposition of birth/death, before/after, this time/to be, outlines some of the complex temporal pluralities of Cliff's writing. His writing also significantly links them to emotions and cognition raising questions about how we know and how we touch the world.

But I mention McFarlane's poem, not only for the fact that it points to some of the key issues that I have discussed in relation to Cliff's text. Cliff's use of this poem highlights a practice of intertextuality that is evident throughout the novel. In addition to her use of Basil McFarlane's poem, Cliff also cites, in full, the poem 'Maroon Girl' by Walter Adolphe Roberts (1984: 90,91) and a significant portion of Claude McKay's well-known sonnet 'If We Must Die' (1984:89). Her practice of intertextuality also extends to the use of folk songs, negro spirituals and proverbs. The inclusion of these intertexts creates a polyvocal narrative. They also signal the temporal pluralities of the text and its impulse and desire for 'touching', 'repetition', 'citation' (Dinshaw 199: 50) and gathering.

Attention to these moments of citation and textual touching reveal the

²⁹ Cliff only cites a part of McFarlane's poem. The full poem is published in John Figueroa's *Caribbean Voices: An Anthology of West Indian Poetry* (1982).

presence of other intimacies across time in *Abeng*. Mary Lou Emery (1990) and Belinda Edmondson (1993) have already examined the relationship between *Abeng* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, pointing to similarities in the experiences of the protagonists of each of these novels — Clare Savage and Antoinette Mason.³⁰ Alison Van Nyhuis has also examined the intertextual relationship between *Abeng* and *Annie Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. She notes that the ‘narrator and the narration gesture towards reading the novel with *The Diary of a Young Girl*. The narrator repeatedly notes how Anne influences Clare’s life’ (Van Nyhuis 2005: 176). This influence is summarized in the assertion that Clare ‘became compelled by the life of Anne Frank. She was reaching, without knowing it, for an explanation for her own life’ (1984: 72). The use of ‘reaching’ to describe the effect that Frank’s biography has on Clare, echoes Dinshaw’s discussion of the desire to touch across time but also bears an allusion to the gloss of the word *abeng*, suggesting Cliff’s own desire that Clare’s narrative might have a similar emotional and transformative effect—that it might reach the reader.

There are other writerly desires that are evident in Cliff’s novel. I want to focus in particular on her textual relationship with Zora Neale Hurston, which is unique in the context of this book, as it evidences an interest in Hurston’s maroon writings, but also in Zora herself. The book evidences the desire to touch Zora. Much like Cliff’s exploration of rituals in the context of maroon culture as a space where maroons might ‘reach’ one another, I argue the writing of maroon rituals also becomes a space where these two women touch.

In the acknowledgements to the novel, Cliff writes: ‘[f]or some of the details

³⁰ In *Jean Rhys At World’s End: Novels of Colonial and Sexual Exile* (1990), Mary Lou Emery suggests that Clare Savage’s dream about Zoe, in which she hits her with a stone, mirrors the scene of separation between Antoinette and Tia in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Belinda Edmondson also notes similarities between these two scenes, but she builds on Emery’s insights to suggest that Cliff ‘actually reverses the scene so that “white” Clare inflicts damage on black Zoe [in order to] acknowledge the white woman’s relation to power’ (1993: 183).

of this book, I am indebted to the work of Zora Neale Hurston, Jervis Anderson and Orlando Patterson' (Cliff 1984). In referencing the work of Patterson and Hurston, Cliff reaches back to draw on a tradition of ethnographic and literary writing about marronage. Zora Neale Hurston's *Tell My Horse*, in which she writes about the Jamaican Maroons, based on her visit to Jamaica and Haiti in the 1930s, is an often-cited text in maroon studies, while Patterson's socio-historical writings and his novels have been influential texts for contemporary maroon theorists and literary critics interested in marronage.³¹

Cliff's interest in Hurston can be linked to the fact that, at the time of the publication of *Abeng*, Hurston's work was enjoying an unprecedented revival in African-American literature. Alice Walker's essay 'Looking for Zora' published in 1975 had created the conditions for the resurgence of interest in the then largely forgotten work of Zora Neale Hurston.³² Walker's essay not only made a case for the significance of Hurston's writing, but also described in moving and insightful detail her search for Hurston's grave. Her connection with Hurston was actually narrated as an act of reaching beyond the grave to recover her memory.

Jervis Anderson's *Harlem the Great Black Way: 1900–1950* (1982), published two years before *Abeng*, also participates in this Hurston revival.³³ Cliff draws on Anderson's descriptions of Zora in her text, particularly his accounts of the

³¹ In Chapter three, I examine Patterson's influential book *Slavery and Social Death* and its usefulness for theorizing marronage and temporality. Patterson's novel *Die the Long Day* is also part of the body of writings about marronage that I refer to as the mythography of marronage in Chapter two of this thesis.

³² 'Looking for Zora' was followed in 1979 by another essay, 'Zora Neale Hurston: A Cautionary Tale and a Partisan View' in which she further elaborated and contextualized the importance of Hurston's literary contribution and legacy. These essays did much to introduce Hurston to a new generation of readers, and still contribute to her current unwavering status as a literary foremother for many black women writers. Published just a year after the Walker's influential *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (1983) — a collection which includes the aforementioned essays — Cliff's text *Abeng* contributes to the process of the evaluation of Hurston's work and legacy by engaging with Hurston's ethnographic research in *Tell My Horse*, while recalling Hurston as a black women writer in the context of the Harlem Renaissance.

³³ Anderson's book was published in 1982, one year before Hurston's anthropological work *Tell My Horse* was republished, and two years before the publication of *Abeng*.

A'lelia Walker literary soirees during the Harlem Renaissance.

During his time in Harlem, Mr Powell became acquainted with one of the women writers of the Renaissance whom he met at one of A'lelia Walker's salon gatherings. This Zora struck him immediately as a beautiful and strong-willed woman. Talk about "uppity" — Lord have mercy. [...] And her jokes — some raw laughs they had with Zora. But Zora had style — and the woman could write like a dream, Mr Powell thought. Even now in the green depths of St Elizabeth thirty years later, he remembered her smile and her talk and wondered if she was still alive. She must be, and must be going strong. (Cliff 1984: 86)

In discussing Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston*, a title which echoes Walker's essay about Zora, Kara Keeling argues that the film is "'more about looking" [than it is about Hughes]' (2009: 571). In many ways Cliff's text and her discussion of Hurston is also about looking. The passage cited above invites us to observe Zora, looking on with an admiring Mr Powell whose comments on her beauty, her style and her smile frame our gaze. The passage also closes on a note of longing. In its imagining of a time when Zora was alive and a time in which she might still be alive, Cliff evidences what Dinshaw has termed a 'deep desire physically to cross or span temporal divides' (Dinshaw 1999: 50). Cliff's writing in *Abeng* is marked by a desire to reach Zora.

But beyond the erotics of writing Zora (I imagine a kind of joy in the presence of her smile) there are other 'queer historical impulse[s]' (Dinshaw 1999: 1) that are manifested in Cliff's writing, and in particular in her representation of the period of the Harlem Renaissance.³⁴ The episodes in the novel where Zora appears, she is in the company of Mr Powell. Cliff's narration of Powell, like that of Zora,

³⁴ The sense of eroticism and affective connection that often marks writing about Hurston is discussed in Bob Callahan's Introduction to *Tell My Horse*. Callahan writes '[p]erhaps it is a little bit too easy to "just love" Zora Neale Hurston. The admittedly attractive, flashy, flamboyant and outlandish side of Hurston's personality has been evoked often enough recently in a series of articles, reviews essays and introductions to her books' (1983: ix). Callahan himself, aims to focus on the more 'scholarly, intellectually curious and prophetic qualities found in her writings' (1983:ix), but is also, by the end of his introduction, seduced by the charismatic Hurston. Cliff's writing, I argue, is also marked by curiosity and contestation but this is overshadowed by the affective tones and impulses of Cliff's writing about Zora.

situates him in the hustle and bustle of the Harlem scene. He becomes a witness, and a participant in the now well-known homosocial, and indeed queer, networks of Harlem life.

Mr Powell was a lover of poetry. [...] As a young man, in the 1920s, Lewis Powell had travelled to New York City. There he pirouetted around the edges of the Black literary movement known as the Harlem Renaissance. He took with him a letter of introduction to the Jamaican poet Claude McKay, and Claude brought him along to meet other Black poets, novelists, editors. (Cliff 1984: 85)

Although Mr Powell's sexuality is never overtly discussed in the novel, it is alluded to in several moments such as the euphemistic use of 'pirouetted' in the quotation above, as well as in his association with Claude McKay — a figure whom Wayne Cooper reads as 'part of the large but officially repressed homosexual community' in Harlem (1987: 75). Later in the novel, Powell is also named as a friend of Clinton — one of the two male characters identified as 'queer' or 'funny' in the novel. Much like Julien's *Looking for Langston*, Cliff's novel draws on and 'rehearses a subterranean history of a gay identity perceptible from within the dominant history of black cultural production' (Keeling 2009: 569). In her narration of the Harlem Renaissance scene, Cliff calls up for reference 'those moments in that movement in which something queer might appear' (Keeling 2009: 571). If Baker links marronage and the Harlem Renaissance by looking at the aesthetics of its cultural productions and their use of masking, doublespeak, and the subversion of 'master codes', I would also argue that Cliff likewise narrates its forging of intimacies and negotiations of social and sexual networks through maroon strategies of masking and doublespeak. Her use of innuendo and euphemisms narrates the male homosociality and homoerotics of the Harlem Renaissance through strategies of linguistic marronage.

But I am also interested in Cliff's narration of this moment where she seems to write history queerly — by this I mean writing it through association and innuendo

— as it allows us to think historically about encounters between queers and maroons. The story of Mr Powell and Zora opens up a readerly space where, in discussing queer marronage, I can imagine Mr Powell as a queer man visiting a Maroon community in Jamaica in the 1930s. Cliff's novel tells us:

When she came to Jamaica in the thirties to do fieldwork for her book *Tell My Horse*, Mr Powell insisted on accompanying her on some of her journeys into the Maroon settlements of the Cockpit Country. But Mr Powell had not liked her book a-tall a-tall. Just like Zora to pretend that Jamaicans were comical and uncivilized — little better than Pygmies in the jungle; at least that is what Mr Powell felt. Zora accentuated the African customs too much, what remained of them, far too much. (Cliff 1984: 87)

While Cliff draws on the subversive energies of the Harlem Renaissance in the writing of Zora and Mr Powell, she also uses Mr Powell to critique the narrative of (Black) American progress and (Jamaican) maroon backwardness that underpins Hurston's writing. In *Tell My Horse*, Hurston writes that in Accompong, '[t]here is a great deal of lethargy [...] and utter unconsciousness of what is going on in the outside world' (1983: 36). Her comments point to the operations of alternate temporal rhythms in Maroon cultural life, but also demonstrate a reliance on a 'chronopolitics of development' (Freeman 2005: 58) and its markers of capitalistic acquisition as signs of progress. It is within this particular framework of progress that Hurston asserts the backwardness of the Maroons.

But despite these criticisms, Cliff draws on Hurston's writing in *Abeng*, particularly her chapter titled 'Hunting the Wild Hog'. Two scenes from Cliff's novel recall the hunt for the wild hog. In one of the scenes which best highlights Clare's identification with the Maroons, she along with her friend Zoe, enact their own ritual hunt. One cannot help but note the similarities between the names Zora and Zoe. Indeed one might argue that this becomes another way in which Cliff

invokes Hurston in her narrative.³⁵ As the girls set out for the hunt, Zoe expresses some reservation about their enactment of this ritual:

But what we fe do with him when we see him. Wunna gwan crouch down and shoot him inna di eye? Inna di head? Wunna plan fe cover wunnaself wid blood fi mek ceremony? [...] Wunna mus t'ink wunna is African, gal. Wunna mus t'ink wunna is Maroon smaddy. (Cliff 1984: 117)

In the long run, Zoe's hesitation is arguably well founded. The girls end up killing the family's bull (instead of a wild hog) and incurring Clare's family's wrath and punishment. The hunt is seemingly a failure. Clare is also revealed as not a real 'Maroon smaddy' (Cliff 1984: 117). This narrative diverges from Hurston's account of the successful hunt recounted in *Tell My Horse*. However, I would argue that Cliff includes this failed ritual for several reasons. It firstly serves as another example of Clare's attempts to identify with the Maroons and in particular with Nanny. In the account of her participation in this ritual she becomes a transgressive gender figure in the tradition of the warrior, Nanny. The narrator tells us: She was a girl, she had taken a gun and ammunition; perhaps that was forbidden enough. She has stepped far out of place (Cliff 1984: 114, 115). Jennifer Thorington Springer describes her actions as indicative of a 'rebel consciousness' (2007: 44), identified in Nanny but also in several other female characters in Cliff's text, such as Mma Alli and Inez.

³⁵ In one of the scenes of the novel, which follows the event of the hunt, both Zoe and Clare are seen lying by a river. The scene is recounted in the novel in the following way:

This was the first time in her life that Clare had been naked with someone besides her little sister. Another girl. Another female. In her baths in this same place with Kitty each had been clothed. Zoe's naked body was lean and muscled. Her hips were narrow and her thighs long. The patch of tight curly hair between her legs glistened in the riverwater and the sun. Clare's own body was also long. The gold of her legs and arms met the brown of Zoe as the water cascaded between them, creating a shield which served their modesty. They found a piece of Golden Guinea soap in a crevice of a rock, left by last week's washerwomen, and soaped their skin and hair and splashed each other all over until the piece of soap disappeared [...] After their bath, the two girls lay back. Their bodies stretched against each other, supported by grey and ancient rock. (1985: 119, 120).

In arguing that the name Zoe echoes Zora, and recalls the figure of Zora Neale Hurston, I would suggest that we might reread passages in the text, such as the one cited here, as being imbued with the desire to touch the past. These desires and moments narrated between Zoe and Clare and their acts of touching serve as a stand-in for the desire and possibility of touching between Zora and Cliff.

But secondly, the ritual also underlines some of the dynamics of Cliff's relationship with Hurston's writing. In the account of the hunt with Clare and Zoe, Cliff revises Hurston's writing of this ritual as male homosocial practice.³⁶ If in the earlier quoted passage, Cliff is at once drawn to but also motivated to critique Hurston's writing for its representation of the Maroons, this represents another such moment. In particular Cliff's account of this scene serves to revise the unmitigated male homosociality and (hetero)sexism that Hurston narrates as associated with the Maroons and their rituals. Yet in the failure of these girls to enact their own hunt for the wild pig, Cliff also suggests limits to their participation, but not a total exclusion from ritual practice. She outlines the role of women in the ritual of the wild hog in the following terms:

The Maroons turned the hunting of the wild pig into a ritual, searching for the animal only at certain times of the year and arming themselves with nothing but machetes and spears. It was a man's ritual — the women took part when the pig was brought back to the settlement. (Cliff 1984: 112)

If Hurston's account foregrounds the exclusion of women in maroon cultures and rituals, Cliff's narrative in turn urges us to think about the ways in which they forged key roles within maroon communities (as in the cases of Mma Alli and Nanny).

Yet the conversation between Hurston's and Cliff's texts is not wholly contestatory or divergent. In their accounts of the cooking and partaking of the wild hog, they both narrate it as a scene of communal gathering and sharing marked by affective overflowing and the recalling of the past. The scenes they narrate make visible the ways in which the past affects the present and how these different temporalities are enacted in maroon ritual practice. In her account of the ceremony in *Abeng*, Cliff tells us:

³⁶ In narrating her own efforts to accompany the Maroons on a hunt — one which is initially met with reluctance, not least of all, she tells us because she was an outsider. Hurston comments that 'women do not go on hog hunts in Accompong. If I had sense I would not have gone either' (1983: 46).

The open fire was going, fed by the dry stalks of coconut trees. [...] Kerosine tins heavy with coarse salt were lined up outside in which the meat would be ‘corned’. Some of the voices in the yard were raised, offering advice. Others were quiet, almost hushed in observance. Many of the group waited to see what the family would discard, and what they would get for their own tables. (Cliff 1984: 56)

The sense of the gathering as ritual is communicated in the mention of voices ‘raised’ and the use of the phrase ‘hushed in observance’ (Cliff 1984: 56). These serve to describe the actions of the onlookers but also invoke the language of ceremony (‘raised’, ‘offering’, ‘observance’). It connects this particular enactment to a tradition of such enactments. But I want to also suggest that this moment in Cliff’s text re-enacts the ritual scene from Hurston’s writing in many of its details. This passage from Cliff’s novel might usefully be compared to the account from Hurston’s *Tell My Horse*.

Then all of the men began to cut dry wood for a big fire. When the fire began to be lively, they cut green bush of a certain kind. They put the pig into the fire on his side. [...] Everything was now done in high good humour. [...] All of the bones were removed, seasoned and dried over the fire so they could be taken home. The meat was then seasoned with salt, pepper and spices. [...] While it was being cooked and giving off delicious odors, the men talked and told stories and sang songs. One told the story of Paul Bogle, the Jamaican hero of the war of 1797 who made such a noble fight against the British. (Hurston 1983: 51–52)

Both Cliff and Hurston represent this ritual as a space of communal bonding. Like the gathering in the Tabernacle, it becomes a space for touching the ancestors. Beyond the account of those physically gathered, it becomes a scene to recount the history of Paul Bogle, a leader of the anti-colonial movement in Jamaica. It becomes a time to sing songs and tell stories. It becomes a space where the past can be remembered and various narratives recounted. It also becomes a moment when these two women can touch by the glow of a fire across time.

Conclusion.

Much of the discussion in this chapter has focused on touching between women. This focus has been largely determined by Cliff's narrative emphasis on female maroon homosociality. However, I want to close by briefly commenting on Clare's relationship with the queer men narrated in the text. In discussing their presence and relation to Clare, I aim to highlight the complex queer maroon networks which are narrated as being forged through practices and moments of reaching out. Alongside Cliff's narration of female maroon transubstantiation and spirits, she also narrates the ghosts of queer men. They are represented as figures which haunt the present of the narrative in as much as they also haunt Clare's consciousness. The stories of Clinton and Robert — the two gay men narrated in the novel — differ in that both come from different social class and colour backgrounds. Robert is a member of the Savage family. He is also a 'light-skinned man who worked in the governor's office' (Cliff 1984: 124, 125). Clinton is a farm worker and the son of Mad Hanna, the village obeah woman, driven mad after her son's death. However, their narratives are marked by key similarities. They are both gay men who are represented as isolated figures. Their stories demonstrate the importance of maroon practices of gathering and reaching one another as a political and affective intervention in the experience of isolation shared by those who exist on the margins of dominant normative social structures.

Both Clinton and Robert also die by drownings which are represented as the result of homophobic hostilities by their communities because of their sexuality. In the account of Clinton's death we are told:

There was a rumour around the place that he was being taunted by some of the other men and boys and they had left him floundering in the water and gone about their business, while

their shouts of ‘battyman’, ‘battyman’ echoed off the rocks and across the water of the swimming hole. The swimming hole was now named for Clinton, because he had died in it. (Cliff 1984: 63)

If Clinton’s death is recounted through rumours (as Clare later tells us), Robert’s death is met with silence on the part of his family leaving the young Clare to figure out the details and to grapple with his memory.

Robert did what Clare understood many ‘funny’, ‘queer’, ‘off’ people did: He swam out too far in the Kingston Harbor and could not swim back. He drowned just as Clinton — about whom there had been similar whispers — had drowned. (Cliff 1984: 126)

Clare makes a direct connection between both these deaths and her recounting itself is haunted by the memory of other “‘funny”, “queer”, “off” people’ (1984: 126) who might have died in the same way. However I am also interested in highlighting how, in the aftermath of their demise, these deaths haunt those left alive and facilitate other relationships to time beyond linear temporalities. They enact a haunting of the present.

In the case of Clinton, his ghost haunts the countryside, moving up and down, like the ‘army of thousands — literally thousands — called the Maroons [which] moved over the mountains now shadowed at the back of the Tabernacle’ (Cliff 1984: 20). The people of his community we are told ‘knew how Clinton had died and that his duppy might seek them out, so they put tobacco seeds over their doorways to keep him away, and made circles of coffee an salt around their yards to fend off his duppy. They chopped down any pawpaw trees near their homes because duppies could taint the fruit of that particular tree and bring death’ (1984: 65). These rituals of the dead point to an awareness of spirits among them and evidence knowledge of practices of living with the dead.

However, I want to mention Clare’s own practice of reaching out to these

men, and drawing on their memories to negotiate her own awakening desires. Her affective gesture contrasts with the rest of the community's efforts to avoid contact. It also suggests an identification with them which exists alongside her identification with Nanny and the community of maroon women. Towards the end of the narrative, Clare recounts feelings for her friend, Zoe. The uncanny sense of narrative patterns being repeated (as in the case of the two deaths by drowning) is also evident in this episode. Clare's desire for Zoe, her friend of a darker skin colour, rehearses Robert's earlier actions of bringing 'an American Negro' (1984: 125) home to meet the family — a man whom they described as 'not our kind of people a-tall, a-tall' (1984:125) (not only in relation to his sexuality but also his skin colour). In trying to come to terms with her 'queer feelings', Clare turns to thinking about Robert's experience.

Now Clare herself had a dearest friend who was dark, but it would not have occurred to her to place her those swift and strong feelings — largely unspoken feelings — she had for Zoe in the category of 'funny' or 'off' or 'queer' (Where had Robert placed his feelings for his own dearest friend — that she would never know.) They were girls — not men. And it seemed, or she had heard, that 'funny' people were only battymen. Men like Robert and Clinton. [...] Clare had not thought about her feelings for her friend in any specific way — she only felt when she saw Zoe lying on the rock beside her that she wanted to keep her there. [...] If Clare felt anything wrong with her feelings about Zoe and her concern about losing Zoe's friendship — those feelings should be guarded from family, for example — this would have originated in what she had been taught and what she absorbed about loving someone darker than herself. This was where Robert's experience and hers collided. (Cliff 1984: 126)

Clare talks here about 'absorb[ing]' and 'collid[ing]' with Robert's experience.

These descriptions highlight touches and encounters as important to our understanding of relations in the novel. These references are narrated alongside her 'unspoken feelings' and her imaginings of Robert's difficulty in locating his own feelings. Their intimacies are narrated in tactile terms rather than through identity

discourses. She does not seek to adopt fixed identity labels, but instead questions how to describe her desires in that moment. Her narrative is temporally located, in time in as much as it is situated in relation to other moments across time.

The sense of connections and touching across time is narrated as important to an understanding of marronage in Cliff's text. Cliff narrates a community of maroon women who engage moments of touching and, like Inez, they gain strength from these moments in order to survive. However, in the narrative of Clare's identification with Robert and Clinton, Cliff also suggests a similar process of partial affective identification across time as a response to the negation and silence about queer lives and relationships. Cliff narrates both queerness and marronage in *Abeng* in terms of affective connections. She narrates a process of reaching out, reaching back, as central to survival. This process disrupts the narrative of chronological development and bloodlines, and instead foregrounds an intimacy of feeling and identification as essential to both our experience and understanding of queerness and marronage. Queerness and marronage are figured in terms of contingent relations, not always visible, permanent but temporally and experientially negotiated.

Chapter Two

Locations of ‘Not Here’: Re-Mapping Maroon Flight in Dionne Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*

Distance and reaching are configured differently in this chapter. If in Michelle Cliff’s narration of marronage she examines affective possibilities of reaching across time, in Dionne Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*, she uses the spatial metaphor of the junction and practices of maroon flight to examine the possibilities, and the maroon strategies of reaching one another. In this chapter, I explore the concept of ‘locations of not here’ as a means of talking about moments and practices of movement, meeting and ‘finding’ in the text. ‘Locations’ is used as a plural term to announce a concern with both queerness and marronage. I examine how Brand seeks to unsettle these indentitarian locations while (and indeed by) bringing them in contact with each other.

Dionne Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*, is framed between two key references to flight. The titles of each of the book’s two sections, ‘Elizete Beckoned’ and ‘Verlia Flying’, also foreground acts of flight inviting us to pay attention to their thematic and textual significance. The book opens with accounts of Elizete’s flights from Oliver’s estate and closes with the image of Verlia’s flight from an invading army. In between these textual moments are other stories of physical and

psychological flight. The novel moves between and inhabits various geographical and temporal spaces. It traces the meanderings of Elizete and Verlia between Canada and the Caribbean and links their migratory journeys to a history of Black Atlantic movements. Brand's exploration of historical and contemporary practices of flight situates the novel in a tradition of writings about marronage. Yet, as I will argue here, *In Another Place, Not Here* significantly remaps the imaginative and mythographic terrain of maroon flight by moving beyond the trajectories of movement and the symbolic locations that have so far tended to mark narrative representations of maroon flight.³⁷ In this chapter, I trace Brand's remapping of the 'symbolic geography' (Arnold 1994: 9) of marronage and examine how this offers possibilities for conceptualizations of new and varied paths of marronage including movement away from social prescriptions of heteropatriarchy, discussed here as queer marronage.

³⁷ The tradition of narrating the Maroons may aptly be described as constituting a mythography of marronage. I use the concept to signify the fact that the discourse of marronage is marked by multiple sources and sites of telling as well as by an interplay between processes of documentation, creative imagining and ideological re-imagining of historical marronage extending from the early period of colonization to contemporary nationalist and postnationalist representations. I take the concept of the mythography from reading Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name, A Biomythography* (1982) where the biomythography, and by extension the mythography is used as a framework for conceptualizing narrative telling which, includes the consideration of the interaction between oral and scribal traditions and between personal and communal narrative as well as the presence of complex timescapes. In her discussion of Lorde's text Ann McClintock points out:

The neologism biomythography yields a number of rich glosses. Mythography dispels at a stroke any nostalgia for autobiographical exactitude. At the same time the term suggests life through mythography, the life of the future born from the collective refashioning of the past [...] Lorde's refusal to employ the prefix "auto" as the single imperious sign of the self expresses a refusal to posit herself as the single authoritative, engendering voice in the text. Instead, her life story is the collective transcribed life of a community of women - not so much a perfect record of the past as a fabulated strategy for communal survival. (1995: 315)

While McClintock fails to interrogate the function of the singular narrative voice in Lorde's text and the ways in which this destabilizes the notion of a rejection of the 'single authoritative engendering voice' in favour of a communal one, there is much that is insightful about McClintock's reading of the naming of Lorde's text (1995: 315). The idea of the complex temporal economy which the mythography facilitates, for example, is interesting to consider in relation to Maroon identity. In this complex spatio-temporal refashioning that she suggests the mythography potentially allows, the function of survival is foregrounded and linked to processes of subterfuge, re-emergence and recuperations.

Central to Brand's re-mapping is her use of the spatial metaphor of the junction which both facilitates and exists as a symbol of her revision of earlier narratives that locate the mountains as the space of flight and maroon habitation and which plot maroon flight in terms of movement from plantation spaces to mountain enclaves (Chamoiseau 1992; Glissant 1958; Reid 1967, 1976, 1983; Roy 1961).³⁸ In contrast to these earlier texts, *In Another Place, Not Here* narrates 'a continuing meditation between one place and another' (Bush 1998) offering recurring accounts of flight rather than providing any definitive accounts of arrivals or narratives of spatial locatedness. Its detailed chronicling of trans-generational acts of flight invites us to read marronage not as a bounded historical experience or movement within fixed symbolic coordinates, but rather as an imaginative space in which a dialogue between past and present, memory and imagination, oppression and freedom is continually being re-enacted. Rather than offering a strict focus on flight from antebellum slavery, the novel calls attention to the ways in which neo-colonial systems of relations replicate the plantation order compelling continued acts of flight. For Brand's characters, marronage is not simply a historical phenomenon but a mode of response to systems of hegemony and oppression. Physical and psychological marronage are presented as recurring responses to enduring systems of plantation

³⁸ In his discussion of Glissant's work Caryl Phillips describes his early novels as outlining a 'dialectical relationship between hill and plain, forest and ocean' (2001: 173). But while Phillips also discusses these symbolic locations as also being significant in the work of Patrick Chamoiseau, he notes that Chamoiseau's work also represents how 'on these small islands the "maroon" can never truly escape to the hills and form self determining, fully independent communes. The small island rebel must remain to some extent dependent upon the "plantation" for food women and friends' (2001:226). This complex relationship with the plantation is true for most maroon settlements in the Caribbean, even in larger territories. Phillips's invocation of this relationship between plains and mountains is less a reflection on the question of the actual materiality of maroon experience. Rather he further invokes maroon space as a symbol to which structure his examination of the question of language in Chamoiseau's work. He argues that in Chamoiseau's work 'the act of literary *petit marronage* involves nothing less than the restructuring of the French language' (2001: 226). In my discussion of Brand's work and her remapping of this symbolic geography, I read her as tracing this complex relationship in spatial terms which serves to demonstrate the contingent, complex nature of marronage, its passages of flight and return. These contingencies in Brand's writing do not serve to reinforce a contrast between *petite marronage* and *grand marronage*. Contingencies and conjunctions mark the very nature of marronage.

servitude, institutionalized patriarchy, heteronormativity and neo-liberal capitalism all of which produce varying modes and trajectories of flight.

Indeed one of the uses of Brand's text to a discussion of queer marronage is linked to the fact that it does not foreclose the possibilities of flight. Brand offers a complex representation of marronage that depicts these recurring strategies and moments of flight as well as their manifestations across various geo-cultural and political terrains. The affective bond shared between Verlia and Elizete — the novel's main characters, is for instance figured as a kind of marronage. In the narration of Elizete's flight from her relationship with Isaiah Ferdinand and her subsequent relationship with Verlia, the novel establishes parallels between maroon flight from colonial institutions of domination and flight from heteropatriarchal dominance. Maroon flight becomes more than an act of fleeing the plantation. In Brand's work it also becomes linked with movement into and beyond various symbolic and affective locations. In this regard Brand's work resonates with that of Michelle Cliff, Patricia Powell and Shani Mootoo who narrate various maroon tactics as part of the political and social strategies of people who construct identities in diverse positions of relationality to normative heterosexuality. The tactical and constructive possibilities of marronage are suggested in the text's mapping of the diverse affective terrains that Elizete and Verlia inhabit and traverse.

The multiple possibilities and locations opened up by acts of flight are, for example, reflected in the text's rejection of what Greg Mullins terms 'the colonizing epistemology of human sexuality' (Mullins 2007: 1106). By choosing not to categorize Elizete or Verlia through social vocabularies of sexual identification, Brand calls attention to how their relationship constitutes a protean space of possibility that defies the locational politics of identity discourses and its processes of naming. Their complex intermingling of sexual, revolutionary, maternal, sisterly

and anti-colonial desires produce a tale of maroon flight from institutionalized systems which seek to contain; colonialism, heteronormativity and even language and the habitation and negotiation of spaces which might be termed locations of ‘not here’.

The novel’s title, which invokes the phrase ‘not here’, indicates Brand’s foremost concern with these junction locations and the problematic of naming them. It also calls attention to the difficulties of mapping these spaces through its suggestion of a simultaneously existing relationship of difference and fluidity between these locations of ‘not here’ and ‘here’. This relationship is signified, for instance, by the use of the comma that holds both clauses which construct the novel’s title in a relationship of conjunction and disjunction. While there is an implicit contrast, both these locations are never locked in a dynamic of strict opposition. Brand, for instance, refers to ‘not here’ — a space that is by its very evocation relational — without definitively locating or fixing ‘here’. The use of phrase ‘not here’ might thus be read as an act of concurrent naming and not naming. Her linguistic choice serves to destabilize our conceptualization of the stability and the centrality of ‘here’, but also refuses a defined trajectory of expectation captured by the term ‘there’. Rather, Brand invites us dwell in and traverse coordinates of identification and desire that are relational and defined by evolution and movement.

It is for this reason, I would argue, that the novel is not defined by a straightforward narrative progression towards a culminating point of action. *In Another Place, Not Here* is instead marked by what I would like to term as ‘junction poetics’. By this I mean that it continuously veers off in strategic directions. Here and there, past and present are interacting and intersecting locations which are never far from each other, and we often encounter them in unexpected turns. Brand’s narrative technique — her use of this junction poetics — recalls the figure of Eshu

Legba, the god of the crossroads, who in African and Afro-Atlantic cosmology is described as ‘a pathfinder who bridges inside and outside, here and there, self and other’ and ‘represents the divine principle of transversal connection — a meeting of many roads, realities and possibilities’ (Tinsley 2010: 34). This spirit of crossings is evident in Brand’s novel through the constant narrative and linguistic turns and returns as well as multiple temporal and spatial crossings.

In Another Place, Not Here opens with and focuses most closely on the relationship between Elizete and Verlia, who are lovers and sister-comrades in a revolutionary struggle on an unnamed Caribbean island. Also it moves backward in time to narrate the story of Elizete’s maroon ancestor Adela — the one who made the journey across the middle passage as well as moving forward in time to narrate Elizete’s sojourn to Toronto, before returning to Verlia’s dramatic act of flight which chronologically precedes Elizete’s journey to Canada. Yet these shifts occur so seamlessly that they function to create a sense of locations that are intrinsically connected; syncretic and layered rather than distant. As Elizete relates the story of her ancestor, Adela, the story becomes her own; ‘Leave...I...she ought to be a woman her dress tail disappearing towards the dense rain forest of Tamana going to my life, she marronage’ (Brand 1996: 36).³⁹ Past and present, desire and expectation become expressed through a single textual image.

This pattern of crossings between time and space has been noted by critics like John Corr, who have commented on the aesthetics of movement that dominates the narrative and how this adds to the readerly difficulty of the text. As Corr notes:

Brand sweeps the reader through *In Another Place, Not Here*: sentences flow for paragraphs without final punctuation, and dialogue and interior monologues

³⁹ Like Césaire's use of ellipses, discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, Brand's ellipses also serves to map discontinuous time associated with marronage. While this chapter focuses on space and marronage, the question of time, and movement across time is also linked with these crossings in my discussion of Brand's text.

sometimes appear as transcriptions of oral speech. The flow of any given section shifts, often without warning, between past and present; first, second, and third person narrative voice; Caribbean and Canadian dialects; and Trinidadian, Canadian, and Grenadian Settings. (Corr: 2009)

But while Corr is largely concerned with the experiential effects of these shifts for the reader and how this takes us across different ‘affective coordinates’, I want to argue here that these movements might be considered the part of a logic and practice of marronage — a practice marked by continuing and tactics of flight. The reading of the text offers us a thematic as well as an affective engagement with queer marronage — its discontinuous connections and process of movement and transformation.

The prominence of movement as a part of the aesthetics of Brand’s work has led to critical discussions of her writing in relation to metaphors of water (Evans 2009; Garvey 2003; Laramée 2008; McCutcheon 2002) and haunting (Johnson 2004; Mason 2006). These metaphors have proved useful in talking about the movements across time and space that manifest in Brand’s work, as well as the fragmented, elliptical, looping nature of her prose. Critics have understandably turned to these critical tropes as they are prominent motifs in Brand’s meditations on the history of the movement of bodies and spirits across and into the waters and the territoried spaces of the Atlantic. However, in this discussion, I want to explore how the metaphor of the junction — a recurring metaphor in *In Another Place, Not Here* — might help us to understand the discourses and aesthetics of movement which structure the text. My reading of the junction as part of Brand’s discourse of movement mediates in critical discussions of Brand’s writing which have tended to rely on an implicit contrast between territorial space configured in terms of the boundedness of home, the nation-state and identity, and water figured in terms of

movement, de-territorialization and the possibility for new politics of identification. Instead I consider water and transoceanic movement as extensions of the maroon pathways and networks of flight routed through the landed spaces that Brand's characters occupy and traverse.

The junction as a symbol undoubtedly has cartographic associations which might, on the surface, seem to render it antithetical to the more manifestly, elusive, corrosive decolonizing geographies of water that dominate Brand's writing. But it might be useful to consider how Brand works against the processes of fixing and containment which structure cartographic imaginings of territorial space in both *In Another Place, Not Here* and her later memoir *A Map To the Door of No Return* precisely by complicating and layering physically marked spaces. Central to Brand's discussion in *A Map to the Door of No Return* is the notion that the 'door of no return' is more than a geographical location — one that can be marked on a map. On the opening page of the book, Brand writes: 'This door is not mere physicality. It is a spiritual location. It is also perhaps a psychic destination' (Brand 2002: 2). The layered and elusive, multiple sense of place evoked here is also evident in the mapping of the junction in *In Another Place, Not Here* where the junction becomes more than a physical textual location. The junction in Brand's novel is a complex place of intersections and divergences. It is at once physical and psychic space, site of departures and returns, land and water and a place where the spirit and the embodied, past and present meet. It is also a coordinate between the known and the unknown, between experience and possibility where memory, revolution and desire are routed. This complex representation renders the junction a useful symbol for talking about a history of Black Atlantic movements and counter-movements, free and forced, with which Brand is concerned in her writing and the more specific

tradition of maroon flight and queer marronage which constitutes my own focus in this chapter.

In the first segment of this discussion I explore Brand's junction poetics and how flight functions as theme and as aesthetic device in the novel. In particular I suggest that the novel is marked by a series of generic crossings and departures from the literary models and frameworks within which critics have tended to use to frame discussions of the text. Yet this is not meant to suggest that Brand is not conscious of writing in relation to a tradition of narratives about flight and marronage. Brand engages in strategic remappings of the symbolic geographies of marronage. The metaphor of the junction, which is central to Brand's narrative, serves to revise the patterns of movement from South to North and from Plantation flatlands to mountain enclaves which have tended to dominate maroon narratives of flight. In the second and third segments of this discussion I also examine the usefulness of this metaphor of the junction for talking about departures from normative heterosexuality and processes of queer marronage and suggest how the concept of 'locations of not here' which is throughout the text linked with movement into and beyond junctions might be useful for exploring the complex affective terrains that Brand's characters occupy and traverse.

In Another Place, Not Here, Maroon Flight and Generic Crossings

In their discussion of *In Another Place, Not Here*, Christian Olbey and Pamela McCallum argue that ‘[w]ith the allusion to flight Brand locates herself in ‘a literature, a genre, a tradition [...] and that tradition is the tradition of black writing’ (1999: 163). Beginning from this rather broad categorization, they move on to locate Brand’s work more specifically in relation to the genre of the neoslave narrative and its manifestation in late twentieth century writing both within and beyond the context of African American writing. McCallum and Olbey use this ‘generic label’ to describe ‘novels that retell the stories of slavery in narratives marked by postmodern formal innovations’ (1999: 163). They read the emergence of the neoslave narrative as an appropriation of the earlier slave narrative arguing that ‘[l]ike other writers of neoslave narratives, Brand draws explicitly on conventions and narratorial strategies developed by the antebellum slave narrators in order to take up the challenge of representing recent history’ (McCallum and Olbey 1999: 164). Referencing James Olney’s discussion of twelve identifiable conventions of the slave narrative, McCallum and Olbey explore the manifestation of three of these conventions in Brand’s novel. They discuss; ‘flight, the description of work, and the omnipresence of the whip — along with a fourth to which [Olney] alludes but does not explicitly list — the construction of collectivity’ (McCallum and Olbey 1999: 167).

Foremost among these, both in terms of order of discussion and extent of treatment, is their exploration of the theme of flight. Drawing on Olney’s assertion that ‘the depiction of flight from the slave South to the free North is a stock convention of the antebellum slave narrative’, they argue that Brand represents a similar pattern of flight in which she inscribes ‘the South or Grenada as a site of neoplantation labour [...] that Verlia and then Elizete must “run away” from to a free

North' (McCallum and Olbey 1999: 167, 168). They thus locate the migratory movements of Brand's principal characters within a history and pattern of maroon flight from the plantation servitude.

Like McCallum and Olbey I read flight as a major theme in Brand's novel. However, in contrast to their work, I want to suggest that Brand's representation of flight as a major theme and as a formal structuring device in *In Another Place, Not Here*, complicates generic location, rather than serving to ground the text within a specific genre. Drawing on a discourse of marronage as queer act and relationality, I argue that flight and marronage facilitate border crossings, rather than fixing the narrative and generic locations of the text. Indeed if we consider genre as a way of normatively reproducing texts, of inscribing specific textual genetic codes and genealogies, we might usefully read Brand's textual use of maroon flight as itself an act of queer marronage — a process of departure from, and construction of alternatives to, established modes of embodiment and reproduction. Not only does the text represent maroon themes and tactics, but its use of flight and movement as structuring devices facilitates movement within and beyond now-established literary genres and genealogies. Brand's focus on the junction as a primary symbol of maroon flight also serves to queer the generic and symbolic means of representing processes of marronage. These formal and symbolic departures function to perform a process of flight from established representational models. *In Another Place, Not Here* thus resists modes of normative textual reproduction, while complicating easy discourses and narratives of literary paternity or maternity.

This refusal to fully textually embody and reproduce the genetic qualities of a particular literary lineage or genre is evident even in the context of McCallum and Olbey's reading of the text as neoslave narrative. For instance, they describe the novel as an 'appropriation, reconfiguration and redeployment of some of these

nineteenth-century strategic literary practices' (1999: 167). Thus, while discussing the text within a specific generic framework, they also acknowledge its complex relationship to that generic lineage. They also further signify Brand's textual remapping in their assertion that despite the neo-slave narrative's concern with 'retell[ing] the stories of slavery [...] Brand's novel does not explicitly seem to address the history of antebellum slavery' (McCallum and Olbey 1999: 164). Rather, they assert that 'in Brand's deployment of the neoslave narrative [it serves as] a strategic means of building on past cultural constructions of oppression and liberation in order to speak more effectively to contemporary forms of oppression and liberation' (1999: 165). Thus they signal the text's concern with and enactment of departures.

But while McCallum and Olbey appear sensitive to the subtleties of Brand's narrative departures in the passages cited above, elsewhere in their discussion they seem arguably less so. For instance, with specific reference to the representation of patterns of flight in the novel, they map a trajectory of movement from the slave (or neo-plantation) South to a 'free' North. This pattern of movement which they foreground in many ways fails to adequately account for the heterogeneous networks of movement and diverse negotiations of freedom evident in the text. While several characters embark on journeys from the Caribbean to Canada in a pattern of movement from the Global South to the Global North, the paths of flight that are narrated are much more spatially diverse. Elizete imagines flight to Aruba and Maracaibo, while Verlia, in a pattern of flight that runs counter to South–North directionality, flees from Canada to join the revolutionary movement in the Caribbean. These movements complicate the linear trajectories of flight and the movement between specific symbolic coordinates that McCallum and Olbey foreground in their discussion of the genre of the neo-slave narrative and which they

map onto their reading of the novel. Brand's departures from these generic conventions, I argue, represent a refusal to locate the novel solely within a specific generic framework. *In Another Place, Not Here* instead exists as a kind of crossroads text which gestures in various directions at once.

Indeed other critics who have written about *In Another Place, Not Here* have noted its complex relationship to other literary genres. Raphael Dalleo, for instance, in his discussion of the novel argues for a consideration of the text in relation to the testimonio — a genre which Dalleo notes is inaugurated with the publication of *The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave*, a text which connects the testimonio to a Caribbean tradition of writings about marronage. In his discussion, Dalleo points out that central to the production of this genre is the relationship between a folk figure and an intellectual — the latter being the professional writer who is seen to 'give over the space of the page to the illiterate and excluded' (2010: 69) in order for them to tell their own story. This generative model of textual production is evident in *The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave* in which Miguel Barnet records the oral narrative of the Cuban runaway Estaban Montejo. In defining the testimonio, Dalleo argues that it 'speaks directly in the voice of an uneducated, marginalized person who represents the ordinary rather than unique experience and requires the professional writer only because he or she does not have the ability to write the story for him- or herself' (2010: 69, 70). The relationship between the two main characters in Brand's novel — Verlia (a political activist) and Elizete (a field worker) — is read by Dalleo as an allegorical rendering of this symbiotic relationship between the intellectual and the folk. In examining Brand's use of the conventions of the testimonio, Dalleo points out that '*In Another Place, Not Here* begins in Elizete's voice, invoking the testimonial strategy by allowing readers to experience the Grenadian Revolution through the eyes not of an intellectual but an uneducated peasant' (2010: 70).

However, Elizete's strikingly textured vernacular voice, evident in these opening passages of the novel, soon gives way to a range of other voices and other linguistic registers as the narrative progresses. For instance, much of the segment of the novel which describes Verlia's youth in the suburbs of Toronto moves in and out of a third person narrative voice and is markedly different in emotional and linguistic register. Here, movement across spatial and temporal borders is paralleled by narrative shifts and crossings which create levels of intimacy as well as distance. While Brand is seen to strategically invoke the artifice of the testimonio at the start of the narrative, thus situating the novel in relation to writing associated with revolution, this narrative device is quickly complicated and effectively abandoned. Dalleo's discussion rather than convincingly locating the text within the genre of the testimonio, instead highlights a willingness on Brand's part to engage in allusive play with different generic frameworks. The framework of the testimonio, he notes, is deployed by Brand 'in ways in ways which challenge [its] basic assumptions' (Dalleo 2010: 70).

This willingness to invoke, revise, and subvert different narrative frameworks in order to achieve a range of narrative, political and emotional effects, further links *In Another Place, Not Here* to maroon practices of strategic disguise and subterfuge. But this textual strategy also recalls Brand's recurring spatial metaphor of the junction and the spirit of Legba — the god of the crossroads who, as I have suggested in the previous chapter, is variously characterized as a trickster figure and a master of disguise — 'the quintessential tricky shape shifter' (Russell 2009: 9). Henry Louis Gates in *The Signifying Monkey* describes Legba as a 'master of style and of stylus' (1988: 6). Gates, additionally notes that '[t]he Fon call Legba "the divine linguist", he who speaks all languages, he who interprets the alphabet of Mawu [the creator] to man and to other gods' (1988: 7). Legba thus speaks in many

tongues, and is characterized by a fluid complex form. Importantly, despite being often identified through a masculine pronoun, he also complicates fixed linguistic processes of naming and gender classification in that he ‘is not restricted to human distinctions of gender or sex; he is at once [...] ambiguous, contrary and genderless’ (quoted in Gates 1988: 29). This formal, linguistic and stylistic shape-shifting manifested in the figure of Legba is also evident in Brand’s work which throughout moves in and out of different literary generic guises refusing stable formal features and distinct narrative locations. *In Another Place, Not Here* also utilizes a range of narrative voices, speaking in different tongues even complicating fixed distinctions between singular and collective terms of identification. Like Legba, the text’s formal and linguistic dimensions, shifts and movements are multiple, ambiguous and sometimes even contrasting. It is these multiple narrative shifts which makes *In Another Place, Not Here* a text marked by what I describe as a junction poetics — an aesthetic of constant movements, narrative shifts and generic crossings.

These complex Legba-like, narrative crossings which typify *In Another Place, Not Here* mean that it also engages with other literary genres beyond those identified and discussed by the critics cited above. We can for instance map points of intersection between Brand’s text and the genre of the maroon novel — a genre which has been largely ignored in critical discussions of *In Another Place, Not Here* and its representation of flight. I use the term maroon novel here to refer to texts that narrate the experiences of runaways particularly those living in maroon settlements. This genre constitutes a smaller group of narratives within the wider body of writings that comprise the mythography of marronage. While the action of these novels are often historically located through references to moments of militarized action, rebellions, the signing of treaties, or the establishment of new settlements and

moments of death and succession of leaders, these narratives remain fictionalized accounts and imaginings of the experience of life in maroon enclaves.

The relationship of the Brand's text to this genre of the maroon novel is perhaps foremostly evident in the shared focus on experiences of flight. But *In Another Place, Not Here* is also marked by the presence of archetypal maroon characters such as Adela, Elizete's maroon ancestor, who might be read as one manifestation of the figure of the maroon-healer-warrior woman. This maroon character is largely based on the historical maroon figure Nanny of the Maroons, who is fictionalized in Victor Reid's novel *Nanny Town* (1983). This literary figure, with her memories of Africa, knowledge of the healing herbal arts and her trenchant resistance to plantation slavery, also recurs in Michelle Cliff's novel *Abeng* in the form of Mma Alli. But despite these shared figural presences and thematic concerns, Brand's work also evidences some marked departures from several of the conventions of the maroon novel. In particular, I would argue that Brand's treatment of spatial and temporal settings is markedly different and it is this aspect of *In Another Place, Not Here* that marks it as an innovative re-mapping of the genre of the maroon novel and its symbolic maroon geographies.

In Another Place, Not Here is marked by a noteworthy allusive restraint in the construction of its temporal and spatial geographies. The nature of this departure is striking when compared with the historical and territorial locatedness that generally tends to typify maroon novels such as Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of this World* which takes as its point of focus the Haitian Revolution and Vic Reid's narratives which focus on the founding of the Maroon settlements in Jamaica in the seventeenth century (*The Jamaicans*) and the ensuing Maroon wars with the British colonial powers (*Nanny Town, The Young Warriors*). Like these texts, *In Another Place, Not Here* also takes inspiration from a significant revolutionary event of modern history

but this relationship is only signalled through strategic but vague textual allusions and parallels. Mark McCutcheon in his work points to the ways in which allusions to the name of places and people such as the plantation owner Oliver function to link the text to the landscape of Grenada and to the Grenada Revolution (McCutcheon 2002). But the revolution and the place are never named in the text. Brand thus deviates from the conventions of the maroon novel through a strategy of not naming. Much like her referencing of the symbolic space of ‘not here’ in the novel’s title, Brand refuses to fix the setting of the novel in definitive terms. This strategy of not naming means that the novel’s setting can be read both in terms of its historical referentiality, and thus its direct connection to Grenada, but also in terms of its allegorical nature and the ways in which it symbolically recalls and references a longer tradition of resistance and marronage. As Mark McCutcheon argues, Brand’s refusal to name the island setting of the novel means ‘the island assumes an anonymity through which it can stand for the necessity of anti-colonial revolution’ (2002). The textual landscape evokes not just a specific historical moment of the Grenadian revolution, but rather a history of, and a potential for, such moments.

Brand’s text also consciously remaps the symbolic locations which have overtime become associated with the maroon novel and its narratives of flight. In particular, Brand turns away from the focus on mountain dwellings or *mornes* as ‘the domain of the heroic Maroon’ (Arnold 1994: 9) which is evident in a range of earlier maroon texts. Drawing on the socio-historical accounts of the mountains as a space of dwelling for maroon runaways, writers like Victor Reid, Namba Roy, Édouard Glissant, and Patrick Chamoiseau have represented mountain spaces as literal and symbolic sites for the construction of maroon communities. The mountain as maroon space is distinguished from, and narrated in oppositional terms to, the geo-cultural location of the flatlands—the historical location of plantations. In Victor Reid’s

Nanny Town (1983) for instance, this oppositional relationship is presented in the narrator's account of the instigating circumstances of the Maroon wars—the story of how Nanny Town became a War Town. According to Kishee, the novel's narrator:

When the Englishmen turned into our mountains to take our food, we, the Mountain-People, said no! no! no! And boom! went our muskets and skiwee went our machetes, saying no no no to the English. So they turned back down the mountain, down to the flatland. (Reid 1983: 9)

In Reid's spatial mapping of marronage, both mountain and flatland become metonyms of a colonial relational dynamic expressed through references to contrasting geo-cultural terrains of identity.

A similar logic can be traced in the work of Namba Roy. His novel *Black Albino* similarly focuses on the mountains as the space of maroon flight and habitation. Roy sets his narrative in the fictional mountain location of Twin Sisters — a composite rendering of the two famous historical maroon mountain polities located on the island of Jamaica. Roy references both these historical settlements in describing the setting of the novel.

The two mountain ranges now famous in Jamaica and Maroon history — the Cockpits towards the west and the Blue Mountains on the eastern side of the island — were as if they were specially created as spaces of refuge as well as fortresses for runaway slaves. (Roy 1961: 19)

In describing the mountains as 'specially created as spaces of refuge as well as fortresses for runaway slaves', Roy fixes maroon locationality and resistance in terms of its association with mountain geographies. Beyond the act of simply plotting the mountain as the location for maroon settlement, Roy also emphasizes a sense of locatedness that situates the mountains as the definitive space of maroon flight and settlement.

In contrast to these earlier maroon narratives, Brand's ancestral maroon figure Adela associates the mountains with her experience of confinement. When she is

transported across the ocean to the place of her servitude, Adela obstinately christens that place as 'Nowhere' which signifies her overwhelming sense of physical and psychological displacement (Brand 1996: 21). This act of 'unnaming' becomes part of a process of psychological flight as well as expresses her desire for physical flight.

When she look at this place it remind her of nowhere for is not a place that is easy to get out of and it don't look like any other place. Mountains cut all sides, river run like ribbons, rock to one side, the sea near enough to smell and far enough to desire. All the way here, Adela, registering the stench of the ship, must have memorize the road to find she way out and the road was not only solid ground but water too [...] she find she self locked in on all sides and not by nothing human. (Brand 1996: 21)

The narration of Adela's exile negates any identification with the surrounding land or with the mountain terrain. The mountain and the sea are only represented as spaces that enclose and as potential corridors of flight. Brand thus departs from the convention of maroon identification with the mountains foregrounded in these earlier texts. Instead, throughout the novel, it is the spatial metaphor of the junction which becomes associated with practices of maroon flight. This association of the junction with flight might be read as an incisive acknowledgement and inscription of a variety of manifestations of marronage. Brand replaces Reid's and Roy's mountain-flatland coordinates which function to fix colonial/maroon relationality in strict geo-cultural terms of opposition and contrast, with a complex discourse of junction movement which acknowledges multiple and varied paths of flight between locations of 'here' (rendered as sites of departure) and 'not here' (which in the novel become synonymous with spaces of maroon flight). In contrast to the oppositional geographies of the maroon novel, Brand constructs an intersectional, layered, and relational maroon space which exists as a key part of her exploration and representation of maroon flight and practices of queer marronage.

‘Trying to make that junction’: Re-Mapping Maroon Flight

The image of the junction as a complex spatial metaphor occurs most vividly in relation to Elizete’s narrative in the opening segment of the novel. The early scenes of the narrative are replete with references to Elizete’s desire for flight. This yearning stems from her desire to flee the harsh routine of working daily in the canefields and escape a tyrannical relationship with her lover Isaiah. She describes her condition as living in ‘what ordinary...when all it have for a woman to do is lie down and let a man beat against she body, and work cane and chop up she foot and make children and choke on the dryness in she chest and have only one road in and the same road out and know that she tied to the ground and can never lift up’ (Brand 1996: 4). The sense of oppression that she feels and the routine nature of her existence are reiterated by the repeated use of the word ‘and’ in her description of her circumstance. By the end of the passage, the mounting sense of her burden is concretized in the image of her being ‘tied to the ground and can never lift up’ (Brand 1996: 4). This grounding stands in contrast with her desire for flight.

Elizete’s oppressive relationship to place and her sense of routine is also captured by the image of her traversing ‘one road in and the same road out’ (Brand 1996: 4). Her signification of her sense of oppression through the metaphor of the road is noteworthy as all her early attempts a flight invariably halt at the junction — a terminal space much like the ‘door of no return’ which Brand talks about in her memoir. Here journeys encounter the prospect of suspension because of an absence of map or memory to chart the space beyond.

Nobody here can remember when they wasn’t here. [...] I don’t even remember when I stop trying to run away, stop trying to make that junction. [...] Trying to get to the junction so much I forget where I was going. I know every track leading to it but when I get there and see

Isaiah, it come like he was the end of it. [...] I didn't have nowhere in mind except not here. (Brand 1996: 8, 9)

The language of Elizete's description of her journeys to the junction is striking in its use of a profusion of terms of negation. The semantic construction of these sentences, marked by the use of double negations, is consonant with Elizete's cultural and class position as a Creole speaker amply reflected in the lyrical style which characterizes the sections of the novel told in her narrative voice. But it also importantly serves to signal for the reader the frustration that marks her journeying to the junction and the sense of incapacity that this inheres.

It is this sense of being unable to move beyond the junction that becomes symbolic of Elizete's confinement and which conversely inscribes the junction as a space of maroon flight. But even while her physical movement beyond the junction is impeded, it still exists as a site that inspires psychological marronage particularly with the coming of Verlia from beyond the junction. Verlia's arrival opens the possibility for a connection with another place. For Elizete, the junction becomes not just a threshold but also a pathway between the known and the unknown. This significant shift is seen in Elizete's wonderings about Verlia's daily journeys beyond the junction.

I used to wonder who she went home to; watch she walk to the junction in the evening and wonder if her quickness fall away on the transport [...] Soon I was only wondering about she. I watch she disappear up the junction and I wait for she to break it in the mornings. Is nothing that draw me to she but that and the way she want nothing from me and the way she brand new come from another life.
(Brand 1996: 10)

The images of newness and daybreak in this passage contrast with the negations that characterize Elizete's previous encounters with the junction. In the foregrounding of

the act of ‘wondering’, linked to imaginative processes of flight, Brand offers a discourse on the role of the imagination in her fiction much like that she outlines elsewhere in her writing. In an essay titled ‘Whose Gaze and Who Speaks for Whom’, for instance, Brand comments on the necessity of seeing ‘the imagination as transformative, as leading out of the pessimism of colonial discourse, as making new narratives’ (Brand 1994: 168). This view of the imagination positions it as one possible antidote to this absence of map and memory that initially impedes Elizete’s flight.

This discourse of the imagination as a tool for negotiating systems of colonial oppression is arguably sketched out in the textual account of the relationship between Elizete and Isaiah. Elizete, in her earlier quoted reflection, notes that with Isaiah ‘all it have for a woman to do is lie down and let a man beat against she body’ (Brand 1996: 4). The images of passivity suggested here point to a politics of sexual subjugation that structures their relationship which replicates a colonial semiotic of relations. However Elizete also goes on to outline how her psychic journeys (narrated as acts wondering and wandering) help her to negotiate and resist this outward condition of passivity.

Isaiah ride me every night. I was a horse for his jumbie
[...] With that he ride me again. These times I wander, I
turn my head to the wall and travel in the dust tunnels of
wood lice. I cover myself in their fine, fine sand, I slide
through the tunnel and I see all where I have to go and I
try to reach where they live and I try to be like them
because try as I did when I was little I never see one of
them yet only the rifts on the walls. Is so they work in
secret and in their own company. (Brand 1996: 10, 11)

The secret movements of the wood lice become a symbol for her psychic wanderings, both occurring below the surface of the discernable physical world. These subterranean routes of Elizete’s wanderings link her to a history of maroon

flight and guerrilla activity. The references to ‘dust tunnels’ allude to the Underground Railroad and the secret pathways of flight to Canada used by runaway slaves. The evocation of this history of underground movement recalls histories of maroon flight as well as prefigures Elizete’s own sojourn in Canada later in the narrative. In these ‘travels in the dust tunnels’ (Brand 1996: 10) the junction becomes more than a physical location but also a psychic location linking past, present and possibility.

Yet what is interesting to note in Elizete’s accounts of her ‘wanderings’ is that imagination and memory are not placed in an antithetical relationship. Elizete’s acts of psychological marronage involve both imagination and memory. Both these psychic locations are noted coordinates in her wanderings. Her wanderings are routed in relation to her recent memory, which constitutes her personal experience, and the more distant memory of cultural experience. While the passage might be read in terms of its allusions to the Underground Railroad it also references her specific memories of her childhood. Thus her current moment of flight is framed within a history of such moments, all of which impact and inform her enactment of marronage.

While the references to the Underground Railroad links these psychic journeys to Elizete’s later physical sojourn in Canada, Elizete’s paths of wanderings are multiple, rather than singular, and thus resist any attempt to situate them within a linear trajectory of movement between the Caribbean and North America. Elizete documents her psychological flight not only through references to the wood tunnels but also through imaginings of flight to Maracaibo — a city in Venezuela. In her narration of these flights she talks of them as emerging from, but also as alternative to, the prohibition of physical journeys beyond the junction.

If I dig deep enough to cool me and take me mind off the junction. I feel my body full up and burst. All my skin split. Until I was so tired I could not run. I dream of running though to Aruba or Maracaibo. I hear about these place. Yes, Maracaibo. I love the sound of it yet I have never seen it. I dream of taking his neck with a cutlass and running to Maracaibo, yes. I imagine it as a place with thick dense vine and alive like veins under my feet. I dream the vine, green and plump, blood running through it and me too running, running, spilling blood. (Brand 1996: 12)

The reference to digging which opens this account links it to the subterranean passages of Elizete's wanderings in the earlier passage but the direction of flight alluded to here, differs. The paths of flight are not just the movements from South to North. Brand offers a maroon discourse that incorporates South American maroon geographies as sites of desire and movement.

With the specific references to flight to Maracaibo, Brand recalls a history of resistance by early American populations to European colonization. The evocation of Maracaibo might be read as part of a conscious desire to incorporate diverse narratives of anti-colonial resistance in the New World. This reference invites us, as readers, to consider not just the well documented history of Afro-maroon flight on the South American continent to the famous maroon stronghold of Palmares but also a history of early Amerindian resistance to European colonization (Brathwaite 1994). Hans Christian Adamson notes how the very name Maracaibo points to this history of resistance in his narrative of how the place got its name.

In its early days, colonization in Venezuela was conducted by the Welsers, a house of German bankers. The King of Spain gave them a charter in payment for money he had borrowed from the Germans [...] One year after the Welsers took over, an adventurer, Ambrosio de Alfinger sailed from Coro to Lake Coquivacoa with 150 soldiers to found a settlement. He met with opposition from an Indian chief Mara. When the chief was killed in a battle the soldiers shouted 'Mara cayo' (Mara has fallen). (Adamson 1941: 179–180)

Adamson argues that the name Maracaibo commemorates the cry of these warriors. In incorporating Maracaibo in her landscape of marronage, Brand calls attention to a longer historical narrative which resists locating marronage solely within the temporal framework of African enslavement in the New World. The presence of connections, embodied and geographical, is symbolized in the images of vines, veins and blood that run through the passage. These images of blood point to a history of violence but also in their associations with vines and veins invite us to recognize genealogical connections to this site of marronage. Elizete notes this connection in her description of ‘blood running through it and me too running, running, spilling blood’ (Brand 1996: 12). These lines are deliberately ambiguous in their multiple suggestions of connection and movement. The life blood of the place is represented as running through Elizete linking her to a tradition of New World resistance and she is also represented as running through the space spilling blood contributing to the already existing stream — extending the tradition of marronage. Both these images suggest connections but also imply that the connections are at once ancestral and temporal, rooted and routed. They also function, once again, to link Elizete to the junction paths of connection and movement. In this instance she becomes a physical manifestation of the junction — a site through which ancestral experiences of marronage are routed, reinterpreted, and revitalized.

In her narration of Elizete’s flight to Maracaibo, Brand also challenges the masculinist history of resistance encapsulated in Adamson’s narrative. In contrast to the narrative of European male conquest and indigenous male resistance, Elizete imagines and invokes women’s practices of marronage.

I will wear a black skirt shapely like a wing and down to
my toes. I will fly to Maracaibo in it and you will see
nothing of me but my black eyes in my black face and my

black skirt swirling over thick living vine. I dream of flying in my skirt to Maracaibo. (Brand 1996: 12)

Both general and specific coordinates of Brand's project are captured in this image. If Brand gestures towards a more fully realized genealogy of resistance in her linking of various historical sites of marronage, she is also specifically concerned here with situating the black female body within these narratives. She suggests that these narratives are rendered incomplete by the marginalization of women's presence. While she sketches out a long tradition of marronage, she also intently locates Elizete and Verlia and their relationship at the centre of this narrative.

Like Elizete, Verlia also experiences longing for flight. In her case she longs for flight from Canada. The novel offers us a poignant moment that complexly captures this longing in the second half of the narrative which focuses on Verlia's story. The scene occurs after an extended description of the harsh Canadian winter weather, and the sense of enclosure that this produces for Verlia and the city's other inhabitants. In a passage which, like Elizete's references to the dust tunnels, flight by the Underground Railroad, Verlia narrates how '[t]he city shrivels, its plastic skin roughens scabrous and people bow their heads to the tunnels underneath' (Brand 1996: 197). In her reflections, Verlia imagines the city's inhabitants as sharing her own desire for flight. In this moment of longing, she wonders:

Will she become one of those women arrested in the long gaze of better memories even if they weren't better, just not here? Not Here. Here. There is no way of marking latitude or longitude, a black sand seabed, a lagoon of alligators, no discernable inclines or shapes [...] here is leaving, here is a highway and a house inhabited by strangers. [...] Here is a hole in the wall opening to the sea and you...she cannot recognize anything after that...she cannot remember why you...she is standing at a corner of Bathurst and Bloor looking into a store window, looking back from the sea. I'd better run across the street to take the bus to Vaughn. But if only this was here, the sea...well [...] Here is not a word with meaning when it

can spring legs, vault time, take you...her away in a store window and a palmed mountain road, a tunnel in a wall leading to the sea, here she memorized the road and here she forgot. (Brand 1996: 199)

This scene might on one hand be read as an instance of migrant nostalgia, but Brand carefully frames the moment, layers the landscape, and charts a complex relationality between ‘here’ and ‘not here’ to render it a rich image of maroon flight. This passage is stylistically interesting for its collapsing of several distinctions. The boundaries between ‘you...she’ is collapsed to construct a sense of communal exile in the Canadian landscape which is described as a ‘house inhabited by strangers’ (Brand 1996: 199). Verlia wonders if she will become — and in that moment is in fact — one of ‘those women’ who longs for flight.

This moment produces a tangible sense of communal exile that facilitates the blurring of the specific coordinates of ‘here’. ‘Here’ becomes a mobile location, associated with ‘leaving’ and ‘a highway’ and which ‘spring legs, vault time’ and takes her away (Brand 1996: 199). The liminal space of the store window initially configured as a threshold space becomes a junction — a hole in the wall facilitating movement across space and time. The manifestation of ‘the hole in the wall opening to the sea’ in the Canadian landscape collapses both spatial and temporal boundaries to recall and resituate the journey of manacled slaves moving into and beyond the slave holds to the middle passage. The imposition of this image on the Canadian landscape disrupts the narrative of Canada as a space of liberation. The ‘tunnel in a wall leading to the sea’ (Brand 1996: 199) becomes an inversion of the Underground Railroad and an image of flight from Canada. This textual image also collapses the distinction between land and sea as pathways of flight. Both become part of the corridor of flight to a location of ‘not here’. This reconfiguration of the junction as pathway of land but also water recalls the narrative of Adela. For Adela ‘the road

was not only solid ground but water too' (Brand 1996: 21). In a moment that recalls Adela's longing to escape slavery, Verlia also imagines escape from the alienating landscape in terms of journeying across both oceanic and landed pathways.

The conjunction between land and water that recurs in these imaginings of flight is also mapped elsewhere in the narrative. Most importantly it occurs in the symbolic associations of Verlia with water imagery, and the equations of Elizete with stone. But while Brand offers a distinction between these 'elemental tropes that characterize Verlia as water and Elizete as stone' (McCutcheon 2002), we as readers are invited to relate to them not in strict terms of difference, but rather through images of embrace.

I sink in Verlia and let she flesh swallow me up. [...] Her look say, 'Elizete, you is bigger than me by millennia and you can hold me between your legs like rock hold water [...] you dive into me today like a fish. (Brand 1996: 5)

In much the same way that, despite their differing social, emotional and ideological positions, Elizete and Verlia form a close knit bond, becoming intricately intertwined in each other's lives, the relationship between land and water in *In Another Place, Not Here* is imagined as one of convergence rather than of separation. Both these spaces become extended pathways of flight, blending and merging in unexpected ways.

Brand's exploration of a conjunctive meeting of spaces of land and water throughout the text further constructs the junction as a variable space. This variability is evident not only in the passages that map the junction through references to the physical landscape, but also in the textual descriptions of Elizete and Verlia as embodied manifestations of the junction. Like Elizete who becomes an embodiment of the junction in her moment of wanderings and her imaginings of flight to Maracaibo, Verlia is also described in the text as a physical manifestation of

the junction. When Elizete reflects on her early attraction to Verlia, she suggests that she is drawn to her because of this capacity for movement. ‘It was her speed though, the way she could make the junction still standing in front of you, the way she could move fast in she head’ (Brand 1996: 9). Here she talks of Verlia’s negotiation of the junction in terms of psychic movement. The act of ‘making the junction’ initially configured in terms of physical movement becomes a term for the processes of deciphering and strategizing that she observes in Verlia. Verlia’s community organizing, her participation in and her knowledge of the history of ‘the Movement’ and her yearnings for revolution are all part of Elizete’s account of her, and all part of this negotiation of the junction.

Later in the narrative Elizete also likens Verlia to a bridge. She is thus, in these moments of reflection by Elizete, associated with both junction and bridge — corridors of movement over land and water.

A woman can be a bridge, limber and living, breathless, because she don’t know where the bridge might lead, she don’t need no assurance except that it might lead out with certainty, no assurance except the arch and disappearance. [...] A way to cross over. (Brand 1996: 16)

These references to Verlia as junction and as bridge further invite us to see these pathways as related rather than opposed spaces. Yet what is interesting about these metaphoric pathways is their obscuring of destinations, which might be read in terms of a refusal to fix patterns of flight and movement within specified horizons of expectation. It points to a junction sensibility that marks imaginings of flight in this novel. The image of the bridge as ‘a way to cross over’ that ‘lead out with certainty, no assurance except the arch and disappearance’ (Brand 1996: 16) is one that suggests numerous possibilities and outcomes of acts of flight.

The metaphor of the bridge itself also resonates on multiple levels resisting fixity of meaning. Elizete's description of Verlia as a bridge, for instance, might, on one hand, be read as a straightforward declaration of female solidarity and an acknowledgement of the bonds of support that these women share. But this declaration might also be read in relation to the role that Verlia plays in facilitating Elizete's physical movement to Canada in the later segment of the novel. Significantly also, when read in the context of the narrative's focus on the emotional and sexual union of Verlia and Elizete and the novel's mapping of Elizete's movement away from her relationship with Isaiah Ferdinand (narrated in the pages which precede Elizete's declaration), this assertion that 'a woman can be a bridge' might also be read as an acknowledgement of the affective and sexual possibilities and the departures from social prescriptions of heterosexuality that Verlia helps to facilitate. When read in this way, the narrative's obscuring of destinations, inscribed in the bridge's 'arch and disappearance' (Brand 1996: 16), becomes particularly interesting to consider. If as I suggest here, the relationship with Isaiah can be read as a point of departure, then Elizete's subsequent relationship with Verlia I would argue textually comes to signify a space that can be associated with crossing, and with the image of the bridge's arch and disappearance. Elizete's affective crossing becomes an intriguing space of maroon flight and queer marronage — one that resists narrative and symbolic fixity and easy mapping — a space that might be termed a location of 'not here'.

Elizete's reference to Verlia as 'a way to cross over' further enriches her various associations with flight, movement and 'locations of not here', which are repeated throughout the narrative. Not only is Verlia's introduction in the opening pages of the novel described in terms of an arrival from beyond the junction — from

another place — but her final act of flight, which closes the novel, is also figured as a movement into a location of ‘not here’.

She’s flying out to sea and in the emerald she sees the sea, its eyes translucent, its back solid going to some place so old there’s no memory of it [...] Her body has fallen away, is just a line, an electric current...a faultless arc to the turquoise deep. She doesn’t need air. She’s in some other place already, less tortuous, less fleshy. (Brand 1996: 247)

Here the reference to the body’s ‘arc’ echoes Elizete’s description of Verlia-as-bridge in terms of ‘arch and disappearance’ (Brand 1996: 16). In this final movement, like various other movements into symbolic locations of ‘not here’, flight is also closely associated with marronage. In this instance, as Heather Smyth points out, the description of Verlia ‘going to some place so old there’s no memory of it’ invokes the myth of ‘flying back to Africa’ (Smyth 1999: 156) — a central motif of New World maroon narratives of flight from slavery. This description of Verlia’s flight is also notably marked by a language of negation. This continues the obscuring of destinations evident throughout the text, which raises complex questions and challenges for definitively mapping these narrative crossings and arrivals and further inscribes the junction as part of the negotiation and experience of these symbolic locations.

**A Woman Can Be A Bridge...A Way to Cross Over:
Other Affective Locations, Marronage and Locations of Not Here**

Critics writing about the novel have variously called attention to the presence and function of these negations that accompany accounts of spatial and affective crossings, while also alternately trying to make sense of and find a language to account for these movements. This dialectic has been most evident in the attempts to talk about departures from normative heterosexuality, which throughout the novel are variously associated with flight, movement, and crossings. But, as John Corr notes, these associations have also been marked by obscuring of fixed destinations resulting in what Corr describes as various points and moments of ‘affective coordination’ (Corr 2009). In Corr’s formulation, affective coordination is deployed as both verb and noun. According to Corr:

affective coordination,’ [is] a term that invokes a doubled meaning of ‘coordinate.’ As a verb, ‘coordinate’ evokes the kinetic, sensual synchronization of different bodily parts that creates an overall increase in ability (such as when an athlete relies on coordination, instead of muscle to generate power). Brand's writing enables readers to visualize the surprising operations that are made possible when we coordinate with each other in unorthodox ways, creating unexpected encounters that unbalance established arrangements of power. (Corr 2009)

Corr’s discussion of the ways in which affective coordination works to ‘unbalance established arrangements of power’ is rendered in the quotation above in general terms (Corr 2009). But in his close reading of the text, he points to ways in which affective coordination between Elizete and Verlia serves to decentre and unbalance heteronormativity and heteropatriarchy. Yet at the same time he notes the multi-layered dimensions of their engagement with interconnected systems of power: colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and neo-liberalism, to name a few.

Corr thus talks about the act of affective coordination in erotic terms, as well as in broader revolutionary terms, without establishing any strict divide between the multi-layered fields of power in which these acts of coordination intervene. Part of the value of Corr's formulation undoubtedly lies in its signalling of multiple fields of engagement beyond the sexual and the erotic. The multiplicity of these intersecting locations of desire is further mapped out by his rendering of affective coordinate as a noun. Corr argues:

I also deploy the word 'coordinate' as a noun to invoke the vocabulary of longitudes and latitudes, the unit that safely guides travellers and demarcates the territories of established nation-states. My use of 'coordinate' in 'affective coordination' draws attention to the alternative, diasporic mapping that the characters' relationships produce. (Corr 2009)

In his explorations of Brand's text, Corr thus urges that we see the affective intersections between Elizete and Verlia in dynamic rather than fixed or static terms. Their coming together is charted through shifts and movements that establish and produce 'alternative, diasporic mapping[s]' (Corr 2009).

While I agree with much of Corr's reading, in particular his theorization of shifting varied intersectional coordinates, it is also important here to raise questions about the discursive terminology that he employs. His deployment of the concept of 'affective coordination', though infinitely useful, serves to direct our attention away from the rich vocabulary and metaphors that Brand's work applies to talking about these shifts, movements and crossings and the various ways in which people come together to renegotiate orthodoxies of power and create affective and political change. The novel's invocation of locations of 'not here', for instance, offers a rich symbolic narrative term for engaging with the multiple coordinates of desire that people negotiate, which, as Corr argues, are 'alternative, diasporic' and variously

mapped along differing and differential longitudinal and latitudinal points of relation. Brand's refusal to fix these locations of 'not here' in definitive terms renders them supple and effective coordinates for exploring individual and collective renegotiations of regimes of power enacted through varying strategies of flight and queer marronage.

The recurring images of junctions discussed in this chapter also offer an important textual mapping of the ways in which people come together and pull apart and establish other locational coordinates and relational spaces. *In Another Place, Not Here* through its descriptions of acts of, flight, departures, and marronage offers a rich symbolic imaginary for exploring a range of alternative erotic and social possibilities and spaces of relations that are established through diverse intersections with and departures from heteronormativity. Yet this discourse of marronage with its rich metaphors, particularly that of the junction, has remained largely under-theorized in critical discussion of Brand's text.

In a discussion of *In Another Place, Not Here* which outlines some key aspects of Brand's departures from fixed identitarian logics and its politics of recognition, Greg Mullins, for instance, significantly highlights the use of the concept of 'Grace', invoked in the opening passage of the novel.⁴⁰ Mullins explores the use of this term

⁴⁰ Writing after, and responding to, Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth's influential work, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (2003) Mullins points out that '[t]he novel does not engage the language of international human rights' rather, he reads Brand as moving 'towards a new poetics of representation' (2007: 1104). He describes her characters as inhabiting and moving between multiple locations describing them as sharing 'connection to lives that had otherwise suffered fragmentation, dislocation, and alienation' (2007: 1107). Mullins's own approach to reading Brand's work and its mapping of fragmentation is revealed in his assertion that she 'offers an orientation—a guide map' (2007: 1100). He approaches and describes Brand's work in *In Another Place, Not Here* in terms which recall some of her critiques of cartography in *A Map to the Door of No Return*. If his discourse of 'orientation' (2007: 1100) and his discussion of Brand's turn 'towards a new poetics of representation' (2007: 1100), echoes Sara Ahmed's questions of what it means to be 'orientated toward' (2006 b: 3) and against objects in the world and what this means for queer life, this questioning leads Ahmed to veer towards the idea of disorientation, while in Mullins's work, he reaches for maps as a way to re-orient. I read Ahmed's concept of disorientation as part of the terrain of 'locations of not here', its spaces of negation that allow for the exploration of new and unfixed coordinates of relation.

as an important signifier of a rejection of ‘an exterior or colonizing epistemology of human sexuality’ (2007: 1106). Mullins argues that it signals a refusal of the language of neoliberal politics and human rights based activism based on a ‘politics of recognition, which has come to be closely associated with the politics of identity [...] demarcated by lines of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and, more recently, disability’ (2007: 1101). In contrast to these well-reiterated ways of understanding difference, Mullins argues that ‘Brand turns to narrative art to imagine original logics and self-sufficient frames of reference’ (2007: 1108) in order to represent the relationship between Elizete and Verlia.

Mullins’s discussion builds on the reference to ‘grace’ which occurs in the opening passage of the novel.

Grace. Is Grace, Yes. And I take it quiet, quiet, like
thieving sugar [...] That woman like a drink of cool water.
The four o’clock light thinning she dress, she back good
and strong, the sweat raining off in that moment when I
look and she snap she head around [...] See she sweat,
sweet like sugar. (1996: 3, 4)

In these opening lines, the narrative calls attention to how the representation of Verlia’s body is contextually generated. Here the repetition of the term ‘grace’ highlights the search for an appropriate term by Verlia. This process of weighing up this term is followed by the affirmation ‘yes’ suggesting its appropriateness for describing the body that Elizete observes and desires.

Mullins’s discussion of ‘grace’ in the novel intersects with Corr’s theorizations of affective coordination. In elaborating his discussion of coordinate as a verb, Corr points to the ‘bodily dynamism, productive power, and ascendant beauty’ suggested by the term — attributes which he also associates with grace (Corr 2009). But in addition to linking these terms, Corr also extends the resonances of grace by arguing that it ‘defines how these women save one another’ (Corr 2009). He thus foregrounds

not only a descriptive but also a transformative imperative in Brand's use of the term. However, while both Mullins and Corr reference Brand's invocation of grace, Corr's work situates the term within a broader theoretical framework in which it helps to elucidate his central concept of affective coordination. Through its close reading of the text, Mullins's work on the other hand offers keen insight and focus on the narrative discourse unfolding in Brand's text. His work highlights ways in which, according to Alexis Gumbs, 'Brand's work has created a language in which to question and reimagine the economic, gendered, sexualized and racialized circumstances that reproduce an unacceptable world' (Gumbs 2011: 9).

But while Mullins and Corr in turn explore the implications of Brand's use of 'grace', they largely ignore the references to marronage which occur in this passage and elsewhere throughout the text which, as I argue here, help to provide an important linguistic and imaginative framework for understanding and describing the negotiations of affections and alliances between these women outside the discourses of politics of recognition. In the opening passage, cited by Mullins, the desire shared between the women is described as an act of 'theifing sugar', while Verlia's body is described with 'she sweat, sweet like sugar' (1996: 3, 4). Brand thus links their desire and their practices of embodiment to the day-to-day strategies deployed by slaves on the plantations, and their subversive negotiations of the plantation society (1996: 3). The act of 'theifing sugar' invoked here describes the sweetness of their sexual desire and its often 'quiet, quiet' enactments, which the novel suggests are difficult to map (1996: 3).⁴¹ Elizete's desiring is represented here as subversive, as

⁴¹ In her discussion of the phrase 'theifing sugar'--which forms the title of her book—Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley argues that in '[p]lacing my work under this title, I want to open a space to think of creative ways for envisioning both female sexuality which is not a natural "orientation" but a historically constructed understanding of women's bodies [...]both sexuality and landscape emerge as ongoing *processes* that can be interrupted and redirected' (2010:3). This open sense of process, practice and its resistance to the fixity of location and locational politics is part of the mapping of marronage in Brand's novel.

subterfuge, and as marronage. It is also importantly rendered here, in terms that recall the site of the sugar plantations on which Elizete's ancestors like Adela worked and where Elizete herself continues to labour.

The examination of Brand's use of marronage in this passage and throughout the text also serves to highlight what I would argue are some of the shortcomings of Mullin's reading of Brand's remapping of landscapes of desire. While I share his methodological focus on the text as a generative site for imaginative 'original logics and self-sufficient frames of reference' (Mullins 2007: 1108), I would also argue that his discussion of the invocation of 'grace', though largely enabling and insightful, evidences the search for a specific term through which to outline and discuss an alternative discourse of recognition. Yet what becomes apparent when we consider the opening passage discussed above, along with Brand's textual strategies throughout the novel — and in particular her use of the metaphor of marronage — is that, alongside specific terms such as grace, Brand offers us a rich taxonomy of similes and metaphors that help to elucidate the specific context of relations between these women. These at once help to represent as well as call attention to the challenges of representing the complex relationship forged between Elizete and Verlia. These include the various references to junctions, bridges and other paths of maroon flight outlined in the earlier segments of this discussion which help to chart a relational, dynamic between various spaces of flight, movement and location. Like Legba (the spirit of the crossroads which, I argue, is central to our understanding of the poetics of the novel), the linguistic terms and symbolic imaginings offered by the narrative are multiple, complex and resist fixity and easy mapping.

Conclusion

In calling attention to the multiple paths of desire, their arch and disappearance, Brand opens up a space for the representation of desires and relationships that do not readily conform to social discourses and Western terms of sexual identification, such as gay and lesbian. It is important to note that Elizete and Verlia are never identified by these labels in the text. Their relationship, though one that might be socially defined through these terms, contests these labels in its blending of sexual, revolutionary, maternal, and sisterly desires. A discourse of sexual love is supplanted by something else. Brand's gestures towards an acknowledgement of other bonds of affinity shared between these women. In her exploration of marronage and her representation of woman-loving desire, Brand remains infinitely attuned to how those who engage in acts of flight from normative regimes necessarily traverse and inhabit multiple locations between the polarities of here and there — spaces that might be termed locations of 'not here'.

Chapter Three

A Queer Time and Space of Marronage: Patricia Powell's *A Small Gathering of Bones*

In her book *In A Queer Time and Place*, Judith Halberstam argues that '[q]ueer time emerges most spectacularly, at the end of the twentieth century, from within those gay communities whose horizons of possibility have been severely diminished by the AIDS epidemic' (2005: 2). Examining the ways in which different expectations of reproduction — heterosexuality, family, and futurity — shape our relationship to time in late capitalism, Halberstam argues that the HIV/AIDS epidemic raises the threat of a 'constantly diminishing future [which] creates an emphasis on the here, the present, the now' (2005: 2).⁴² Halberstam's affirmative claiming of a logic of diminished temporality, in many ways, echoes Lee Edelman's polemic *No Future* which advocates a rejection of the social and political gospel of reproductive futurism or rather what he terms 'the coercive belief in the paramount value of futurity' (2004: 6). He instead discusses queerness in terms of negativity, the death drive and a 'disidentification from the promise of futurity' (Edelman 2004: 27). But Halberstam also moves beyond Edelman's focus on negated futures, to point out that:

⁴² Halberstam's focus on the present and her assertion of its exceptionality in many ways echoes Puar's concern with the contemporary moment which I have both highlighted and critiqued in the Introduction to this thesis. The consideration of both these texts, highlights a concern with the queerness of the present but also evidences a reluctance to map it in relation to the experience of the past which is challenged by the novels discussed in this thesis.

queer time, even as it emerges from the AIDS crisis, is not only about compression and annihilation; it is also about the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance and child rearing...[q]ueer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those pragmatic markers of life experiences — namely, birth, marriage, reproduction and death. (Halberstam, 2005, 2)

The experience of queer time in Halberstam's work is described in terms of 'bursts', 'flashes' which suggest not only brevity but also intensity of experience. For example she discusses how an alternative relationship to time, which privileges the now, is manifested in the lives of people who 'live in rapid bursts' and 'also often live outside of the logic of capital accumulation: here we would consider ravers, club kids, HIV-positive barebackers, rent boys, sex workers, homeless people, drug dealers and the unemployed' (Halberstam 2005: 4, 10). While not all of those included on Halberstam's list can be said to exist outside the logic of capitalistic trade (I refer here to sex workers and drug dealers), they all share '[t]he diminishing temporality of queer time' which, as Halberstam notes, produces an 'urgency of being [that] also expands the potential of the moment' (2005: 2). In focusing on this potential of the moment, Halberstam points out other contours of the relationship to time, and thus reconfigures and extends Edelman's focus to foreground not only the length, but also the emotional and affinitive arc of experience.

Halberstam significantly links the urgency of queer time to processes of radical and subversive appropriations of space. While the title of her work invokes the concept of place, this quickly gives way in her discussion to a focus on queer uses of space which operate in the construction of '[w]ilfully eccentric modes of being' (Halberstam 2005: 1). According to Halberstam, 'Queer Space' refers to the place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage and it

also describes the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics' (2005: 6). Indeed, an important part of her work is its keen attention to the theorization of queer constructions of space. Halberstam conceptualizes these spaces in terms of active processes of making rather than through focusing on particular locations. The value of her discussion lies in its suggestion of mobile rather than located notions of queer space. In this regard, the references to 'flashes' and 'bursts' used to describe queer time might also be applied to the representation of the nature of these queer spaces; their spontaneous, temporally bound and often fleeting manifestations.

I have discussed Halberstam's work at some length because it offers a profoundly useful point of departure from which to advance a reading of Patricia Powell's *A Small Gathering of Bones* (1994). The title of Powell's novel announces its attention to issues of space, time and death, concerns which thematically connect it to Halberstam's work. Its narrative focus on HIV/AIDS also represents a pivotal point of connection. Set in Jamaica during the early days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, *A Small Gathering of Bones* explores how the AIDS virus along with persisting conditions of homophobia and social violence impact on the brief lives of the main characters, Ian Kayson and Dale Singleton, over the period of several months between February and November 1978. The novel communicates an urgency of the 'now' through a strategy of not identifying the disease by its later given name. Thus it refuses an engagement with the future discursive epidemiology of AIDS. As Lizabeth Paravasini-Gebert points out '[t]he disease would not be named until 1982, four years after the events narrated in the novel; the virus that causes it (HIV) was not discovered until 1983, when it was confirmed that it could be spread through sexual activity and contact with bodily fluids. By then, as we now know, it would be too late for most of the gay characters that we meet in the novel' (2008: 177).

Paravasini-Gebert's lament that it would be 'too late' appropriates a future moment as the ground for evaluation of the experience of Powell's characters in as much as it also serves to call attention to the urgent relationship to time that they each share. Throughout the course of the narrative, we witness the spread of the virus among the gay community, and also the social panic and violence that it causes in the wider society. Even as the narrative closes, the death of one member of the community heralds the manifestation of symptoms in another. The future is seemingly conjured in terms of death and annihilation.

Yet while the overall picture that emerges from the novel is incredibly bleak, particularly with regards to their future prospects, the text also recounts the radical space-making practices used by these men to create spaces of pleasure, solidarity, support, and survival. Out of this harsh social landscape, spaces like Clovy's Bar and Nanny Sharpe's Park emerge as sites that facilitate erotic and social encounters, however brief. Clovy's Bar is the gay social and drinking club frequented by the characters in the novel. It thus represents a space of communal gathering which we can read as a counterpublic to the largely heterosexist and often homophobic culture that pervades the wider society. An even more radical appropriation of space is represented by Nanny Sharpe's Park, a 'cruising spot' where gay men engage in public sex. Powell names this park after two Maroon figures: Nanny, the leader of the Windward Maroons during the First Maroon War, after whom a Maroon town in Jamaica is named; and Sam Sharpe, the leader of the 1831 Christmas Rebellion in Jamaica. In this discussion I argue that it is significant that Powell invokes these maroon figures in the context of this novel. In doing so, she links the politics of claiming space by these gay men to the practice of marronage, which, in the context of slavery, represented a radical and subversive appropriation of space in response to a condition of social death.

Powell's referencing of marronage as part of the vocabulary for narrating the utilization of time and space by gay Jamaican men in the late twentieth century significantly challenges the strict periodization marking Halberstam's work. Thus while Halberstam's work might usefully inform my reading of Powell's novel, this reading also provides a necessary occasion for reassessing some of the underlying assumptions inherent in Halberstam's discussion.

While Halberstam discusses the manifestations of queer time and space and the relationship to diminished temporalities at the end of the twentieth century in terms of exceptionality, Powell's novel invites us to consider its relationality. In this regard, *A Small Gathering of Bones* might be read as echoing concerns forcefully articulated in Cathy Cohen's *The Boundaries of Blackness*, where she contends that '[d]eath is not a new phenomenon in black communities, and, unfortunately, the death of young people is not uncommon in the history and current circumstances of African-American lives' (1999: xi). She situates responses to the AIDS epidemic within a wider framework which acknowledges the ways in which notions of respectability have functioned to facilitate access to resources for some people while the value of other lives, deemed unrespectable, are discounted. In particular she suggests that 'black gay men, black men who have sex with men, black injection drug users and their sexual partners [are] groups we are accustomed to ignoring' (1999: xi) and continue to do so with the AIDS epidemic. Halberstam acknowledges the implied challenge that Cohen's work offers when she notes that Cohen 'shows that some bodies are simply considered "expendable" both in mainstream and marginal communities and the abbreviated life spans of black queers or poor drug users, does not inspire the same kind of metaphysical speculation on curtailed futures, intensified presents or reformulated futures' (Halberstam 2005: 3). Yet this acknowledgement remains marginal to her theoretical articulation of queer time and

diminishing futures. While Cohen's work focuses on black lives in the context of the United States in the twentieth century, Powell's novel narrates gay Jamaican lives, as well as extends the temporal framework for consideration beyond a focus on the last century. Powell's novel invites us to consider how the relationships to time, space, and death evident in the lives of gay Jamaican men close to the end of the twentieth century and their space-making practices might be explored in relation to those lives marked out as disposable within the framework of early Western capitalism, and particularly within the space of the plantation.

This discussion of Powell's use of marronage as part of the examination of the politics of expendability amplifies as well as modifies aspects of the links between modernity, capitalism and the social construction of expendable lives suggested by Zygmunt Bauman's *Wasted Lives*. In Bauman's exploration of the function of this discourse of expendability across time and space, he argues '[s]ince the beginning of modern times each successive generation has had its shipwrecks marooned in the social void: the collateral casualties of progress' (Bauman 2004: 15). Bauman's passing reference to marronage as a way of bearing witness to a counterpoint to modernity's narrative of progress offers another link between marronage and the politics of expendability that provides a useful background to the current discussion. But while Bauman describes those 'marooned' as located in a space of subtraction, or rather what he terms a 'social void', in this discussion marronage is explored as a framework that offers the possibility for alternative constructions of community and a life not shaped by already scripted expectations and capitalistic determinism. Its queerness, in other words, lies in the potential for and the manifestations of what Halberstam has termed 'other logics of location, movement and identification' (Halberstam 2005: 1).

The queerness of marronage, which is invoked here, is also intimately bound up in its relationship to death. In exploring the relationship between marronage and queerness suggested by Powell's novel, I argue here that they both represent radical appropriations of space in response to circumstances of social death. Drawing on Orlando Patterson's theorizations of social death in terms of natal alienation, I want to argue that the lives of Powell's characters are framed by a condition of social death. Beginning from this point of consideration, I suggest that in contrast to Halberstam's invocation of a condition of diminished temporality which maps out a social expectation of longevity, Powell offers a representation of lives lived through a condition of social death and expendability. Such a reading of Powell's novel serves as a useful standpoint from which to raise questions about Halberstam's formulation — not as a way of offering a new orthodoxy of queer time and space, but rather to call for the reinstating of a consideration of the particular within Halberstam's much more general formulations.

This discussion is divided into two main segments. In the first part, I return to the question of temporality to further examine the relationship between queerness and marronage. Building on the work of critics such as Evelyn O'Callaghan and Aparajita Sagar, I call attention to the multiple ways in which, according to Powell, 'homophobia kills' (Smith 1996: 325). A key part of this discussion is a consideration of the condition of social death as a persistent part of the experience of Powell's main characters. Their temporal-scapes, I argue, are shaped by the presence of death — a situation made only more urgent by the advent of HIV/AIDS and its effects. In the second part of this chapter I explore the relationship between queerness and marronage, in terms of space. I explore the tactics of spatialization utilized by Powell's characters as responses to the effects of their experience of social death. Powell's use of marronage as a key part of the representation of queer

time and space provides an occasion for further thinking about the focus on negativity and diminishing futures which often frame discussions of queer time and space. The relationships to time and space in *A Small Gathering of Bones*, I argue, might be understood through a maroon logic of survival — one which is defined not by an unbounded futurity, but rather by a spatiality and temporality which is always contingent and mapped out in relation to a persisting condition of social death.

Queer. Time. Marronage

In *Slavery and Social Death*, Orlando Patterson writes that ‘[p]erhaps the most distinctive attribute of the slave’s powerlessness was that it always originated (or was conceived of as having originated) as a substitute for death, usually violent death’ (1982: 5). Slavery, as Patterson describes it, was a ‘conditional commutation’ (1982: 6). ‘The execution was suspended as long as the slave acquiesced in his powerlessness’ (Patterson 1982: 6). A key element of this condition of powerlessness was what Patterson termed natal alienation; a situation in which the slave was ‘[a]lienated from all “rights” or claims of birth, he ceased to belong in his own right to any social order’ (1982: 6). The importance of this concept to Patterson’s examination of the condition of social death is underscored in his assertion that ‘the liminal state of social death, was the ultimate outcome of the loss of natality as well as honour and power’ (1982: 46). Social death was ‘the outward conception of [the slave’s] natal alienation’ (Patterson 1982: 8). In arguing for his preference, and

indeed the usefulness, of the term natal alienation, Patterson declares that ‘it goes directly to the heart of what is critical in the slave’s forced alienation, the loss of ties of birth in both ascending and descending generations. It also has the important nuance of a loss of native status, of deracination’ (1982: 7). Implicit in Patterson’s theorization of the concept is a concern with genealogy and with reproductive futurity. As Patterson puts it, ‘[t]he incapacity to make claims of birth and to pass on such claims is considered a natural injustice by all people’ (1982: 8). It is this condition that he outlines as the lot of the slave.

Patterson’s discussion of the slave’s existence is, throughout his work, invariably situated in relation to processes of reproduction; both the biological reproduction of slave populations and the social reproduction of slavery. The slave’s present is framed within a wider discourse of intergenerationality. In his theoretical formulation, natal alienation is not just a separation from a place of origin, but also a location on the margins of kinship and identity networks and their narratives which inform and construct belonging. The slave becomes a figure on the margins of a dominant cultural experience and narrative of time — a figure located on the margins of history. Patterson’s work can be read as an elegy to this lost status, in that it scrupulously documents the social death of the slave, but it does not engage in a meaningful way with the alternative outcomes mobilized by this moment of unfixing.

In this regard, Patterson’s work can be usefully compared with that of Hortense Spillers (1987) and Curdella Forbes (2005). Both Spillers and Forbes signal the genealogical disruption that Patterson describes through gender troping. With specific reference to the plight of the captive body under slavery, Spillers argues ‘[u]nder these conditions, we lose at least gender difference in the outcome, and the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political manoeuvre, not at all gender-related, gender-specific’ (1987: 67). Forbes’s work

extends this idea in her theorization of the slave collective through the trope of the hermaphroditic body — a trope which she reads as consonant with the liminal subjectivity of the slave; socially unvested with gender specific roles (an ungendered agent) (Forbes 1999, 2005). In their troubling of the heteronormative gender and genealogical constructs which undergird Patterson’s work, both Spillers and Forbes acknowledge the moment of social death as a moment of alternative possibilities that necessitates and facilitates another state of being. Forbes describes the moment as ‘a kind of shifting comma of possibilities on a dimension at once outside and within known reality’ (2005: 33). Spillers, in turn, describes the moment of unfixing as ‘a rupture and a radically different kind of cultural continuation’ (1987: 68).

Marronage names one dimension of the relationship to time that emerges from the trauma and possibility of the moment of social death. Maroon society was, in its earliest configuration, forged out of this violent disruption of generational reproduction and thus represented a new relationship to time that emphasized the contingency and strategic possibilities of the moment. Accounts of early maroon communities, such as that offered by Kenneth Bilby, foreground the ‘heterogeneity and cultural synthesis’ (1994: 15) that marked these spaces.⁴³ People who had before slavery belonged to different tribal and kinship networks came together in this new time and space of marronage forming strategic military, social and sexual networks of relations. The sense of temporal disruption and an ensuing ‘radically different kind of cultural continuation’ (Spillers 1987: 68) is captured in the comments of one anonymous eighteenth-century observer.

these small bodies were composed of negroes of different
countrys and of different manners and customs in Guinea
and often verry opposite and att great variance with one
another and when in time afterwards they became numerous

⁴³ This relationship to time can also be marked in several of the essays discussed in Richard Price’s book *Maroon Societies*.

(for all of these companies endeavoured to corrupt and enveigle from the plantations and were ready to receive their respective countrymen) they had many bloody battles with one another. (quoted in Kopytoff 1978: 295–96)

This account primarily describes marronage in terms of a discourse of violence, constructing it as a violent threat to plantation society and to its own continuity. It at once signals and negates the threat that maroon society represented to colonial authority. This focus on violence represents part of the racial construction of otherness which framed several early accounts of Maroon societies (Edwards 1793; Dallas 1803; Long 1801). But the tension between the applied logic of accretion evident in the quotation above and the, albeit paradoxical, prophecy of doom bears witness to the politics of contingency which marked maroon community formation. This contingency, I would argue, represents part of the strategic configuration of marronage which locates it within the framework of a break from genealogy, ‘manners and customs’; thus not bounded by firm allegiances with the past, but neither fully inhabiting any stable promise of futurity. It also frames marronage as alternative logic to the accumulative logic of capitalism that undergirded plantation society.

This tactic of contingency and transience, and the impermanence of maroon settlements, were often manifested as a response to the militarized opposition and violence advanced by colonial authority. As Richard Price points out in *Maroon Societies*, maroon communities ‘seemed to appear almost as quickly as the old ones were exterminated... right up to final Emancipation’ (1996: 4). Barbara Kopytoff (1978) similarly notes how small Maroon groups, to ensure their survival from military attack and to make use of limited natural resources, often formed strategic alliances, variously merging and seceding with other small groups as well as with larger maroon polities.

But as Boulou Ebanda de B'éri argues, this pattern of transience was also part of the logic of marronage. de B'éri notes that 'Marrons (Maroons) were constantly on the move [...] because the Maroons' primary tactic was to disappear as soon as they achieved their goals' (2008: 200). While he focuses on movement as an organizing logic and strategy (linking it to discussions of Black counter-cultures such as Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*), in the context of this discussion, we might usefully re-define the attributes he notes in terms of temporal schemas. Maroon communities were transient spaces of existence where people constructed important and useful though not always permanent support networks and alliances. Thus while marronage was forged out of a break with lineage, 'manners and customs', it also represented an alternative configuration to (though importantly not a rejection of) a narrative of futurity. The time of marronage that I am describing here is one that is contingent, in that it is not linked to an unbroken ancestral genealogical past, nor is it defined by an unbounded futurity, but is one that is always eked out in relation to a present which is itself defined by crisis.

It is this time of marronage which Patricia Powell invokes in her representation of the lives of the main characters in *A Small Gathering of Bones*. Even as the futures of Ian, Dale, and Nevin are hemmed in by the spectre of disease, they also experience the impact of social death alienating them (in symbolic and material terms) from ancestral connections. Powell's novel vividly captures how the general social hysteria about the new mysterious disease, as well as the pervading social views about homosexuality, served to isolate these characters from essential family networks and social systems of support. In light of this experience of alienation, the novel documents their strategic, meaningful attempts, often with varying degrees of success, to construct alternative alliances and communities of solidarity and identification outside of family units and genealogical bonds.

Of Powell's main characters, this process of natal alienation is most vividly dramatized in the narrative of Ian Kaysen — the character who throughout the novel most displays symptoms of the unnamed disease. In the opening segment of the text we learn both of Ian's illness and of his isolation from his mother. The first page describes Ian's 'offensive dry cough', underscoring its unusual nature. The resulting concern it elicits from his friend and now caregiver, Dale Singleton, through whose perspective much of the narrative is focused, serves to shape the reader's sense of dread and the underlying sense of urgency which informs the narrative. Dale describes Ian's cough in the following way:

[I]t wasn't just any ordinary coughing that start off with a tickling at the back of the throat and finish off a little later with a few ke-hem, ke-hem, a harsh nose-blow and a sound wipe. It wasn't the kind either that would retreat with a tall glass of water, two aspirin or even a mug full of busy tea steamed for several hours. It was like the devil from hell inside him want to come out, but the walls of his throat it seems, just too narrow. (Powell 1994: 1)

In narrating Ian's symptoms, Dale underscores its seeming exceptionality by pointing to the inability of both formal and folk medicinal techniques to offer relief. Neither aspirins nor the busy tea ease his cough. The sense of a pending, almost inevitable, demise is further suggested by the apocalyptic reference in the final sentence of the quotation. This reference to 'the devil from hell inside him' serves to frame the account of his symptoms in relation to the discourse of panic, fear, and condemnation attached to the disease in its earliest manifestations (Powell 1994: 1). This reference most notably echoes the fundamentalist religious rhetoric that circulated in the years subsequent to the onset of the disease, which in the absence of medical answers served to characterize HIV/AIDS as a punishment visited on gay men for the sin of their indulgence in homosexuality.

This religious rhetoric of damnation is most fervently articulated in the novel by Mrs Kaysen, Ian's mother. Her abhorrence and condemnation of homosexuality contributes to an estrangement between mother and son which functions as a major tension in the narrative. When Mrs Kaysen learns of Ian's homosexuality her response quickly grows from disapproval to judgement.

Mrs Kaysen didn't have any merriment left in her heart when she find out Easter gone that the lawyer she used to hear so much about was starting to court Ian... It was Mr's Kaysen's birthday. Enclosed in the same gift wrapped box with the snow white silk evening dress... was a type-written letter to his mother explaining the state of his heart where men were concerned. (Powell 1994: 20)

Her disapproval is undeniably signalled in her burning of this letter. The narrative recounts Ian's trauma captured by the image of him 'whimpering softly, thumb and forefinger tenderly caressing ashes from a small white envelope that had [...] the letter the mother burn to cinders and send back' (1994: 20). The encounter between mother and son, which follows this episode results in an unequivocal declaration of judgement on the part of Mrs Kaysen:

I am not your mother... I don't know who you are. So please go[...] I never did like you from the beginning. Miss Iris couldn't get you out. Twist up yourself inside me womb like you plan to stay. Them did have to force cow-itch tea down me throat to get you to budge. Even then you were no damn good. Should've followed me heart and put a blasted end to you then. (1994: 21, 22)

Her pronouncement of his banishment is offered here in strident, definitive terms. The opening words of her declaration, 'I am not your mother', stands as a direct proclamation of his natal alienation from family ties and connections. It serves to dislocate him from genealogical belonging. In her recounting of the events surrounding his delivery she also retroactively locates the moment of

disidentification at the very moment of his birth, thus revising all claims to belonging. Her narration of his birth frames it as a birth into social death.

This declaration of banishment is also significantly accompanied by a pronouncement of his expendability: ‘Even then you were no damn good’ (Powell 1994: 22). Her statement is at once an evaluation of his moral goodness, as seen through her eyes, as it is a statement of his social worth. To borrow Zygmunt Bauman’s term he is declared as ‘human waste’ (2004: 5). Ian’s social expendability, as articulated by Mrs Kaysen, is also linked to the fact of reproduction. It is both the difficulty of giving birth to him, described here, and his failure to produce an offspring (unlike his brother Courtney), invoked later in the text, that combine to render him socially expendable and ‘no damn good’ (Powell 1994: 22).

Mrs Kaysen’s declaration of judgement is only reinforced later when Dale visits to inform her of her son’s deteriorating medical condition. When Ian collapses for the first time and is believed to be suffering from lung failure, it is Dale who is left to take care of his medical arrangements. Convinced that his family should be informed, he visits Mrs Kaysen. Her unsympathetic response to Dale’s news movingly underscores her views of the link between action and consequence, between homosexuality and punishment, and concretizes the fact of Ian’s natal alienation:

‘Well Mister Singleton,’ she start to walk out towards the gate, swaying from side to side wide hips inside the sleeveless cotton frock. Plenty people don’t know it, but take it as I tell you. I only have two children left. Courtney and Andrea.’ ‘Mam?’ She did have her face close up to Dale’s. The milk curdle up in his throat. Him shut him eyes tight and swallow it down. ‘Courtney marry now three years and give me a nice granddaughter seven months ago. Andrea still finishing her studies.’ She pause [...] ‘When your child choose a course God didn’t cut out for him, you dish him dirt.’ Her voice take on a dull ring. ‘You wash your hands clean. You banish him from your life.’ ‘But him lungs collapse. Him in intensive care,’ Dale tell her, adamant, not certain what propelled him out there in the first place,

what him was hoping to accomplish. But she'd already turn her back and was walking towards the house slowly. 'Banishment, me son, banishment.' She whisper it over and over.
(1994: 37)

The terms of Mrs Kaysen's final declaration invokes both the religious discourse that informs her judgement, as well as the legal discourse that Patterson references in his articulation of the definition of social death. Ian's punishment is an act of banishment. Like the natively alienated slave that Patterson describes, he is rendered an estranged subject, caught between life and death, bereft of connections, and powerless. As Alison Donnell puts it, Mrs Kaysen '[draws] a clear line placing Ian outside of family, society and God' (2006: 229). This fact of banishment by his mother, and the attempts at reconnection initiated by Ian, becomes a source of narrative tension as the novel unfolds. The narrative recounts the Birthday, Christmas, and Mother's Day gifts offered by Ian as appeasements, all of which are returned by Mrs Kaysen (Powell 1994: 18–19). The climax of the novel in many ways becomes the culmination of this tension. When on his birthday, an ailing Ian visits her house in a desperate bid to effect a reconciliation with Mrs Kaysen, she physically pushes him away. This physical demonstration of her rejection of him results in his death as Ian tragically falls down a flight of stairs and dies.

In the final passages of the narrative, Dale imagines this final encounter between Ian and his mother based on fragments of the account given him by Ian's sister, Andrea. Dale's imagining of Ian's demise recreated through Andrea's telling further constructs Ian as an alienated figure. He is, in this final movement, positioned as a figure alienated from, or at least situated in a tenuous relationship to, narrative space and time. This both mirrors and becomes a fulfilment of his earlier declared banishment from genealogical and historical time. This shift in the narrative is

indicated in the change to the speculative tense which characterizes much of the last segment of the novel:

And at that point, Dale couldn't listen anymore. For him could just see Ian, standing uncertain by the door [...] Then Miss Kaysen would swing the door to her room wide open and the bright light would blind him for a few minutes, then his eyes would adjust [...] Then the two, of similar length and breadth, would meet eye to eye, shoulder to shoulder[...] 'Mama'. And maybe him would start to cry, silent salty tears of relief and love that temporarily blind his vision and fill his heart. 'Get out.' And the hardness of her voice would stop him dead in his tracks and his outstretched arms ready to pull her to his chest, would waver uncertainly[...] 'Get out.' And maybe she took one step forward, the red house coat girthed tightly around her waist billowing around her spindly legs, and chucked him in the chest with both hands clamp shut into fists, and maybe the wind flew out of Ian's chest[...] And maybe she would push back against Ian, for the memory was too tremendous, and his heels, forgetting altogether that they'd reached the tip of the step, tilted backwards, off balance, for it'd been so long since he'd set foot in that house. (1994: 136, 137)

The passage dramatizes the tension between forgetting and banishment on one hand, and memory and the will to narrative on the other. This struggle is played out on several levels in this passage. It is most visible in Dale's attempt to resituate the banished Ian within the framework of narrative and memory by reconstructing received fragments as well as imagining other parts of the narrative in order to bear witness to what must have happened. His 'reconstructed' narrative is also scattered throughout with references to remembering and forgetting. Mrs Kaysen's act of pushing Ian down the stairs is, for instance, rendered as an act of trying to push away his memory: 'maybe she too would remember the pretty little boy, lying quiet in her arms, sucking tenderly on her breasts [...] maybe she would push against Ian for the memory was too tremendous' (Powell 1994: 137). Her attempt to push him away from her physical space and from memory can be read as an attempt to complete his banishment. Ian's alienation is also signified here by the reference to him forgetting

the contours of the house. His dramatic fall is linked to this fact of forgetting: ‘and his heels, forgetting altogether that they’d reached the tip of the step, tilted backwards, off balance, for it’d been so long since he’d set foot in that house’ (Powell 1994: 137). In this way his death is intricately linked to this earlier act of banishment.

But there are also other important symbolic links between Ian’s banishment and death. His death becomes an actualization of his earlier commuted sentence. In Patterson’s formulation, social death and natal alienation represented a ‘conditional commutation’ (1982: 6) of the sentence of death. The execution was stayed as long as the subordinated, banished subject ‘acquiesced in his powerlessness’ (Patterson 1982: 6). In many ways it could be argued that it is Ian’s refusal to acquiesce in his judgement of banishment that leads to his eventual physical demise. His numerous attempts to reconcile with his mother by offering gifts in order to purchase a reprieve and his eventual presence in her house contravene the terms of his sentence. This tragic culmination of the text may then be read in keeping with the earlier established link between action and punishment that forms a dominant feature of the relationship between Ian and Mrs Kaysen.

In exploring the complex relationship between Ian and Mrs Kaysen, Aparajita Sagar points to the complex ways in which the relationships between mothers and gay sons in the text come to stand in for the broader relationship between the society and its gay citizens. Ian’s death, because it occurs at his mother’s hand, has symbolic resonance beyond his individual narrative. As Aparajita Sagar points out, ‘[e]ventually Mrs Kaysen becomes the epitome of all the vengeful, implacable and homophobic elements in the community’ (Sagar 2004: 36). Evelyn O’Callaghan in a similar vein argues that ‘the rejecting/rejected mother may also be read as a figure of the motherland [...] Jamaican society has been so dehumanized by political violence

and economic parasitism that the motherland now devours “her” children callously abandoning or rejecting the vulnerable, the weak, the needy, the different’ (1998: 318). In both these critical accounts a symbolic rejection of homosexuality by the wider society is inscribed in what might at first be seen as an individual narrative of natal abandonment.

This abandonment by the wider society is evident in several ways and in several instances throughout the text. Not only do the characters experience alienation from family connections, but they also endure the effects of the social stigma attached with homosexuality — a situation which is only further heightened by the paranoia of disease. This is demonstrably played out when Ian collapses for a second time and is brought to the hospital after being found in Nanny Sharpe’s Park — a well-known spot for gay sexual activity. The reluctance of the medical staff to offer care and their readiness to stigmatize him is vividly underscored in two moments during Dale’s trip to visit Ian at the hospital:

The long neck girl at the reception didn’t have Ian’s name on her roster. She stare at Dale unsteadily, wanting him to leave so she can go back to her other responsibilities [...] With a slight scowl gathering around her forehead, the girl raise her dry head slowly [...] this time meeting Dale’s gaze with hostility unfurling on her face. ‘Oh, you mean the one them find in the park last night? [...] You know Nanny Sharpe’s’. (1994: 79)

The sense of alienation and dishonour linked with the question of Ian’s assumed homosexuality is reiterated moments later when Dale meets the attending doctor:

Dale follow after him trying to keep abreast. ‘Them say him was here. But...’ Dale couldn’t continue. The man take him eye off Dale and look far down at the end of the corridor. His eyes shine a dull glow from underneath half grey bushy eyebrows. ‘Them find him in the park, you know. Him go there often? Him one of them funny types? Where you know him from?’[...] Dale clear his throat, voice cold, dull. ‘We

attend the same church' [...] 'We like to know a little something about our patients. That's all. Him in church. Good [...] Bad seizure him have in the park. Maybe something out there upset him and bring it on.' (1994: 82, 83)

The sense of antagonism evident in the receptionist's foregrounding of the fact that Ian was found in the park, and the resulting disdain it elicits, is only reinforced by the doctor's hostile questioning moments later. Ian's alienation is highlighted by the fact that he is offered no other identification, by the receptionist or the doctor, than as the man found in Nanny Sharpe's. This becomes a coded reference to his homosexuality. The exclusion of his name from the roster points to a refusal to identify him in social terms; that is, as a socially initiated subject. Indeed, like Mrs Kaysen, in the passage cited earlier, the doctor seems to predicate his sense of Ian's social worth and conversely his expendability based on a discourse of morality which rejects the practice of homosexuality. This is not only true of his evaluation of Ian but also of Dale. He only relents to answer Dale's question after being assured that they are members of a church. In this interaction, social recognition is only seemingly accomplished through a denial of homosexuality. Conversely, the suggestion of homosexuality marks one out as socially expendable.

The sense of expendability and social alienation is also spatially represented in Ian's location 'far down at the end of the corridor' (Powell 1994: 82). Powell's phrasing here, further emphasizes a feeling of marginalization, with the use of double articulations of displacement. The terms 'far down' and 'at the end of the corridor' both serve to create a sense of distance adding to the social and spatial marginality reiterated in different ways throughout this passage.

While the novel focuses most intently on Ian's experience of natal alienation, his narrative is not offered in isolation. We can also, for instance, mark interesting and important connections between his experiences and another story recounted by

Mrs Morgan about a woman she knew as a young girl. Although the story is told in passing reference, its striking thematic parallels and resonant images render it as an important story that serves to extend several of the primary concerns raised in the context of Ian's narrative. Mrs Morgan recounts:

‘Back in my young gal days, I used to know a woman.’
 She sounded far away again. ‘Lovely lady. College teacher.
 Well respected and successful in her vocation. Church going.
 Choir singing. All in all decent. She never marry. Did share a
 flat with another lady. Decent like herself.’... ‘Father wasn’t
 happy at all. No matter how she try. Rebuild his house. Buy
 him long car. Pay off his debts. Daddy still wasn’t content.’
 [...] ‘She move away with her friend to another town. But not
 far enough it seems. For the man used to bother her about her
 ways. Write her letters, send telegrams to her school. Next thing
 you know, she meagre down to nothing. Jaw bone stick out,
 eyes sink in, teeth drop out one by one. Last time me hear that
 gal end up inside alms house.’ (Powell 1994: 51)

While the threat of disease is notably absent from this particular narrative, there are marked similarities in the ways in which the experience of social alienation becomes physically marked on the body. The narrative offers a striking image of social negation in its description of how ‘she meagre down to nothing’ (Powell 1994: 51). This image resonates with some of the descriptions of Ian's body offered later in the novel. Indeed, the novel invites us to make connections between this unnamed woman's story, with its descriptions of how her ‘[j]aw bone stick out, eyes sink in, teeth drop out one by one’, and Ian's ailing body through the account of Dale's response to hearing this story (Powell 1994: 51). After Mrs Morgan narrates the story to him, Dale begins to reflect on Ian's physical condition: ‘Silence fill the little room. Dale think about Ian's face on the stretcher. Ashen. Jaw kind of slack; lips slightly apart as if about to say something’ (Powell 1994: 51). The reference here to Ian's ‘[j]aw kind of slack’ which becomes associated with trying to ‘say something’, also recalls the description of the woman with her ‘[j]aw bone stick out’ and her ‘teeth

drop out one by one' (Powell 1994: 51). These images of emaciated jawbones, offer us a powerful symbol of the bodily effects of social death. But Powell also links this image of the jawbone to a politics of silence and narrative marginalization. Not only is the invocation of Ian's ailing body framed within a moment of silence but he is figured with his 'lips slightly apart as if about to say something' (Powell 1994: 51). Powell highlights how the experience of social death impacts on the conditions of narrative representation both in the case of Ian, as well as in the story of the unnamed woman. Mrs Morgan's concluding comment, that '[l]ast time me hear that gal end up inside alms house', marks not only a move to a marginal social position but also to a marginal narrative position. In this final move to the alms house, she is removed from social visibility. Only rumours serve to construct her narrative. Like Ian, in the final passages of the novel, she becomes as a figure situated in an alienated relationship to narrative space and time.

Despite the novel's central focus on gay men and their experience of natal alienation, Powell uses the story of this woman to inscribe the experience of lesbians, alongside the central narrative, demonstrating ways in which both gay men and gay women are similarly dislocated from the social and genealogical belonging. By including this narrative, Powell invites us to consider Ian's situation within a wider social and temporal framework. Although the lives of Powell's characters are each shaped by varying individual circumstances, the presence of underlying similarities, in their social experiences and narratives of alienation, calls attention to the workings of a systematic process of exclusion and alienation which function to shape their social experiences and relations in profound and far-reaching ways.

It is in relation to this endemic social practice of alienation that Ian, Dale, Nevin and others form strategic bonds of identification and support. Critics writing about Powell's text have struggled to find a language to talk about the nature and the

intimacy of the affective bonds constructed outside of family and genealogical networks of belonging. Evelyn O’Callaghan, for example, describes the relationship between Ian, Dale, and Nevin as a ‘middle-class homosexual love triangle’ (1998: 314). This designation serves to firmly locate them within a class structure to which they share an often tenuous relationship and within a framework of romantic and sexual desire that belies the complexity of their relationships and their networks of attachment. Both Ian and Dale form a series of what we could term ‘middle-class attachments’ through their relationships with men of that social class. Yet their own access to power, money, and resources, and thus their own social positioning, remains tenuous. Aparajita Sagar notes that ‘[o]f the relationships we see in the novel, few love affairs take place among men of the same age group or social class or with similar access to power. Instead a pattern gradually emerges in which sexual pleasure is often a part of unequal exchanges — of food, money, gifts’ (2000: 32). While it is worth raising questions about how we might possibly value emotional capital and whether we should designate these exchanges as necessarily unequal ones, both Ian’s and Dale’s relationship with Nevin can be said to be located in this system of affective and material exchange. But they each also extend beyond the descriptive framework which Sagar’s work provides. Indeed, while Nevin is romantically involved with Dale before becoming involved with Ian, they each remain intricately involved in each other’s lives despite their respective break-ups and the entry and exit of various other sexual partners from their lives. Their affective bonds outlast the temporal moment of their sexual attraction and involvement.

The third connecting bond of this triangulated relationship — the relationship between Dale and Ian — also offers another kind of intimacy and affective interchange that cannot be located within the framework of sexual desire or romantic

love. In talking about this relationship between Dale and Ian, Aparajita Sagar suggests a more nuanced and complex bond than that offered by O'Callghan. She notes that:

At first [...] Dale and Ian are positioned as competitors for the love of the same man. Without any fuss or fanfare, each refuses this role. Nor do Dale and Ian become lovers. Though both are involved in a series of complicated and tormented relationships with other men, neither one has a trace of sexual interest in the other [...] Outside the kind of economies and exchanges outlined above, outside the dynamics of surplus value, of family and blood kinship, of sexual desire and rivalry, the novel delicately etches out an alternative bond between mourner and mourned. Though it could so easily be collapsed into one of these frames, the relationship between Ian and Dale is shown to rest, un sentimentally and often precariously, on something else, something resembling responsibility. (Sagar 2000: 32)

Sagar's discussion of the relationship between these two men focuses on the politics of mourning and memory. She points to the construction of what she terms an 'alternate bond between mourner and mourned' (Sagar 2000: 32) and demonstrates how this is constructed outside of kinship and sexual networks of exchange. Yet in her tentative naming of this bond as 'something resembling responsibility' (2000:32), as well as her designation of a fixed distinction between mourner and mourned, Sagar's work points to an unequal power relationship as the basis of the connection between Ian and Dale.

The textual account of their relationship, I would argue, offers a much more empathetic politics of identification. Dale sees much of his own situation reflected in Ian's condition and social positioning. The basis of their identification is a shared sense of expendability.

Ian was the only one of Nevin's old sweetheart Dale ever became friends with. Him couldn't understand why Ian in particular [...] But him figure maybe it was because him see and hear how Nevin and them other ones just use Ian and not

much longer fling him one side like old dish rag. And him feel sorry. For in some small way him don't feel him get better treatment from Nevin. Or maybe it was because him see and hear too how Ian poppy-show friends never around when him need them. (Powell 1994: 3)

This moment of identification, recounted above, underlines the experience of expendability as one shared by both Ian and Dale and as one which forms a central basis of the relationship between them. From the outset, their affective bond is framed as a response to the condition and experience of expendability. Indeed, the sense of urgency suggested in the account of how and why they became friends revises Sagar's description of their relationship as 'a kind of relay and exchange in which the mourner lives out the life of the one being mourned and [...] possibly dies the death of the one he is mourning' (Sagar 2000: 31). In contrast to this investment of the importance of their relationship in relation to a future moment, the textual account of their relationship positions it as an urgent intervention in an experience of social death — a time and space in which the future holds no enduring promise.

In offering another framework for understanding the politics of identification evidenced in this relationship, I want to suggest that marronage defined as manifestation of and response to the disruption of kinship narratives and reproductive futurity serves to name this 'alternate bond'. It describes these contingent affective unions formed in relation to the moment of social death and alienation. Like the historical maroon communities which were formed in response to the exigencies of slavery, these relationships offer a moment of intervention in a discourse and practice of expendability by constructing alternative frameworks of belonging and, I would argue, also for survival.

Queer. Space. Marronage

In describing marronage as an intervention in a politics of expendability, it is also necessary to pay attention to the spatial practices used by Powell's characters to create alternate frameworks of support and counterpublics of identification in response to the displacement of gay and lesbian lives from public consideration and acknowledgement. This politics of expendability discussed here is not only rhetorically but also spatially signalled in instances such as the account of Ian's positioning on the margins of the hospital ward. This marginal positioning serves to symbolically highlight the practice of social negation that frames Ian's experience, as it does other gay characters in the text. Social death is throughout the novel further experienced as a sense of dislocation. When, for instance, in the final scene of the text Ian returns to his mother's house, the fact of his alienation is signified by his forgetting the physical terrain of the house. In this moment, his sense of disorientation becomes a tangible manifestation of his experience of exclusion from this space of belonging — an exclusion that is represented as directly contributing to his death.

Yet if Ian's illness, alienation, and ultimate death chart an experience of social death and expendability as a relationship to time and space, the narrative of Dale, the other main character in *A Small Gathering of Bones*, offers a more focused representation of how natal alienation might be mapped through the exploration of the politics of space. As Thomas Glave points out, '[i]t is through Dale's eyes that we receive and interpret most of the events' (1994: viii). Alison Donnell extends this idea in her assertion that Dale 'occupies a bridging point between Nevin's world of gay clubs, Nevin's mother's world of the Church and his own romantic and affectionate attachments to other men' (2006: 228). While acknowledging Dale's

central role in mapping varying spaces in the text, in my discussion here, I focus primarily on the textual mapping of gay spaces of identification through Dale's observations and experiences. In focusing on these moments and spaces, I explore how they help us to understand the complex ways in which gay spaces of identification can be understood through the logics of marronage in that they are negotiated and shaped through guerrilla strategies; modes of disguise, strategies of embodiment and varying dynamics of movement. These spatializing tactics, I argue, serve to render these spaces as part of networks of relation which I would like to term queer spaces of marronage. However, exploring these negotiations of space within a framework of marronage also foregrounds their politics of contingency and transience. Much like historical maroon communities, these spaces of identification in Powell's text are often impermanent ones largely due the presence of existing legislative pressures and ongoing institutionalized violence. Powell's representation of these complexly negotiated spaces in *A Small Gathering of Bones*, calls attention to their transformative limits (their limited ability to foster an enduring sense of community and lasting political change), in as much as it renders these spaces as important and necessary responses to the ongoing pressures and practices of social expendability.

Dale's role as mediating figure and consciousness in mapping these spaces in the text is arguably an appropriate one. At the time we meet Dale, he is a university student studying Geography. He thus represents an apt choice through which to mediate the reader's perception of space. Dale's decision to study geography is discussed early on in the text.

And it wasn't that Dale did have a long-standing passion for the study of the earth's surface, its features, the effects of human activities and whatever else Geography entails why him went ahead and not only followed Nevin advice to choose

this particular course of study, but there was something discerning about the [...] old white-haired English woman who teach the course. And at first him thought that maybe it was just her method of teaching [...] but after enrolling in her lectures several more times, him come to realize that it was because of certain peculiarities she would exhibit. For example, in the middle of a lecture, in the middle of a multi-syllable word she would all of a sudden just stop. And for a full three minutes, she'd run her tongue slowly and carefully over the smooth surface of her gums, maybe even lingering for a while inside the darkened cavity of a tooth [...] before picking up the final syllable and carrying on. Other times it was the particular way she would laugh after giving her own dry, lifeless joke [...] She reminded Dale of his mother. (Powell 1994: 12)

Dale's choice to study Geography is initially represented as an arbitrary one. However, as the passage progresses it becomes linked to the loss of his mother and to a desire for identification. In extending my earlier stated argument, one that is also forcefully rendered in O'Callaghan's and Sagar's work, that the characters experience a sense of alienation from their motherland, we might read this decision in terms of an attempt to re-establish a point of connection. Yet this attempt is marked by several disjunctures and ruptures. These are perhaps best symbolized by the Geography teacher's act of lingering between sounds 'before picking up the final syllable and carrying on' (Powell 1994: 12). These discontinuities between the syllables which accompany the act of naming place not only serves to indicate the circularity of memory, which Aparajita Sagar highlights in her reading of the passage, but also traces a complex and elusive sense of space that defies fixed cartographic taxonomies (Sagar 2000: 43). Dale's fascination with his Geography lecturer's lingering between the syllables invites us to engage with elliptical and elusive notions of space in trying to understand and account for the logics and practices of spatialization that operate in the text. These negotiations often complicate fixed geographic designations and easy cartographic mapping, and are

instead shaped by and exist in the tensions between ‘embodiment, place and practice’ (Halberstam 2005: 5).

Judith Halberstam captures the constructive potential of these tensions in the definition of queer space as the ‘place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage [and as] the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics’ (Halberstam 2005: 6). Central to Halberstam’s discussion is the notion of an active process of space-making enabling new and alternate uses and understandings of space. The ‘counterpublics’ of identification negotiated between and by gay characters in *A Small Gathering of Bones* are arguably queer ones to the extent that they ‘develop according to other logics of location, movement and identification’ (Halberstam 2005: 1). They are in many ways the product of the undercurrent of capitalistic expendability that Bauman highlights in his work and thus often operate in contradistinction to normative social dictates of durability and the capitalistic logic of accumulation.

While Powell’s narrative represents fixed spatial locations central to gay life, such as Clovy’s Bar — the local bar where gay men gather to party weekly — many of the spaces depicted in the text are more transient spaces of gathering and identification. In offering a sustained focus on these alternative negotiations of space, the novel highlights the fact that the conditions of existence of these characters and their negotiations of community are largely framed within an experience of heavy social policing and surveillance by state apparatus aimed at marginalizing and negating their existence. This lends to fleeting, impermanent constructions of spaces of identification and often to the use of guerrilla tactics in the process of negotiating space. Powell’s work, while acknowledging the significance and importance of bars as sites of gathering and community, also directs our attention to other negotiations of space outside the context of bar and club cultures which have tended to dominate

studies and discussions of sexual geographies (Valentine and Bell 1995). *A Small Gathering of Bones* points to the presence of an alternative queer maroon geography, one that is difficult to definitively map but which exists alongside these visible spaces of gay life. Powell's decentring of bar culture as the focal point of the representation of gay community life in the Jamaican context offers another way in which we might understand gay life and community outside of the primary focus on the avenues and patterns of consumption that have dominated studies of gay culture particularly in the North American context.

One key way in which Powell's work enables alternative understandings of space is through its emphasis on movement and strategies of contingency in the production of counterpublics of identification. In exploring the politics of space in *A Small Gathering of Bones*, strategies of contingency and mobility are for instance evident in accounts of queer uses of spaces such as Nanny Sharpe's Park, where gay men engage in anonymous public sex. Geraldine Skeete in her reading of the text argues that the 'legislation of homosexuality as a crime, and the subsequent withholding of rights for homosexuals [...] force many to indulge in fleeting intimacies in public places/spaces' (2010: 8) such as Nanny Sharpe's Park. Skeete's assertion of a link between legislative culture and the sexual practices that Powell depicts, calls attention to ways in which the use of Nanny Sharpe's Park as 'a queer maroon space' is directly linked to the politics and pressures of expendability. But while the sexual encounters enabled by this space are brief, often anonymous ones, as opposed to the normative social prescription of long-term sexual commitment (marriage and domestic cohabitation), in the context of Ian's and Dale's experiences they are represented as important ones that serve as respite from the experience of natal alienation. While critics like Skeete have focused on this zone of contact as a potential space for transference of disease, arguing that with his visit to the park Dale

‘has now made himself totally susceptible to contracting the HIV/AIDS virus’ (2002: 9), the novel also opens up the possibility, through the narrative of Dale, of engaging with the question of what these spaces mean to those who utilize them and the alternate affective unions that they facilitate, while allowing us to chart some of the effects of the process of natal alienation on individual lives and community formation.

The importance of these spaces of connection is signified in the account of Dale’s first sexual encounter in the park. It happens at a key moment of crisis in the narrative. After having advised Ian — a frequent visitor to the park — about the dangers of going there, Dale ventures into the park one night. The moment occurs at the time of Ian’s worsening illness and also coincides with Dale’s increasing alienation from the church where he had been a member and Sunday school teacher. Dale’s crisis of faith is symbolically invoked by the presence of the preacher and attendees holding a gospel meeting outside the entrance to the park. Their presence outside the park also serves as a vivid reminder of the social policing that accompanies negotiations of gay and lesbian spaces.

A tall thin holy-looking man in a white robe was handing out leaflets and preaching in a loud voice under the white glare of the street lamp [...] To his right was the sign leading to Nanny Sharpe’s. Maybe him should go in, him didn’t want to have to walk past the preacher. [...] Him walk soundless, footsteps lost on the concrete, now grass. The moon had slipped under. Dale melted into the dark... Him had to leave the church. It was impossible to continue on like this. His days heaped in hypocrisy. In lies. Suddenly a heavy hand grip on his shoulder. Him stiffen. Heart galloping in him chest. ‘Easy.’ The voice was gentle, almost tender. ‘Isn’t this why you came?’ Dale didn’t answer. (Powell 1994: 112)

The air of condemnation and judgement outside the gates of the park contrasts with the momentary sense of consolation that Dale experiences from the encounter in the park. The ‘gentle almost tender voice’ of the man holding him is juxtaposed against

the 'loud voice' of the preacher (Powell 1994: 12). The contrast between these spaces is heightened by the images of light and dark in the passage. Powell uses these images in ways which complicate easy associations of light with good and of darkness with evil and danger. The 'glare of the street lamp' (Powell 1994: 112) for instance, becomes a reminder of an ever-present panoptic gaze and ongoing strategies of surveillance, while the enveloping darkness and 'the large limbs of the willow trees [serve] as chameleons in the dark' (Powell 1994: 114) creating the possibility of an intimate space shielding the men from being observed by passers-by and those outside the park.

Here in these shadows the men exist in anonymous yet intimate spaces. It is this sense of space to which Geraldine Skeete makes reference when she asserts that '[t]he park's physical attributes that protect the men from view and provide them with a meeting place [...] give it a kumbla-like essence' (2010: 8). The kumbla is a protective space of enclosure often associated in Caribbean women's writing with wombspace (Boyce-Davies and Savory-Fido 1990; Cooper 1991). In Erna Brodber's novel *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home*, it is rendered as 'a round seamless calabash that protects you without caring' (1981: 123). This idea of the protective nature of the space is captured in the account of Dale's sexual encounter. The description of the voice of the man as 'gentle, almost tender' (Powell 1994: 112) helps to reorient our initial sense of pending danger. In the course of the passage Dale's emotional response, and consequently our own sense of space, temporarily shifts from fear and shame to one of consolation and assurance.

All of a sudden his voice failed him. Not to the fear of whether this man would kill him, would beat him up and rob him thirty dollars in his wallet, but to the embarrassment, the shame [...] The hand carefully guided Dale towards the overhanging branches of a tree, sidestepping tree stumps, puddles of water. And like a cape that was protecting him, all the embarrassment suddenly dropped to Dale's feet and him could catch all the

nuances of the perfume that clung to the man's body, the bitter, acrid odour of car grease that settle permanently under his nails, in his pores, the bitter sweet smell of perspiration under his arms, on his neck... And all of a sudden, Dale didn't care about anything. Not about God or Deacon Roache, Ian's disease or Bill's hypocrisy, or Miss Kayen's craziness [...] All him wanted was this man, this burly brute with callous hands and acrid breath. (Powell 1994: 112, 113)

But while Skeete describes this space through the metaphor of the kumbla, it proves problematic here as it invokes associations with motherhood and womb-space. These associations are particularly questionable in the context of this novel which focuses on men-loving-men, and where relationships with mothers are particularly volatile ones. Rather I would argue that in this space and moment these gay men are maroon mates. They engage in mati relations. Powell's naming of the park reinforces the idea. In naming the park after the maroon leader Nanny of the Maroons and the leader of the 1831 slave revolt Sam Sharpe, Powell's narrative identifies this space of gathering as maroon space.

The idea of the park as maroon space is also linked to its patterns of transience. References to spaces and moments of light and dark help in the marking out Nanny Sharpe's Park as a potential queer maroon space for gay sexual activity. Within this space, gay sexual encounters, are represented as complexly spatially and temporally negotiated, often occurring under the cover of night and shade, and existing where 'trees stand up tall and weeds grow plenty' (Powell 1994: 80). This sense of transience is also captured in the way in which the unknown, unseen man in the park appears and also disappears enabled by the geographic terrain and the darkness: 'Then him was gone. And Dale was alone [...] Him squint his eyes, stop his breath so as to hear better any faint sounds, the footsteps retreating on the grass were just as noiseless as them'd appeared' (Powell 1994: 114). The narration of his stealthy appearance and departure underscores his guerrilla subjectivity: his ability to

be alternately visible and invisible, to engage a kind of maroon ambush in the process of assembling and negotiating space.

Powell's representation of these outdoor negotiations of sexual space also reminds us of historical maroon appropriation and use of mountainous and other geographical terrain beyond the enclosed spaces of the plantations. In much the same way that Powell's mapping of queer maroon geographies decentre representations of bar life and culture, it also moves beyond the representation of interior enclosed spaces usually represented as the primary spaces of sexual activity. This linking of interiority and gay sexual activity, which is challenged in Powell's novel, is reflected for instance in foundational metaphors of queer theory such as the closet. As Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley argues '[i]nspired by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's landmark study *The Epistemology of the Closet*, too many northern studies of same-sex sexuality stay out of springs or swamps and close to bedrooms. Their cartographies often rely on standard metaphors of interior and exterior space[...]. In fact, 'the closet' seems to work not (only) as the space that confines queers but also as the space that confines queer studies' (Tinsley 2010: 25, 26). In this regard, *A Small Gathering of Bones* might well be located in relation to theoretical work by postcolonial queer theorists like Martin Manalansan (1997, 2003) and Gayatri Gopinath (2005) who, according to Tinsley, have 'pushed for new queer cartographies' (Tinsley 2010: 25). Powell's novel offers glimpses and instances of a variety of landscapes as potential spaces of gay sexual activity and identification. In this way, Powell represents the queer space of marronage as a potentiality variously negotiated and manifested, rather than as spatially bounded or enclosed and easily charted.

This idea of the transgressive potentiality of queer maroon space is captured in one of the early textual descriptions of Nanny Sharpe's Park. Here patterns of movement are once again emphasized as strategies for negotiating space.

All around, trees stand up tall and weeds grow plenty. A foot beaten path trail off into the thickets. It was evening. Sun gone down for the day. Over in the main park, people walk dogs or stroll around with babies in prams. The 'KEEP OFF. NO ADMISSION TO THIS SIDE OF PARK' sign lay buried and trample-over not far from his feet. Another man walk past: fortyish, head bald completely, one foot slightly longer than the other. Him circle around since Dale didn't follow and walk past again. This time slow enough so them could say howdy-dos. (Powell 1994: 80)

Powell's description of the physical terrain here invokes representations of spaces of maroon community offered in Robert Dallas's historical writing and Namba Roy's imaginative rendering of maroon geographies. The opening sentences of Powell's description of the park, for instance, echoes Namba Roy's opening description of the entrance to the fictional maroon settlement of 'Twin Sisters' in his novel *Black Albino*. Roy describes the terrain as '[s]teep, rocky and dotted with trees and clumps of shrub near its base, with only one negotiable path, narrow and winding' (Roy 1961: 19). The image of the 'foot beaten path' in Powell is resonant of the 'one negotiable path, narrow and winding' in Roy's description, and links the maroon space described to patterns of movement. This idea is reinforced by the description at the end of the passage of the man circling the path, trying to attract Dale's attention. The representation of this instance of gay 'cruising' is significantly set against the image of the 'KEEP OFF. NO ADMISSION TO THIS SIDE OF PARK' (Powell 1994: 80) sign, marking the boundary between the permissible and the impermissible, lying trampled on the ground. Its demarcation of fixed spatial designations and prescriptive uses of this space is symbolically eroded. This image of the sign laying trampled points to the opening up of a transgressive space of

possibility in this physical location where gay sexual activity is seen to potentially exist alongside other normative activities of people walking dogs and pushing babies in prams.

The strategies of movement and transience depicted in this scene, the references to light and dark, as well as the use of guerrilla tactics of visibility and invisibility represented elsewhere in the novel, serve to locate these queer uses of space in relation to a wider social and historical experience and practice of marronage. Not only were the maroons known for their deft use of guerrilla strategies of masking and unmasking, but, as Boulou Ebanda de B'éri argues, they 'were constantly on the move' (2008: 200). Yet this focus on movement, foregrounded in my discussion here, is not meant to negate the importance of land (particularly the lands offered as part of the maroon treaties) to articulations of maroon identity. Rather, the consideration of the conditions that led to the development and the importance of the maroon tactic of movement, and other guerrilla tactics, help us to understand how and why these lands came to have important symbolic significance in the construction and articulation of maroon identity in the post Maroon Treaty years and into the contemporary period. The legal allocation of these lands represented a tangible manifestation of the abatement of the immediate threat of extinction due to the militarized actions of colonial authorities.

While de B'éri points to movement as central to the practice of marronage, I think it is also important to emphasize how the practice of mobilization was linked to the fact of crisis. This link is central to an understanding of the usage of marronage in Powell's narrative. In much the same way that movement as guerrilla tactic in maroon history was linked to particular moments of threat from the colonial machinery, in Powell's text the deployment of movement as a spatializing logic is seen to be linked with the fact of a crisis of expendability. Powell's novel outlines

how the spatial practices of its characters are linked to the urgencies of the moment that they inhabit. In this way, Powell's work does not offer a sentimentalized celebration of the politics of dislocation and movement, but rather calls attention to its utility as a tactic of survival. We are constantly reminded throughout the novel of the threat to gay lives, not only from disease but also from police surveillance and from homophobic violence. Dale, for instance, outlines what is risked by going to Nanny Sharpe's Park in one of his cautions to Ian: '[s]ometimes you don't know who is following you into the bushes. Suppose is a straight man who hate people like us. Suppose is a ploy to get you into the bush so him can cut you throat, bust you head. Suppose is a police man. Suppose...' (Powell 1994: 81). Indeed this concern with safety, reiterated in Dale's warnings to Ian, is also highlighted by Dale's own initial fear of being robbed and beaten up while in the park. The park as maroon space constantly reminds us both of the active sense of threat enabled by the discourse of expendability, and of the complex negotiations of space that this threat mobilizes in the production of spaces and moments of assembling.

However, Powell's novel does not solely root the fact of the threat of violence in the experience of homophobia. In locating the text in 1978, Powell also inscribes a collective social experience of violence which impacted the Jamaican society at the time, culminating in what Thomas Glave describes in the introduction to the text as 'the infamously violent 1980 general election' (1994: vii). As Aparajita Sagar notes, as the men move through spaces in Kingston 'they still register from the corner of their eyes picket lines, election posters, the debris of newspapers and election paraphernalia on the streets' (2000: 35). She also importantly notes that '[a]round the time of Ian's death, a radio left on announces to no one in particular the police killings and a riot' (2000: 35). Powell thus invites us to view a general practice of expendability alongside the more specific sites of this experience which

constitute the main focus of the text. She presents political violence and the resulting deployment of state tactics of surveillance and counter-insurgency as another layer of the experience that these gay men face. This idea is reflected in a conversation between Dale and Ian in one of the early moments in the text.

Ian pause for a while, eyes far off [...] ‘You know how it is with the upcoming election.’ Dale shake his head. I can’t wait for it all to be over. For now you have to be extra careful who you talk to, what you say, the color clothes you wear. You hear on the radio how they shoot this poor man on his way to work for wearing a red shirt?’ [...] Ian shake his head [...] ‘I just hope they don’t bother with the curfews again like last election. Police just slap-slap you up with batons as they have a mind’.
(Powell 1994: 16)

Here the body is presented as a site of surveillance and a site of trauma. The experience of political violence as threat is represented, in this instance, as one that is shared by both gay and straight people alike. Dale’s assertion of the need to be ‘extra careful’ might thus be read as a general note of caution. But alongside the inscription of this general caution, the narrative also calls attention to specific ways in which the gay body represents a particular site of surveillance. Dale’s warning not only echoes but also subtly extends the warning issued by the national radio. The insertion of the word ‘extra’ in Dale’s caution takes on additional resonance as the passage progresses. As the conversation between Ian and Dale continues, Ian tells one of his stories about flirting with a man he sees at the bus stop. In narrating the story Ian says ‘I put on my best man walk. You know [...] Act just like them. None of this prim and proper business’ (Powell 1994: 17). In addition to knowing the codes, customs, and manners necessary to survive the general impact of political violence (knowing what colours one should or should not wear), Ian’s story also points to the need for knowledge of specific codes of masculine performance which serve both to disguise and to make visible the gay body as a potential site of attraction or of violence. In their everyday experience as well as in the negotiation of specific spaces

of gay activity such as Nanny Sharpe's Park, the conditions of possibility of gay life are seen to be negotiated through codes, movement and through strategies of visibility and invisibility, which link gay social life and survival to maroon experience and subjectivity, particularly through their shared guerrilla practices.

In linking marronage to the more contemporary urban experience of Powell's characters, Michael Dash's concept of the 'urban maroon' proves a useful one. In his discussion of Patrick Chamoiseau's work, Dash argues that 'Chamoiseau focuses on the ultimate colonial space, the town as a new forest of symbols for the urban maroon' (1998: 143). Set against the 'visible limitations' of island and urban space that 'could easily be traced by roads or systems or discourses that indiscriminately subsume everything under a universal sameness', Dash argues that resistance for the maroon 'takes the form of constant flux and displacement, thus creating new traces, detours in the process of drivage and errancy' (1998: 142). Dash's argument examines how what he terms the 'irrationality of the runaway' serves in the process of renegotiating colonial geographies or rather what he terms, 'an urban logic that is Western, linear and strong' (1998: 134). Powell's characters inhabit a 'forest of signs' much like that which Dash suggests constitutes the landscape of the 'urban maroon' in Chamoiseau's texts. Dale's warnings and Ian's narratives about 'picking-up' men in Kingston point to the presence of codes and strategies which become necessary for these gay men to navigate and survive the dangers — and engage the possibilities — of their urban landscape. In their negotiations of this 'forest of signs', the characters in Powell's novel use what Dash terms '[n]ot the official knowledge but an alternative way of knowing how to combine, scramble, and improvise [...] the key to survival' (1998: 142). These alternate modes of knowledge are for instance rehearsed, transmitted and revised in moments such as the conversations between Ian and Dale in which they discuss and pass on alternative ways of negotiating space and

different strategies of identification. In the process, they also reinterpret and extend the messages transmitted via official channels. For instance, they note the general threat of violence issued on the radio news report, but also revise its general discursive terms to include the particularities of the social experience of violence and the social practices of gay Jamaican men.

Dash's discussion of the value of strategies of scrambling and improvising as part of the practice of urban marronage recalls the image of Dale's Geography teacher pausing in the middle of a word, 'lingering for a while inside the darkened cavity of a tooth [...] before picking up the final syllable and carrying on' (Powell 1994: 12). His teacher's scrambling of words performs the maroon strategy of inhabiting and moving in constructed spaces between seemingly fixed structures. This process of creating space in relation to a physical and social landscape which is rigidly structured and policed is evident in the experiences of Powell's characters throughout the text, and is enacted through the use of a variety of inventive tools and strategies. The capacity of Powell's queer maroon figures for engaging tools of urban marronage in the process of creating space is for instance, referenced in Aparajita Sagar's discussion of a moment where Dale and Nevin are driving through the city. As they drive they observe a political demonstration in progress. Sagar notes '[t]hey react by winding up their window. Spatially in this moment, homosexuality is shown to be contained; locked within the middle class haven of cars, the two men are able to move unaccosted through the neocolonial scene, so far unobserved but well within the panoptic range of the neocolonial state' (2000: 35). Sagar's discussion of cars and their usefulness in facilitating movement through the state might be considered alongside Ian's earlier comment about putting on his 'best man walk'. Both these textual moments highlight different tactical strategies mobilized in response to the rigid social policing of homosexuality in a society where codes of masculinity and

heterosexuality inform discourses of citizenship and belonging. Sagar's reading of this scene can be situated within a wider taxonomy of maroon strategies and ways of moving, aimed at subverting state and social surveillance.⁴⁴ These strategies include not only the use of 'the middle class haven of cars' discussed by Sagar, but also the studied performances of normative masculinity staged by gay men who have to walk through the city, and the tact and stealth of the men who gather under the cover of darkness in Nanny Sharpe's Park.

Conclusion

Yet Powell's work is marked by a reluctance to offer an altogether celebratory rendering of these spatializing practices. Throughout the novel, Powell constantly links these practices to experiences of loss and negation. The experiences of Ian, Dale, and Nevin in *A Small Gathering of Bones* highlight how these maroon spaces are almost invariably negotiated in response to an institutionalized condition of social death, and its persisting narratives and practices of alienation and expendability. Powell's depiction of the ways in which loss and alienation are central to these negotiations of alternative spaces and communities is signalled in textual

⁴⁴ In his latest study of Black mobility Paul Gilroy focuses on the politics of automotivity. Gilroy advances a rather convincing discussion of how the rise of automotivity has constituted a retreat from the public sphere and from its political possibilities. *Darker Than Blue* mourns the loss of a visible and politically motivated Black counterpublic in the wake of the Civil Rights era. The social and economic gains of the civil rights era, Gilroy suggests, have resulted in the investment in and valorization of practices of individual capitalist consumption and a retreat into the haven of cars and its privacy of motorization. If in his discussion of the Montgomery Bus Strikes Gilroy notes how cars provided spaces of political gathering and mobility, which along with walking facilitated the boycott of buses, he discusses cars in the contemporary American culture as a retreat from the public sphere. Powell's representations of cars in *A Small Gathering of Bones* offers a narrative of how they continue to shape and mobilize political countercultures of relation even while being personal spaces of intimacy.

moments such as the narration Ian's banishment. After Mrs Kaysen changes the locks on the door and orders Ian to leave her house and 'don't come back', Ian is pictured as a dejected figure walking down the road. The image is deeply moving and poignant, and underscores the way in which these spaces are often the product of social alienation.

Nevin say him couldn't listen anymore. Him close the window and walk back to the car. Him wait several minutes, then slowly pull away from the kerb, circling the square several times before driving back to the house to pick up Ian who was walking in the middle of the road towards the lighted eyes of the car, head bent, shoulders drooped, hands deep inside his pockets, the rain pouring off his tall slender frame, for his mother refuse to lend him a piece of plastic to throw over his head so him wouldn't catch a cold. (Powell 1994: 22)

While the passage points to the presence and possibilities of alternate connections outside of family bonds, mobilized in this moment of unfixing from genealogical connection, through the reference to Nevin's approaching car (a symbol that Ian is not totally alone in his moment of banishment), Powell invites us to visually and emotionally engage in a meaningful, direct way with the alienation which Ian experiences. His symbolic location in the middle of the road situates him within the patterns of movement and transience foregrounded in this discussion but it also vividly serves to remind us of his alienation. The references to Ian's 'head bent, shoulders drooped' further evoke a picture of an alienated, dejected man. The sense of pathos evoked here is heightened by the 'the rain pouring off his tall slender frame' (Powell 1994: 22), which calls attention not only to the fact of his unhousing, but also to his mother's refusal to offer him any kind of covering from the elements. Throughout the novel, Powell movingly depicts moments such as these, alongside the representations of the strategically negotiated moments of communal identification and gathering by gay men in spaces such as Nanny Sharpe's Park.

The tensions and ambiguities evident in the representation of these spaces, and the experiences of the characters that negotiate them, undoubtedly demand a sensitive theoretical approach to a reading of the text. The focus of marronage offered here, with its inherent paradoxes and complexities provides one way of reading the novel which acknowledges the strategic possibilities as well as the limitations of these social negotiations. As Michael Dash notes in his discussion of the social practices of Patrick Chamoiseau's urban maroons, '[t]heir behaviour does have primordial roots in the tradition of *la petite maronne*, or small scale marronage, which meant periodic absenteeism from the plantation, not negation of the system' (1998: 141). Dash's observations on the limits of marronage as a fundamental sustained challenge to the institutional framework might also be applicable to reading Powell's characters who engage maroon strategies of negotiating spaces and relationships. But these negotiations, in as much as they challenge, are always necessarily constructed within the limits of the existing social frameworks. While highlighting the necessity, importance, and subversive potential of maroon spatializing tactics of movement and transience, Powell's work also seems to suggest their transformative limits as socially and politically liberating practices by reminding us that their necessity and utility is inextricably linked to the fact of social alienation and loss. Powell's reluctance to offer an emancipatory reading of the political efficacy of queer marronage as social rebellion invites us to reflect on the limits and contingencies of these practices.

Yet the textual reminders of loss and alienation as well as Powell's ambivalence in the representation of these contingent spatial negotiations should not be read as an affirmation or a privileging of a social prescript of longevity in which these brief lives and their alternate temporal logics and affinitive unions constitute only an unmitigated site of mourning. In fact, Powell's work can be read as

destabilizing the privileging of a singular narrative of longevity in its refusal to offer an emancipatory mapping of these spatial practices. The narrative thus arguably resists the impulse for the restoration of the ground of futurity as the primary context for understanding these lives. The future is throughout rendered in ambiguous terms, in as much as the past is configured as a terrain of discontinuous relationships. Rather, the narrative demands that we consider the strategies of queer marronage in relation to the urgencies of the moment into which they intervene. Its constant reminders of the effects of social practices of expendability on the lives of Ian and Dale insist that we engage with their experiences of alienation as well as with the strategies which are shaped by this experience. Powell's foregrounding of the politics of contingency in the construction of alternative affective unions and spaces of identification locate them within what we can describe as a maroon politic of survival rather than as straightforwardly transformative, emancipatory spatial and social practices. *A Small Gathering of Bones* bears witness to the necessity and effects of the contingent bonds and spaces forged out of the experience of natal alienation, and documents how these maroon tactics serve as ground for a politics of survival in relation to an ongoing experience of social death.

Chapter Four

Queer Marronage and Vagrancy in Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms At Night*.

This chapter focuses on Shani Mootoo's novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*. In many ways, my discussion of Mootoo's text engages a critical strategy of vagrancy in as much as it also discusses representations of vagrancy. By this I mean that my examination of queer marronage here does not advance straightforwardly towards a conclusion, but instead moves beyond the boundaries of a queer maroon discourse. In situating Mootoo's novel within the context of this discussion, I am mindful, for example, that it does not invoke the term marronage (although, unlike some other texts discussed here, it includes the term queer). While this thesis has so far has focused on the ways in which the novels discussed have invoked queer marronage, I want to examine and consider how, if we take the notion of queer marronage and the plantation/maroon discourse it offers for examining contemporary sexual politics in the Caribbean seriously, a complex network of experiences, relations, intimacies, and strategies also becomes evident. The examination of these various tactics and strategies acknowledges the complexity of the Plantation as well as the complexity of marronage. The narrative of marronage as Antonio Benítez-Rojo has noted, offers 'an enormous branching narration that will potentially serve as alternative to the 'planters' histories that we know' (Benitez-Rojo 1996: 254). This chapter signals some of the intersections and proximities within this branching narrative. It considers

how vagrancy and marronage exist alongside each other as interrelated yet separate modes of negotiating space and belonging in relation to the repression and regulation of the body. Queer marronage, I am keen to suggest, should not be considered as closed off from other practices of renegotiating colonizing and hegemonic regimes.

Cereus Blooms at Night is a novel shaped by the experience and aesthetics of movement. Throughout the text, characters constantly re-negotiate belonging, identity and home in relation to different experiences and circumstances. This chapter explores how vagrancy — a particular mode and experience of mobility evident in the narrative — might offer one particular way of understanding and talking about Mootoo's characters' various dislocations, transgressions, and crossings.⁴⁵ I also explore how these experiences of vagrancy can be considered in relation to the practices of queer marronage outlined in this thesis. While I pay keen attention to movement and to characters' experiences of not being at home, I also examine the queer ways in which characters seek out and engage in strategies of community and practices of intimacy by engaging modes of relations conceptualized in this thesis as acts of queer marronage.

Vagrancy and marronage are complexly related concepts and practices in the context of Caribbean Plantation societies. Both terms emerge from the colonial archives as ways of describing and accounting for the movement of labouring bodies beyond the boundaries of the plantation. During the indentureship period, vagrancy

⁴⁵ Several critics have examined the unsettling of ideas of home and houses in Mootoo's text. Vivian May argues '*Cereus Blooms at Night* weaves together multiple examples of exile and dislocation' (2004: 99) while John Corr, describes the text as a 'distinctly diasporic narrative' (Corr 2005: 68). Gayatri Gopinath further extends the exploration of the politics of movement in Mootoo's text through her description of the novel as a 'radical reworking of homes and houses' that 'responds to and revises the tropes of masculinity and unhousing' (2005: 177). These critical discussions each highlight significant ways in which textual experiences and practices of mobility function as important challenges to discourses of home, identity and belonging. Yet discussions such as these have also consistently tended to rely on a diasporic framework as the principal discursive frame for talking about mappings and renegotiations of home and belonging. In this discussion I want to explore how vagrancy—a particular mode of mobility present in the textual narrative—might offer another way of understanding and talking about Mootoo's characters various experiences of dislocations, crossings and movements away from home.

laws served to label East Indian labourers who transgressed the spatial bounds or who flouted the labour regimes of the plantation as vagrants.⁴⁶ Marina Carter and Khal Torabully outline some of the relationship between these terms in their assertion that:

another common stratagem [among East Indian indentures] was a particular form of ‘marronage’ that is vagabondage, or vagrancy. Thousands of Indians were condemned as vagrants for deserting their work, or through inability to labour through sickness were confined in colonial vagrant depots. Vagrancy was a common form of revolt, an alter ego of marronage of the slaves with its own specificities. Basically the slave was a maroon, the coolie a vagrant. This difference of perceptions and resistances must also be explored in relation to the construction of ‘mixed societies’. (Carter and Torabully 2002: 161)

Carter and Torabully’s description of vagrancy as ‘a particular form of marronage’ and as ‘an alter ego of marronage of the slaves with its own specificities’ (2002: 161), shows the interconnectedness of these terms and practices, in as much as it aims to offer distinctions. But while their assertion that ‘[b]asically the slave was a maroon, the coolie a vagrant’ (Carter and Torabully 2002: 161) might seem to provide a useful basis from which to proceed, this declaration is also worth examining and complicating. The malingering slave on the plantation, the runaway

⁴⁶ As Walton Look Lai notes “[t]he stringent pass-law system made the labourer a de facto prisoner of his specific plantation and was the major distinguishing mark of difference between an immigrant contract labourer and free labour” (1996, 62). According to the terms of the vagrancy legislation:

any immigrant is found on a public highway, or any land, or in any house, not being the land or house of his employer, or in any ship, vessel or boat within the waters of the island any of the following persons, that is to say... The employer of the immigrant or his manager or overseer, may without warrant stop such immigrant, and in case he fails to produce a certificate of industrial residence or exemption from labour or a ticket of leave may...arrest him and take him to the nearest police station, there to be detained until he can be taken before a Stipendiary Justice of the Peace (Look Lai 1996, 63)

These laws were in effect designed to police these labouring bodies and prevent their movement out of their socially designated place. The presence of this legislation, however, in turn meant that the diverse transgressions and migrations of “coolie” bodies beyond the boundaries of the plantation, took on increased political and symbolic significance. In light of the colonial authority’s attempts to regulate these bodies, their various transgressions beyond the bounds of the plantation came to constitute part of a diverse yet inter-related history of responses to the social regimentation of the Plantation organized around the politics of movement by African and Indian labourers.

retreating to the hills or to the shoreline, might well be read as a vagrant figure in as much as the 'coolie' vagrant in the context of their discussion is represented as engaging in 'a particular form of marronage' (Carter and Torabully 2002: 161).

While their work aims to show distinctions between these terms and practices, it also demonstrates how the use of neat social, ethnic, and racial taxonomies as the primary basis for separating out these practices proves unsatisfactory within the context of Plantation societies complexly shaped by what Lisa Lowe has termed the 'intimacies of four continents' (2006: 191). The attempts to reach a definitive demarcation of these terms and practices also call attention to the complexly embedded nature of indenture within the narrative of the plantation, where it at once marks a temporal shift from slave labour to bonded labour even as underlying patterns of labour regimentation and systems of capitalistic organization persisted (Mohabir 2010).

Many of the strategies of response mobilized by slaves also persisted. Noor Kumar Mahabir highlights how 'Plenty a dem run away' (quoted in Mahase 2008: 465), hiding from drivers and watchmen — figures that underscored the persisting regimentation of lives within the bounds of the Plantation. Eric Williams's narrative of two men who were found in the Amazon, believing it possible to walk overland back to India, further demonstrates continuities in patterns and practices of resistance. Williams proposed that 'their spirits were going back to Calcutta and Madras, just as the Negro slave used to commit suicide saying they would cheat the sugar planters and their spirits would go back to Africa. The Bandung Spirit!' (Mohammed 2001: 176). Without dismissing or negating the social and political meanings of these racial and social taxonomies and identity categories, particularly within the colonial context, I want to instead focus on the structurally and politically linked nature of these practices. The consideration of their performance, meanings and their effects might well highlight profound intersections and analysis, and call

attention to a rich and varied yet intrinsically connected archive of responses to the system of the Plantation. In invoking vagrancy in the context of this discussion, I want to prompt considerations of experiences of plantation servitude and resistance beyond the Afro-Caribbean context, which has constituted the primary focus of the writers included in this thesis thus far. However my use of vagrancy and marronage does not rely primarily on the racialized dimensions of these terms as outlined by Carter and Torabully. I also want to consider other areas of difference as part of the examination of their mutual interconnectedness and relationality. This proves useful when talking about contemporary sexual politics in the Caribbean region.

Vagrancy, in this discussion, refers to an experience or practice of being out of place. Drawing on the image of the vagrant moving beyond the bounds of the plantation, I use the concept to examine Mootoo's characters' various experiences of being or feeling or moving out of place. *Cereus Blooms at Night* is full of such characters. Old Man Ramchandin, the indentured labourer from India, crosses an ocean to escape his karmic destiny and later strategizes ways of leaving the social and spatial confines of the bound yard. His son Chandin Ramchandin, who also yearns to leave the barrack yard, is adopted by white Christian missionaries. In his transfer to a new social and spatial location, he is constantly represented as feeling 'conspicuously lost' and experiencing 'the chaos of his uprootedness' (Mootoo 1996: 31). His children, Asha and Mala Ramchandin, are also in turn forced into physical and psychological vagrancy from the Ramchandin house as a result of prolonged abuse by their father. Chandin's wife, Sarah, develops an affair, and eventually runs away from Paradise with Lavina Thoroughly, the Christian reverend's daughter, the woman whom Chandin also desires. In declaring her desire to leave, Sarah tells Lavina: 'I want to go far far away with you, some place where we can be together' (Mootoo 1996: 59). In this instance as well as elsewhere in the

narrative, vagrancy is not only linked with departure from physical houses (most notably the Ramchandin house from which several characters leave), but also signals departures from patriarchal and heteronormative arrangements that define and structure home.

While vagrancy functions as a recurring theme and narrative device in the text, in this discussion, I focus particularly on Mootoo's main character Mala and the narrator of the story Tyler, and their experiences and feelings of being out of place. When we first meet Mala she is alienated from the community after years of sexual abuse by her father, Chandin. The novel recounts her social, psychological and eventual physical vagrancy due to the trauma of familial abuse. While the burning of the Ramchandin house at the end of the narrative signifies a particularly visible moment of displacement, it functions as only part of a longer and more complex experience of vagrancy. Like Mala, Tyler's dislocatedness is manifested through varying degrees of physical, psychological, and social distance. His feelings of being out of place, which are highlighted throughout the text, are intimately linked to his awareness of sexual difference. In the first section of this discussion, I map Tyler's experience and practice of vagrancy; while in the second part of this discussion, I focus on Mala as a vagrant figure. In discussing both Mala and Tyler's vagrancy I also explore the various narrative strategies and shifting narrative locations which recount and signal their vagrancy. I also call attention to their occupation of various alternative social and sexual locations. In Mootoo's representation of these characters, vagrancy is explored and imagined as the occupation of spaces outside normative heterosexual domestic arrangements.

Tyler's and Mala's vagrancy opens up alternative coordinates of relation. Their varied experiences of being and feeling out of place as well as their unsettling narratives of home, enable various queer networks of affinity beyond familial

relationships. They give rise to complex, often contingent, circuits of belonging mobilized as alternatives to fixed locations of home. Mala and Tyler meet when Mala is taken to the Paradise Alms House. It is interesting to note here that the Alms House in which the present of the narrative is set, functions as a ‘semijudicial structure’ (Foucault 1991: 125) designed for dealing with vagrancy. It thus serves to concretise the question of vagrancy highlighted in this discussion. But the Alms House also functions as one scene where the vagrant and the vagrant’s narrative can be recollected and recounted. It is while Mala is resident at the Alms House that Tyler learns her story. Her story is recollected through various sites. These include recovered letters, village gossip, oral histories and through Mala’s own randomly shared recollections and testimonies and Tyler’s own memories from his childhood. These multiple sites serve to underscore her vagrancy. But the recounting of her narrative by Tyler becomes a moment of what John Corr terms ‘affective coordination’ (2009: 113). Within this space, complexly located in what Foucault terms ‘the geography of haunted places’ (1991: 125) and which contains the various collected remains of capitalistic expendability, queer confederative communities develop and even flourish much like the night blooming cereus that Mootoo invokes in her title.

If vagrancy, as figured in the image of the vagrant fleeing the plantation, constitutes what is mainly an individual experience of dislocation from place and belonging, the textual focus on the relationship between Mala and Tyler potentially shifts the dimensions of the text beyond a singular focus on vagrancy. In the third segment of this discussion I examine how Mootoo’s novel allows us to observe parallel and intersecting processes and experiences of vagrancy and queer marronage. Mala and Tyler’s stories also offer us a queer vision of community. In narrating how he came to know Mala’s narrative, Tyler notes:

I wonder what Nana would think if she knew the positions I was in that enabled me to gain the full story. For me there were two: one a shared queerness with Mala Ramchandin, which gave rise to the other, my proximity to the very Ramchandin Nana herself knew of. (Mootoo 1996: 48)

His framing of his discovery and knowledge of Mala's narrative highlights varying intersections and proximities of relation. In particular, it calls attention to what Tyler terms 'a shared queerness' (Mootoo 1996: 48) between himself and Mala. Building on the insights offered by the work of Brand, Powell, and Cliff's work, in which queer marronage narrates and names strategies of community and negotiations of alternate affective locations to family and genealogical belonging, I want to argue that Mootoo's work, and in particular these intersecting narratives at the heart of the text, makes visible other parallels and differences between vagrancy and queer marronage than those offered in Carter and Torabully's comparative formulation. In Mootoo's mapping of the relationship between these two characters, vagrancy as an experience of being out of place is complexly situated alongside marronage as a strategy of renegotiating and reconfiguring community. The acknowledgement of their shared queerness by Tyler becomes part of a process of marronage.

We can see the layered and intersecting operations of vagrancy and marronage within the symbolic space of the Alms House. While it functions as part of the social management and narrative of vagrancy, it also, as I have suggested in my discussion of Patricia Powell's work, exists as a queer maroon space. In extending my discussion of queer spaces of marronage offered in the previous chapter, it is important to consider how Mootoo's text also allows us to observe how a space of social alienation and 'social death' that houses bodies out of place, also potentially fosters alternate bonds of identification and intimacy beyond family and heteronormative filiations. Yet Mootoo's work importantly signals both intersecting

and diverging points of relation between vagrancy and marronage. Vagrancy can never be wholly housed within, nor is it totally separate from, the politics and patterns of marronage. Both experiences and practices occupy and facilitate differing locations within the branching narrative of colonial and neo-colonial resistance to systems of hegemony.

On the Aesthetics of Vagrancy: Tyler as Vagrant Narrator

Cereus Bloom at Night opens with a prologue which alerts us to the complex operations of vagrancy in the novel. In the prologue we meet Tyler, the narrator of the story. This introduction not only positions him as a vagrant figure but also more significantly situates the novel as vagrant text. In the prologue Tyler declares:

By setting this story down, I Tyler — that is how I am known, simply as Tyler, or if you wanted to be formal, Nurse Tyler — am placing trust in the power of the printed word to reach many people. It is my ardent hope that Asha Ramchandin, at one time a resident in the town of Paradise, Lantanacamara, will chance upon this book, wherever she may be today, and recognize herself and her family. If you are not Asha Ramchandin — who could, for all anyone knows have changed her name — but know her or someone you suspect might be her or even related to her, please present this and ask her to read it. Might I add that my own intention, as relator of this story, is not to bring notice to myself or my own plight. However I cannot escape myself, and being a narrator who also existed on the periphery of the events, I am bound to be present. I have my own laments and much to tell about myself. It is my intent however, to refrain from inserting myself too forcefully. Forgive the lapses, for there are some, and read them with the understanding that to have erased them would have been to do the same to myself. (Mootoo 1996: 3)

The prologue ostensibly marks out the limits of the narrative both in terms of the dimensions of the tale and its intended audience. Tyler seeks to locate himself on the

periphery of the narrative (in his role as narrator) and frames the narrative as addressed to Asha Ramchandin. He urges readers who encounter the text and who ‘know her or someone you suspect might be her or even related to her, [to] please present this and ask her to read it’ (Mootoo 1996: 3). But the prologue, at the same time, signals transgressions of and movement beyond these very limits. The narrative begins with a struggle to keep control of boundaries.

Vagrancy operates at several levels. Tyler, for example, acknowledges the ‘power of the printed word to reach many people’ (Mootoo 1996: 3). The word ‘reach’, in this context, does not only suggest the dynamic affective power of the written word (as discussed in the opening chapter), but also calls attention to the text as material object.⁴⁷ In his urging readers to present the text to Asha or to someone ‘you suspect might be her’ (Mootoo 1996: 3), Tyler talks of the text as an object that a reader might take up at various sites of encounter. He therefore does not foreclose the possible directions or paths of encounter with the narrative. In framing the text in this way, the reader becomes a witness to the process of vagrancy. We encounter the text as a potentially displaced or vagrant narrative.

The reader’s first encounter with Tyler is also one where he is out of place. In the first instance he searches for a correct register, a narrative location, from which to engage the reader. He introduces himself ‘simply as Tyler, or if you wanted to be formal, Nurse Tyler’ (Mootoo 1996: 3) shifting between registers. In setting out his role as narrator, he further calls attention to this search narratively to locate himself. He notes that: ‘my own intention, as relator of this story, is not to bring notice to myself or my own plight. However, I cannot escape myself, and being a narrator who also existed on the periphery of the events I am bound to be present’ (Mootoo 1996: 3). But even in this assertion of his peripheral position, there are suggestions of a

⁴⁷ The use of the word ‘reach’ here contrasts with and extends my discussion of the affective resonances of the term examined in my discussion of Cliff’s work in Chapter one of this thesis.

necessity of transgressing and moving beyond these bounds. By the end of the prologue he asserts ‘It is my intent however, to refrain from inserting myself too forcefully. Forgive the lapses, for there are some, and read them with the understanding that to have erased them would have been to do the same to myself’ (Mootoo 1996: 3). His use of the qualifying phrase ‘too forcefully’ (Mootoo 1996: 3) to describe his textual insertions and incursions does not necessarily suggest a desire not to transgress narrative bounds, but rather demonstrates a concern with how far and to what extent he might be able to do so. Within the prologue aimed at marking out the boundaries of the narrative, vagrancy is practised as well as signified.

Tyler’s vagrancy is also linked to the question of textual form elsewhere in the narrative. The opening pages of the novel offer an account of Tyler’s arrival, or rather his return, to Paradise from the Shivering North Wetlands. He notes that ‘I am sure you will agree that it was no coincidence that I and the eye of the scandal happened upon Paradise, Lantanacamera on the same day’ (Mootoo 1996: 5). This account of the arrival of a displaced figure, addressed to the reader, in many ways recalls the genre of the picaresque novel — a genre which Linda Woodbridge discusses as part of the ‘discourse of vagrancy’ (2001: 27). But while it is possible to mark connections between Mootoo’s text and this genre (as well with a broader tradition of writing about displaced figures discussed by Woodbridge as rogue literature), it is also important to pay attention to the specific circumstances framing Tyler’s arrival as well as note Mootoo’s departures from the form. Most notable here is her digression from the singular focus on the figure of the protagonist in the narrative of arrival. The opening of the novel maps two converging moments and experiences of arrival at the Paradise Alms House when Tyler writes about both the ‘I and the eye of the scandal’ (Mootoo 1996: 5). In keeping with his promise in the prologue of the text, he refuses to erase himself from the narrative. He appropriates

narrative space and time. This facilitates a complex mapping of different but converging experiences of vagrancy.

Tyler's arrival from the Shivering North Wetlands, where he has been studying nursing, is not a story of homecoming. The text maps a series of continued displacements. Firstly there is Tyler's keen sense of narrative displacement, evident in the opening pages of the novel. This experience is situated alongside his parallel practice of vagrant presence in narrating Mala's story. His appropriation of space within Mala's tale to tell of his own arrival can be read in relation to his own sense of a displacement from acknowledgement within the wider community's discourse and narrative. In the quotation cited above, Tyler notes that he and Mala arrive at the Alms House on the same day. But he also recounts how 'my arrival was quickly eclipsed by the scandal on Hill Side, the discussion of which became Paradise's favourite pastime' (Mootoo 1996: 5). Despite his supposed focus on narrating Mala's story, Tyler's comment tellingly calls attention to a keen sense of displacement. On the following page Tyler describes himself as '[b]eing an outsider at the time' of the incident and also adds, 'I suppose I still am' (Mootoo 1996: 6). These comments point to one key element of his vagrancy in the text — his sense of continually being outside. While he later appropriates this position of exclusion to bolster his own credibility as narrator of Mala's story by pointing out that he did not participate in spreading rumours about her at the time of the incidents narrated in the text, these comments point to a wound of exclusion that is at the heart of his practice and experience of vagrancy.

This sense of being out of place, suggested in the opening pages, is reinforced as the narrative progresses. It becomes more evident through Tyler's various references to being and feeling excluded from the community of nurses and the staff at the Alms House. This adds to his growing empathy and keen sense of

identification with Mala in particular, who he sees as also being an outsider. In outlining his displacement Tyler notes how he is ostracized by the matron and made to do menial tasks. He also recounts how he is singled out for abuse and ridicule by the nurses and workmen because of his sexuality. While he narrates several other incidents, two incidents especially underscore the point. In the first Tyler tells us about how he ‘was assigned — only once, thankfully — to assist Toby with fixing a leak on the roof’ (Mootoo 1996: 10). Tyler records with considerable chagrin the disdain he suffers from Toby. In a couple of sentences written in brackets in the text, Tyler succinctly recounts the ordeal. His use of brackets to tell his tale can be read as being in keeping with his assertion of his reluctance to impose himself, but also demonstrates his desire not to erase himself from the narrative. Tyler tells us:

(I will refrain from the verbal rocks he tossed in my direction and say only that he made no effort to hide his disdain for my ways. At the end of the ordeal he told me plainly that he was going to leave the job if he was ever put to work with this pansy again)’. (Mootoo 1996: 10)

In a second incident, which shows a similar pattern of exclusion, Tyler recounts an interaction with two nurses which leaves him feeling alienated:

They nodded among themselves, making additional comments, all in the same condescending tone [...] I could detail for you the number of times I have come across the same tone. I am aware of the subtleties and incremental degrees of hospitality — from the tight smile to the seemingly accidental shove — and I have run the gamut. But what would be the value of laying it all out before you. The temptation is strong I would admit, to be the romantic victim. There is in me the performer dying for the part, but I must be strict with myself and stay with my intention to narrate Mala Ramchandin’s story. (Mootoo 1996: 15)

Tyler’s accounts highlight a range of strategies of exclusion that serve to police belonging. Indeed, if Toby’s comment is registered as a particularly hostile one which overtly raises the question of sexual difference as a marker of exclusion, the incident with the nurses represents a more subtle mode of policing and distancing

along the ‘gamut’ of responses. Tyler also interestingly notes that some of these strategies are manifested in ‘tone’ rather than in the content of what is said and thus, one might argue, escape the register of the written text. Yet in these examples, what is useful to note is the fact that Tyler effectively links, hostility, vagrancy and outsidership with the question of his sexuality.

While the quotations cited above point to a reluctance to highlight his own experiences, as the text progresses (particularly after he befriends Mala and their narratives become intrinsically intersected), Tyler demonstrates a greater willingness to outline his circumstances alongside and in relation to Mala’s. His narrative acts of vagrancy, highlighted in the prologue, become more familiar and less often rationalized. In his narration of his experiences, vagrancy also becomes more consistently linked with departures from sex-gender norms. For example, Tyler tells how as a child he first came to know the story of Mala and Chandin Ramchandin from his ‘Cigarette Smoking Nana’ (Mootoo 1996: 46). This story prompted many reflections on social definitions of gender and sex roles (particularly because of the idea that a father could ‘pick up’ with his own daughter) (Mootoo 1996: 47). These reflections later inform his own decision to leave Lantacamara. His practice of vagrancy is at different temporal moments and in different ways mapped in relation to Mala’s.

Over the years I pondered the gender and sex roles that seemed available to people, and the rules that went with them. After much reflection I have come to discern that my desire to leave the shores of Lantanacamara had much to do with wanting to study abroad, but far more with wanting to be somewhere where my ‘perversion,’ which I tried diligently to shake, might be either invisible or of no consequence [...] I was preoccupied with trying to understand what was natural and what perverse, and who said so and why.
(Mootoo 1996: 47, 48)

While his return to Lantacanamara is outlined (and at the same time represented as being displaced) at the beginning of the narrative, it is only later and in light of his

ongoing narrative incursions that we learn of the reasons for his leaving in the first place. His moving out of place is linked to the fact of feeling out of place.

The passage cited above however does more than just shed light on the circumstances of Tyler's departures and returns. It also reveals much about Lavina and Sarah's subsequent flight from Lantanacamara (and their resulting departure from the narrative). Their departures are linked to transgressions of sex and gender norms. In the first instance Lavina is sent away to the Shivering North Wetlands by her father in order to divert the possibility of romantic involvement with Chandin, the young Indian from the barrackyards. The attempt at hindering the possibility of miscegenation is the subtext of her initial departure. Lavina only returns when she is engaged to be married, and the prospect of respectable middle-class domesticity with a white gentleman looms. Yet, in what we might read as an intertext to Tyler's question about notions of the perverse, Chandin when told of this pending marriage suggests that Lavina's engagement to her own cousin reeks of perversion.

Lavina's return to Lantanacamara is, however, short lived. In a surprising complication to the narrative, she becomes involved with Sarah and the two women run away together. As in Tyler's case, the decision to leave Lantanacamara is linked with explorations of alternatives to heterosexuality. The novel invites us to consider both these narratives in relation to each other by textually locating them alongside each other. The revelation of Tyler's reasons for leaving Lantanacamara immediately precedes the telling of the story of Lavina and Sarah's departure. In these parallel accounts, physical vagrancy allows for the exploration of ideas and practices of gender and sexual vagrancy.

Vagrancy, gender and sexuality are further explored in relation to each other in other instances in the text. In one key moment where Tyler stands wearing a female nurse's uniform that Mala has presented to him, he describes himself as feeling

‘horribly silly, like a man who had put on women’s clothing for sheer sport and had forgotten to remove the outfit after the allotted period of fun’ (Mootoo 1996: 77). But he also tells us ‘my body felt as if it was metaphorphosing’ (Mootoo 1996: 76) and further describes himself as ‘Not a man and not ever able to be a woman, suspended nameless in the limbo state between existence and nonexistence’ (1996: 77). His signification of movement and distance in his description of his bodily sensations and feelings marks one invocation of vagrancy in the scene. However, it is through the references to Mala’s actions at this point in the narrative that we are able to most clearly see Mootoo’s linking of the practice of vagrancy and this act of gender transgression. His gender vagrancy in this moment is no longer primarily marked by isolation. As Tyler emerges from behind a screened-off area of the room, dressed as described in the passage above, Mala is presented busily moving around the room constructing a tower of furniture. Tyler recalls:

She had already set a straight back chair on the table in front of the window. On top of that she placed a stool that and was now preparing to stand on her bed and place an empty drawer on the pinnacle. Just as I was hoping the tower would come crashing down and extinguish me forever, a revelation came. The reason Miss Ramchandin paid me no attention was that to her mind, the outfit was not something to congratulate or scorn — it simply was. She was not one to manacle nature, and I sensed that she was permitting mine its freedom. (Mootoo 1996: 77)

Tyler’s reading of Mala’s reaction as well as his reference to being in a ‘limbo state’ invokes a discourse associated with the plantation (Mootoo 1996, 77). This is extended by his references to oppositional states of being manacled and permitted freedom. Within this discourse of being bound and free, states of marronage and vagrancy can be complexly discovered and explored.

But the scene also draws on experiences and images of vagrancy more specific to the text. Mala’s rearranging of the furniture can be read as symbolic of unsettling

normative domestic arrangements. It thus becomes a symbol of Tyler's own embodied state at this moment in the narrative. His wearing of the dress challenges normative relations of sex and gender that circulate and are passed on in the community of Paradise, and which serve as organizing foundations for family and home. The rearranging of the furniture also rehearses another significant moment of vagrancy that is recounted later in the text, but which chronologically precedes the scenes in the Alms House.

Towards the end of the book, Tyler narrates a definitive moment in Mala's physical vagrancy which marks her alienation from the Ramchandin house. It follows belatedly on the flight of her mother, Sarah, and her sister, Asha. At the moment when her father is fatally wounded Mala builds a tower of furniture, blocking entry to the house:

She dreaded the idea of sleep and refused to do so inside the house. She jumped up and ran into her room and dragged a dresser an arm chair and a stool into the centre of the drawing room. She went into her father's room and did the same with his furniture [...] She worked until she had created an admirable wall that was almost impenetrable. It would be dangerous to anyone who tried to dismantle it...When she finished she went out on the verandah. In the frothy wind that wildly stirred the trees in the yard she sat and waited. She never lit a lantern in that house again. Nor did she, since that day, pass a night inside its walls. (Mootoo 1996, 230)

The image of stacked furniture — out of place — links both these scenes. The knowledge of this later scene, and the consideration of its relationship to the former, allows us to read the signification of vagrancy in the earlier episode between Mala and Tyler. While the wall that Mala constructs in the later scene functions as a separating and a protective wall, its erection marks her moment of departure from the house. In much the same way, in the earlier scene, the text uses a similar trope of reorganization of domestic objects to signal Tyler's own vagrancy from fixed gender

locations, as well as to signify both their complex relationship to space, place, and belonging.

Tyler's vagrancy is then directly situated in relation to Mala's. Yet Tyler's narrative vagrancy also serves to facilitate other narrative intrusions and diversions throughout the text. It proves difficult to think of the operations of vagrancy in solely individual terms. The politics of empathy that binds Tyler to Mala also serve to facilitate bonds of identification with other figures. Tyler, for example, recalls and recounts the story of Mr Hector's brother, Randy who is led from his home by his mother because 'the fellas in the village used to threaten to beat he up', and because 'Pappy used to beat him bad-bad, just for talking so' (Mootoo 1996: 73). Much like the nurses' veiled comments about Tyler, the reference to 'talking so' becomes a linguistic surrogate for signalling a departure from gender and sexual norms. As in Tyler's case, the acknowledgement of gender and sexual vagrancy also results in a physical departure from home.

The intersections between Tyler's and Randy's narrative locate it as another vagrant narrative. It is bound within the narrative frame but is also out of place in as much as it is also about being out of place. However, while they transgress and can never be fully housed within the narrative frame, Tyler suggests it is necessary to recall and retrace these narratives. This idea informs his appropriation of space in the prologue to the novel. As Tyler notes, 'to have erased them would have been to do the same to myself' (Mootoo 1996: 3). A similar idea is expressed in Mr Hector's telling of the story of his brother. Mr Hector tells us: 'I miss him bad but if I talk about him Mammy used to cry, so I stop and as time pass it was like he didn't ever exist. Is like you bring Randy back to me boy' (Mootoo 1996; 73). Tyler's presence helps to recall and re-situate another vagrant narrative. Mootoo's novel as vagrant text, and Tyler as vagrant narrator, offers one site where vagrant narratives — and in

particular what we can consider narratives of sexual vagrancy and their alternatives to heteropatriarchy — can be remembered and potentially, if only partially, housed. The process of narrative vagrancy is practised alongside the risk of vanishing away. We must therefore read the text as simultaneously marking, as well as offering a response to, the condition and experience of vagrancy. The consideration of marronage, with its collective dimensions, and its relationship to vagrancy allows us to engage with this dual narrative purpose.

On the Strategies of Vagrancy: Mala as Vagrant Character

While a shared queerness and a mutual practice of vagrancy links Mala and Tyler it is important to note that their vagrancy is practised in different ways. Tyler is a transgressing presence in the story — a vagrant presence — while Mala consistently engages in flight from narrative. Her vagrancy is often marked by strategies of absence and distance. This difference is signified at the outset, in the prologue, where Tyler effectively complicates his own ‘peripheral’ narrative location as ‘relator’ of the story. But the prologue, at the same time, never manages to centre Mala as the focus of the narrative. In fact she becomes a displaced presence. She is never mentioned by name in the prologue. The challenge to locate her continues throughout the novel. Alternating absences and presence, her withdrawal from language, erratic mumblings, along with manifestations both as Pohpoh and Mala, all become part of the textual struggle to narrate her and the struggle to keep control of

the boundaries of the narrative.

Tyler highlights Mala's narrative vagrancy in his discussion of the various rumours that circulated about her in the town of Paradise, particularly at the time of his arrival. According to Tyler:

It is an interesting quirk of fate that for all the prattling by almost everyone at the time, sowing and tilling and reaping idle rumours about the Ramchandin family, and for all the scant attention paid to my presence, I am the one who ended up knowing the truth, every significant and insignificant bit of it. (Mootoo 1996: 7)

Tyler's description of Mala's narrative elusiveness interestingly utilizes references to plantation labouring practices. If in the prologue to the text, his own description as being 'bound to be present' recalls the plantation labour regime, and serves to parallel that experience of labour and its practices of observing and situating bodies in place with his narrative labour, Tyler's description of the community's practice of 'sowing and tilling and reaping idle rumours about the Ramchandin family' (Mootoo 1996: 7) further extends the metaphor of the plantation. In relation to this narrative economy, Mala emerges as a vagrant figure — one that variously eludes, or at least is situated in a tenuous relationship to, regimes of narrative labour.

Acknowledging Mala's complex relationship to various narrative sources, Tyler later (deploying another metaphor) describes his task as one of 'fashioning a single garment out of myriad parts' (Mootoo 1996: 105). He draws on village gossip, his Cigarette Smoking Nana's stories, letters from Mala's sister and accounts from Otoh and Ambrose Mohanty. These all revise and extend different narrative accounts. However, Tyler's claims to definitive knowledge are mostly a result of the fact of having physical access to Mala herself. Yet as Rebecca Ashworth notes 'there is, however, nothing to verify Tyler's assertion that Mala, now a traumatized old lady, utters anything more than animal and bird sounds or the word "Pohpoh"' (2010:

45). Without dismissing the potential insights that Tyler's relational positioning to Mala offers, I want to further argue that even when she is seen to engage in relating her own story, whether deliberately or not, Mala practices narrative vagrancy — a mode of recounting details that is disjointed, rambling and difficult to follow. This undermines Tyler's definitive claims to knowledge of the whole story.

After becoming Mala's caretaker at the Alms House, Tyler describes her as having 'volume of tales and thoughts in her head' (Mootoo 1996: 99). He also recounts instances of attempting to write down her stories. He notes:

She rambled under her breath all day and all night, as long as she and I were alone. Seconds before someone else approached, as though she were trained to hear the stealthiest footfall, she would become flatly silent [...] I began to recognize in her mutterings elements of the legendary rumors [...] I started to jot down everything she said, no matter how erratic her train of thought appeared to be. When she saw me awaiting her next word and writing it down as she uttered it, she drew nearer [...] She spoke rapidly and with great urgency, in a low monotone, repeating herself sometimes for hours without end. There was little doubt that I was being given a dictation, albeit without punctuation marks or subject breaks. I scribbled down and when she took to repeating parts, I caught my breath and rested my cramped fingers. (Mootoo 1996: 99, 100)

Tyler's reference to 'how erratic her train of thought appeared to be' represents an acknowledgement of this vagrancy. He further describes her as 'rambl[ing]', 'muttering', 'becom[ing] flatly silent', '[speaking] rapidly and with great urgency', 'repeating herself sometimes for hours without end' (Mootoo 1996: 99). In many ways, it is left to Tyler to make sense of these utterings, to figure out and map the narrative connections, punctuations and the subject breaks. Yet even the text that emerges from the contact between Mala and Tyler, which has been shaped by Tyler's narrative labour, still evidences elements of narrative vagrancy. The novel is marked by breaks which abruptly shift the scene of focus. It moves dexterously across space and time. It repeats and retraces sections of the story. Characters enter and abruptly leave. Beginnings and endings complexly merge. Shifts and mergings open up new

narrative intimacies and proximities.

Not only is Tyler's narrative labour and Mala's vagrancy evident in the shaping of story recounted, but Mala as represented in the text is also primarily shaped by Tyler's readings. Tyler is constantly represented as attempting to read her gestures, movements and interactions. This serves to foreground their relationship but also situates Tyler as a mediating presence. His readings, Rebecca Ashworth notes, function to 'rehearse empathy' (2011: 48) — a process of identifying with Mala, but creates narrative distance. In one passage that offers a reading of Mala, Tyler declares:

I felt an empathy for her clenched fists, defiant stare, pursed lips and deep slow calculating breathing — an empathy words cannot describe [...] I detected a glint of stubborn independence quite different from the easy reliance and uncontested compliance the other residents seemed to thrive on...my intuition was that the woman on the bed was going to be neither crazy nor failing in health, and that she would fare better given more freedom. On the other hand, perhaps my intuition was nothing more than a recalcitrant yearning, for I did fancy that she and I shared a common reception from the rest of the world. (Mootoo 1996: 19, 20)

It is hard not to read allusions to marronage in the passage above. The references to 'her clenched fists, defiant stare, pursed lips and deep slow calculating breathing' invoke a spirit of defiance — 'a glint of stubborn independence' (Mootoo 1996: 19) — often associated with stories of marronage and with accounts of maroon figures such as Nanny of the Maroons. This link is further reiterated in the passage's clamour for more freedom.

But there are also elements of vagrancy to be observed here. Tyler's use of phrases such as 'I detected', 'my intuition was', 'I did fancy' all indicate a process of searching for and trying to locate Mala (Mootoo 1996: 20). This complicates his straightforward assertion of knowledge of her. His process of reading is rendered necessary, as at this particular point in the narrative Mala withdraws from language.

As Alison Donnell notes, Mala retreats ‘from language — the basic link to the social world — embedding herself more deeply and securely in a natural world’ (2006: 234). Tyler’s comment at the end of the passage succinctly highlights the difficulty of locating Mala. Tyler notes, ‘perhaps my intuition was nothing more than a recalcitrant yearning’ (Mootoo 1996: 20). Even in his observations of Mala from a relatively close distance, she remains elusive. As Tyler himself acknowledges, his observations, effectively suggest more about himself and his motivations than they actually reveal about Mala.

Mala’s elusive relationship to various attempts to read and narrate her is also indicated by the novel’s references to letters. Towards the end of the narrative, Tyler recounts the discovery of a series of letters written by Asha to her sister. John Corr describes them as ‘belated letters that function as an epilogue’ to the narrative (2005: 68). These letters offer a sense of Asha’s experience of vagrancy in as much as they signify Mala’s vagrancy. Tyler recounts:

Over the course of eight years, Asha had written Mala enough letters to fill the box. The majority were sent from Upnorth in the far end of Lantanacamara. Several were mailed from the Shivering North Wetlands and one card from Canada.
(Mootoo 1996: 243)

The letters trace Asha’s movement across several spaces including her journey to Canada, a location hitherto outside paths of crossing primarily explored in the geography of the text. But while the letters serve to trace out Asha’s experiences and movement, they never definitively locate her. Asha states at one point ‘[y]ou can write to me at the above address. That is not where I am staying but I go there to collect my letters’ (Mootoo 1996: 244). This sense of obscurity of location and distance is also conveyed in the opening prologue, which frames the text itself as a letter to Asha, one which remains undelivered because of an inability to precisely locate her.

The discovery of Asha's letters also reminds us of the fact that all the Ramchandin women, not just Mala, experience vagrancy. However these letters serve to distinguish their various experiences of vagrancy. Asha's differs from that of her mother who departs from narrative space altogether, never reappearing after her flight with her lover, Lavina. Tyler notes '[n]one of [the letters] suggested she had made any inroads in contacting her mother or her mother's lover' (Mootoo 1996: 245). But the letters also clearly signal Mala's vagrancy. This is firstly indicated by the fact that they remain undelivered for eight years. Tyler tells us '[n]one of Asha's letters were ever delivered because the righteous postman, deeming the Ramchandin house to be a place of sin and moral corruption, refused to go up there' (Mootoo 1996: 243). The postman's failure to deliver the letters signals Mala's dislocation from the community. Although Asha leaves and Mala stays in Lantanacamara, they both become displaced figures.

The reasons for the non-delivery of the letters also serve to link Mala's vagrancy to Tyler's, discussed in the previous section. Both Tyler and Mala become vagrant figures due to the social legislation and judgements about sex and sexuality. Although the specifics of their narratives differ significantly (Mala is known in the community as having been sexually abused by her father, while Tyler is known as a homosexual) they are likewise viewed by the community, as the postman's actions reveal, as inhabiting and traversing locations outside of the social parameters of acceptable sexual practice and the social codification of normative home arrangements. But the letters also highlight Mala's vagrancy in other ways. If these letters, recounted at the end of the text, offer us Asha's albeit intermittent and elliptical narration of her life away from Lantanacamara, it also exposes the lack of any similar sort of narrative input or intervention from Mala. These letters significantly offer us an account of how Asha felt at different moments. For example

she writes to Mala telling her: 'I think of you every day and night. I love you and miss you' (Mootoo 1996: 244). Noting Mala's lack of reply, she later writes: 'I am so sad that I didn't hear from you' (Mootoo 1996: 245). On the other hand, we are never given this kind of direct or any self-narrated account of Mala's feelings or emotions. Her story is told in the third person and narrated by Tyler. Thus there is always mediated, narrative distance.

The narrative also moves between alternating references to Mala and to Pohpoh. This functions as another means of displacement. In her letters Asha notably refers to Mala as Pohpoh. The use of this childhood nickname serves as a sign of affection between siblings. But the shift between names also occurs elsewhere in the text and functions as another indicator of vagrancy. Vivian May argues that references to Pohpoh indicate 'a psychic split into the adult Mala who cares for the child Mala (Pohpoh)' (2004: 99). She describes this as indicating a form of 'exile and escape' (2004: 99). But the references to Pohpoh might also be read as part of Mala's own narrative vagrancy. It is Mala who first uses the name in the text. In the first section, Tyler recounts one of the first instances where he observes Mala repeating the word 'Pohpoh'.

That day as we strolled across the grounds a stray cat scuttled by, unsure but curious about us. Miss Ramchandin made her most decisive gesture yet. She dropped to her knees, put out her hand and meowed like a kitten [...] Miss Ramchandin rested her cheek against the cat's head and whispered her first words since her arrival. 'Pohpoh, Pohpoh,' she cooed into its ear lovingly, seeming to call the cat by name. (Mootoo 1996: 46)

It is significant that Mala uses this name to christen a stray cat. At first, Tyler reads Mala's cooing the name 'Pohpoh' as an invocation of 'a common nickname affectionately given to children and I supposed not an unnatural name for a kitten as well' (Mootoo 1996: 46). But Tyler (as well as the reader) soon comes to realize that she intones her own nickname. This action evidences a kind of psychic and narrative

dislocation which leads the community to dismiss Mala as mad. But her interaction with the stray cat in the scene above also becomes a physical reminder and a symbol of her vagrancy. The stray cat becomes an image of vagrant Mala. In christening the cat Pohpoh she acknowledges their shared vagrancy.

References to Pohpoh invariably recur throughout the text in passages which narrate moments of escape and flight. Pohpoh is described ‘jump[ing] out the window, effortless[ly] leap[ing] to the moist grass below’, and moving with ‘catlike sure-footedness’ (Mootoo 1996: 146) throughout the neighbourhood. In the narration of these childhood scenes, she is also seen ‘perched like a gargoyle on a window sill’, entering and exiting the houses of different families, ‘her eyes searchlights surveying the quiet street and the neighbours’ yards’ (Mootoo 1996: 147). From various vantage points such as roofs, windows, gardens, she constantly observes the lives of neighbourhood families. Yet the occupation of these positions comes to signify her experience of outsidership.

One of the last scenes which invoke Pohpoh occurs at the moment when Mala is taken into police custody. As the ‘officers wrestle the wriggling old lady’ (Mootoo 1996: 186), she is seen urging Pohpoh to flee.

‘Run, run, fast, Pohpoh, run’ Mala mumbled. Pohpoh nimbly passed the officers on the stairs and reached the drawing room first. At the top of the stairs the officers put Mala down and watched her tip her head in the direction of the verandah. ‘The verandah,’ she whispered. ‘You could take off from the verandah.’ Mala followed by the curious officers hobbled onto the verandah. (Mootoo 1996: 185)

The passage dramatically parallels Mala’s capture with Pohpoh’s escape. It culminates with an image of Pohpoh flying ‘like a frigate bird, splayed out against the sky in an elegant V. Down below, her island was soon lost among others, all as shapeless as specks of dust adrift on a vast turquoise sea’ (Mootoo 1996: 186). This image of flight, set against the turquoise sea, reminds us of Dionne Brand’s

representations of marronage discussed in Chapter two where she consistently invokes bodies in flight. As with Brand's work, here we are offered images of departure but never a return to the ground of certainty. In reading this scene, and its counterpointing of simultaneous containment and flight, we ultimately realize that while much is captured and contained in the telling of Mala's narrative, much also escapes. While the novel ultimately raises questions about how and whether Mala's experience can be fully narrated, the text suggests that what is significant is Tyler's empathetic process of bearing witness to Mala's social and narrative vagrancy, in as much as Mala bears witness to Tyler's sexual vagrancy.

Vagrancy and Marronage

This process of bearing witness and the fact of empathy evident in *Cereus Blooms at Night* opens up possibilities for alternative affinities, communities, and intimacies. The novel both describes and facilitates varying connections through its attention to practices of mobility (gender, social, locational). In much the same way that readers come to the text at different sites of encounter bearing witness to experiences of vagrancy, characters also come together in different ways at different moments of being out of place. Vivian May notes that in *Cereus Blooms at Night* 'Mootoo weaves together multiple histories of dispossession conceptualized as separate' (2004: 97). Tyler's realization and assertion of a shared queerness between himself and Mala is only one of the several intersecting narratives of dislocation and

displacement recounted in the novel. The text's attempt to bear witness to and, in effect, offer a kind of haven for these various vagrant narratives, results in queer intimacies and proximities of relation.

While stories of vagrancy narrated in the text, for the most part, trace departures from family and family homes as primary sites of relation, the novel at the same time does not offer any fixed alternatives. Instead it makes visible other possibilities and modes of relation. The relationship between Mala and Tyler becomes exemplary of alternative possibilities for intimacies built on bonds of mutual identification and caring. As John Corr notes: '[t]heir relationship is tentative at first, as the two do not seem to share much except for their common experience of being queered by everyone else. Tyler explains, however, that a mutual recognition of shared queerness creates the opportunity for life-saving trust and support' (2005: 69). Mutual experiences of dislocation allow characters to come together in empathetic ways. Much like Patricia Powell's novel *A Small Gathering of Bones* in which, because of their experiences of social death (dislocation from familial and social belonging,) characters engage in queer marronage, Mootoo's dislocated vagrants also negotiate queer forms of affective intimacy and empathy. They likewise engage in forms of marronage. In several instances, though not all, strategies of community are necessarily mobilized and mapped alongside and in relation to vagrancy in order to bear witness to their negotiation and occupation of various alternate social and affective locations. While narratives such as that of Mr Hector's brother Randy only recount moments of dislocation and individual vagrancy, the central narratives of Mala and Tyler, among others, also allow us to observe the workings of queer marronage.

In mapping the mobilization of vagrancy and marronage in *Cereus Blooms at Night*, I do not advance a reading of the text that traces movement from individual

alienation to community or from vagrancy to queer marronage. Rather, I suggest that they both function as parallel and intersecting operations throughout the narrative. In as much as Tyler's vagrancy can be mapped in the prologue, there are also traces of marronage to be observed here. In many ways marronage is perceived opaquely mainly through allusive references or through symbolic imagery. The language of the text allows for a recognition of echoes and traces of vagrancy and marronage. Marronage as a form of mobility is also signalled in Tyler's discussions of creative and subversive uses of peripheral spaces in his mapping of the geography of the novel.

The prologue of the novel notably functions to situate Tyler relationally. By this I do not just invoke his complex negotiation of centre/periphery boundaries, but also the intimacies and proximities of relation suggested. Tyler's assertion in the prologue that 'I am bound to be present' (Mootoo 1996: 3) on one level evokes the image of the labourer bound to the plantation. This functions as a metaphor for describing his own narrative labour. But the notion of being 'bound to be present' also suggests another register and dimension of bonding. It signifies an affective bond. His relationship with Mala, which he describes as 'a shared queerness', is part of the necessity of being present. It binds him to her in the process of bearing witness to her story. He is at once represented as being willed to be there, but also as being willing to be there.

In thinking about the signification of marronage in the prologue, it is necessary to consider its signalling not only of social possibilities, but also of narrative possibilities. In Tyler's strategic use, occupation and transgression of 'the periphery' we see manifestations of elements of marronage (Mootoo 1996: 3). In particular, Tyler's assertion of an intention 'not to bring notice to myself or my own plight' is an enactment of maroon guerilla subjectivities. It calls to mind the strategies of

veiled incursions and infiltrations by which Maroons effectively appropriated space, often ‘not too forcefully’ (Mootoo 1996: 3) within colonial geographies.

As with historical marronage, Tyler’s appropriations of narrative space and time are strategically linked to survival. According to Tyler, ‘to have erased them would have been to do the same to myself’ (Mootoo 1996: 3). Eddie Whyte discusses Tyler’s act of narrating himself as a useful symbol for a broader interrogation of the politics of narrating queerness within the Caribbean literary canon. Reading Tyler’s insertions into the narrative through Ian Smith’s critical discussions of the silencing and strategic negation of issues of same sex sexuality and desire in Caribbean discourse, he argues that ‘[Tyler’s] narration (re)defines the possibilities for queer subjects in the Caribbean literary canon’ (2011: 87). Tyler’s active process of claiming space within Mala’s narrative becomes a reflection of the wider politics and process of narrating queer subjects in Caribbean discourse examined in this thesis. In extending Whyte’s discussion, I want to further note that we must also necessarily explore and consider the strategies and concerns which are a part of this process of narration. In this regard, marronage as utilized in several texts discussed here provides a useful framework for understanding Tyler’s narrative, his strategies and concerns, but it also allows us to think of alternatives to experiences to alienation and displacement.

In so far as marronage is signalled in the prologue of the text, it is also evident in other italicized portions of the narrative. These mark the start of the first and second segments of the novel. The use of this device helps to signal and even spatialize some of the parallel operations of marronage and vagrancy. In a brief paragraph offered at the start of the second segment of the narrative, Tyler narrates his awareness of a developing deeper affective connections with other queer people in Paradise. Most notably he recounts his growing attention to Otoh Mohanty, one of

Mala Ramchandin's visitors to the Alms House. Otoh like Tyler also engages in gender vagrancy. Otoh is born a girl but through an extraordinary act of self-will convinces the community that 'he (she) was really and truly meant to be a boy' (Mootoo 1996: 110). According to the novel 'the child walked and ran and dressed and talked and tumbled and all but relieved himself so much like an authentic boy that Elsie [his mother] soon apparently forgot that she had ever given birth to a girl [...] The transformation was flawless' (Mootoo 1996: 110). Embodied movements — dress as well as ways of walking — are all part of a movement away from a socially fixed gendered location. Otoh's story can be situated alongside Tyler's, particularly the consideration of how they both use modes of dress as part of their practice of gender vagrancy.

After these two characters meet, the novel narrates their increased attachment. Tyler digresses from Mala's narrative, in the opening section of the second part of the novel to recount the development of their mutual affection:

The temptation to digress from my mission and to relate every scintillating detail of the romantic blossoming of my knowledge of Otoh Mohanty is overwhelming. And every detail, at least in my estimation, because this was the first experience I had that actually occurred outside the realm of my fertile imagination, seems like nothing less than scintillating. I must remind myself, however, that Mala Ramchandin's story is my prime purpose here. Asha, if you are reading this, all I will say is that, thanks to your sister, my own life has finally — and not too late I might add — begun to bloom. Enough said. Now I will exercise restraint. You will hear little more of me as I apply myself to the story of Mala Ramchandin, fashioning a single garment out of myriad parts...
(Mootoo 1996: 105)

If Tyler is represented in the prologue as being bound to be present in the telling of Mala's story, these views of and wanderings into descriptions of Otoh, signify moments of flight. But these are not simply to be read in relation to vagrancy. The text allusively situates this narrative within a discourse and symbolic imagery of marronage.

As with the history of marronage, Tyler's description above signals how some of the most intriguing and strategically important happenings occur in spaces marked as peripheral. In describing one of Otoh's early visits, Tyler further tells us:

Lost in conversation we wandered outside the property and ended up on a trace in the cane field. From then on Otoh became a regular visitor. Sometimes he came twice in a week always during my off-hours. We would meet away from curious eyes on the periphery of the grounds. Propriety restrains me from detailing just how alluring cane can be when a falsetto trill long trapped in your heart is bursting forth. (Mootoo 1996: 123)

The reference to the use of the 'periphery of the grounds' in this section parallels the reference to strategic use of peripheral narrative spaces in the prologue of the text (Mootoo 1996: 123). The opening sentence of the passage cited above also links narrative departures and spatial departures. Tyler and Otoh are described as 'lost in conversation' while at the same time 'wander[ing] outside the property' (Mootoo 1996: 123). In a reverse mapping of plantation geographies, the outside of the property is represented as a cane field. There among the canes, Tyler and Otoh engage in their own kind of maroon subversion. Their remapping is more than a complication of inside/outside limits. If the cane fields are historically figured as 'landscapes of work', (Tinsley 2010: 15) they are appropriated here as landscapes of queer desire. Mootoo's writing thus also engages in remapping familiar tropes of Caribbean landscape and labour to reveal alternative and layered erotic geographies, as well as to shed light on the appropriations of space — the acts of marronage and vagrancy which queer people practice. In her work on desire between women in Caribbean fiction, Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley describes this as 'engag[ing] historically specific, previously unmapped erotic geographies, looking for what resistant sexualities mean outside the metropole (Tinsley 2011, 3). These fields of relation Tinsley notes can also be the canefields which exist as scenes of intimacy which are often obscured by the visibility of spaces and narratives of coming out and

their defining geographies (Tinsley 2010: 3).

In relating his encounter with Otoh in the cane fields, Tyler comments that ‘propriety restrains me from detailing just how alluring cane can be when a falsetto trill long trapped in your heart is breaking forth’ (Mootoo 1996: 123). As represented here, queer marronage is not only signalled through references to space and reimaginings of space, but also through sound. The passage opens with the descriptions of Otoh and Tyler ‘lost in conversation’, and closes with another reference to sound (Mootoo 1996: 123). Tyler’s mention of a ‘falsetto trill trapped in your heart [...] bursting forth’ recalls the sound of the abeng discussed in the first chapter. As Michelle Cliff notes, the abeng functioned to call maroons into spaces of gathering, and to signal potential moments of liberation for those confined within the plantation (Mootoo 1996: 123). The abeng also punctuated maroon raids. It seems appropriate then that the instrument should signify the coming together of these two characters, and moreover be invoked in relation to this moment of desire breaking forth described by Tyler.

Otoh’s own comments about the relationship between himself and Tyler likewise employs a discourse of queer marronage. On the same page that narrates the previous encounter, Tyler recalls another visit by Otoh.

On one visit, after a long walk we came to rest in the shade among the exposed roots of a wild mango tree. Otoh tended to be self-reflective and philosophical, even mildly morose at such time. ‘You ever feel like someone come and tief your mind from you?’ he said. (Mootoo 1996: 123)

The image of bodies at rest in this scene serves as a counterpoint to the references to labour and movement to be found throughout the novel. But it is Otoh’s question at the end of the passage invoking queer marronage that serves as a frame of reference for understanding the relationship between these two characters. Otoh describes his bonding with Tyler in terms of someone ‘tief[ing] your mind from you’ (Mootoo

1996: 123) — a question which recalls the complex issues of desire, possession and belonging which framed the plantation experience. Much like Elizete in *In Another Place, Not Here*, who describes her desire for Verlia as an act of ‘theifing sugar’, Otoh’s description of the bond shared with Tyler invokes the transgression of the maroon, particularly the transgressive act of thieving, which challenged planter discourses of belonging, and often transgressed the policing of mobility. The reference to thieving becomes one way of describing the maroon act of claiming space and affinity where they were thought not to exist or belong.

Tyler, in turn, invokes the symbol of the night blooming cereus in describing his growing bond with Otoh. In the passage which precedes the second section of the novel, Tyler writes to Asha:

Asha, if you are reading this, all I will say is that, thanks to your sister, my own life has finally — and not too late I might add — begun to bloom. (Mootoo 1996: 105)

The use of the word ‘bloom’ here recalls the title of the text and the night blooming cereus, which becomes a metaphor for the possibility of community and moments of affective flourishing between characters. It signifies Tyler’s connection to Mala but also, in the wider context of the passage, his connection to Otoh. The aptness of the flower as a symbol for narrating these relations is in many ways linked to the fact that it blooms at night. It reminds us of how marronage emerges from moments of social negation, marginality, and social death and spaces of darkness.

In the flower’s first invocation in the novel, Tyler notes how Mr Hector views the cereus as ‘an unruly network of limp green leaves. Too gangly, he said, to be kept in a garden under his charge’ (Mootoo 1996: 5). While the plant is not directly linked to Tyler and his circumstances, his mention of its exclusion from Mr Hector’s garden precedes his own reference to himself as an outsider. His notice of the flower becomes linked to his practice of empathy evident throughout the text. The

description of the plant as gangly also precedes the opening description of Mala, which focuses on her emaciated body. Like the cereus, she is first presented as a gangly figure and as the object of social, even institutional, exclusion by the matron who protests her initial admittance to the Alms House.

Parallels between Mala and the flower are reinforced later in the text. On one occasion when Otoh visits the Ramchandin house and encounters Mala in the garden, we are given the following description of her.

Mala Ramchandin. She sat in a rocking chair beside the tree, her eyes closed. Her figure was all but lost in the blueness of the mudra's trunk. She wore a petticoat, greens and browns and light blues, that blended into the background of leaves and gnarled, twisted limbs [...] She was no bird, he thought. She was thin, indeed, but her height, dwarfing the rocker, surprised him [...] [H]e could so easily have missed her mistaken her for a shrub. (Mootoo 1996: 155)

This moment of encounter highlights strategic use of visibility and invisibility. Like the maroons, Mala uses guerilla practices as part of her negotiation and occupation of space. Her description here echoes historical and literary accounts of maroon ambush. It also recalls descriptions of the cereus that run throughout the text. Not only does the passage present Mala as a gangly figure, but the foregrounding of practices of visibility and invisibility in the passage recalls the duality of the cereus highlighted by Tyler at various moments, such as when the plant is brought to the Alms House. Tyler notes how 'without blossoms the plant appears to be little more than an uninteresting tangle of leafage [...] without blossoms the plant soon became as much a part of the room as her bedpan and even I forgot all about it' (Mootoo 1996: 22). But he also at the same time comments that 'in bloom it is stunningly gorgeous' (Mootoo 1996: 22).

This duality is also highlighted in the account of Mala's introduction to the cereus, told later in the novel. Mala is first introduced to the plant when it is brought

by Lavina to Sarah's garden.

Lavina loved the freedom and wildness in Sarah's garden, so unlike her mother's well ordered colour-coordinated beds. She brought clippings and whole plants ripped from Mrs Thoroughly's garden, the fresh, rich dirt still under her fingernails. She brought flame ixoras for Sarah, and one memorable day she arrived with cactus plants, one each for Pohpoh and Asha. Cereus she called them, pronounced like the bright, fuzzy star, a climbing succulent whose leaves and trunk were ragged and unsightly until they bloomed. (Mootoo 1996: 54)

The description of the plant as 'ragged and unsightly' echoes its previous descriptions as a 'tangle of leafage' and as 'gangly'. These descriptions however contrast with the accounts of the flower in bloom. Differing perspectives about the cereus parallels the multiple ways in which Mala herself is viewed by the community. Tyler points out early in the narrative how the villagers engage in 'sowing and reaping idle rumours' about Mala — his botanical metaphor symbolically linking both Mala and the cereus (Mootoo 1996: 77).

The account of the introduction of the plant into Sarah's garden highlights another significant feature of the cereus. It is constantly represented as being snapped from roots, relocated and replanted. Vivian May notes that 'Mala's particular cereus plant has been transplanted many times; yet under special care, with a little shelter, it thrives on its own terms' (May 2004: 105). Tracing its journey through several sites, May notes that 'the first cutting from which Mala's cereus grew actually came from the Reverend Thoroughly's formal garden', as evidenced in the quotation above. She goes on to point out that 'It was later taken by Lavinia to express her love for Sarah, left by Sarah and Lavinia when they escaped Lantanacamara, then transplanted once more for Mala by Otoh when Mala arrives at the Paradise Alms House (May 2004: 105). Despite its 'ragged and unsightly' nature when not in bloom, the cereus in several of these transplantations functions to signal the promise of deepening affective bonds. Not only does the novel recount the plant being given by Lavina to

Sarah before the revelation of their relationship, but it is later taken to Mala and Tyler by Ambrose and Otoh Mohanty. Its presentation precedes but also seems to foreshadow the deepening bonds between these characters, and harkens moments of affective flowering.

This motif of transplantation and the recurring accounts of the plant being broken from its roots functions as one of the most visible symbols of the process of queer marronage and of vagrancy in Mootoo's novel. As I have argued throughout this thesis, manifestations and strategies of queer maroon community emerge from moments of rupture from genealogical belonging and displacement, loss, social death, forgetting. In Mootoo's text, the constant cutting and replanting of the cereus symbolizes the experience of several characters, including Mala and Tyler. They are vagrant figures who are not securely rooted in place. But Mootoo's novel does not just highlight and narrate these moments of displacement and vagrancy. It also narrates the moments of flowering of alternate bonds and affective relationships — the friendships that bloom in the wake of, but also under the threat of, displacement and relocation. These relationships bloom in unexpected and often unobserved moments of affective coming together and coordination. Mootoo's text insists that we pay attention not only to the moments of dislocation, but also to the importance and magnificence of the cereus blooms at night.

Conclusion

Both marronage and vagrancy are relationally and intimately mapped in Shani Mootoo's novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*. This relational mapping provides one avenue for revisiting and reconsidering how both modes of anti-colonial mobility

facilitated multiple and recursive patterns of movement away from the plantation as a dominant scene of relations, while opening up other, alternative scenes of intimacy. By using vagrancy and marronage, plantation labourers not only managed to elude the regulatory and colonizing gaze that sought to fix them in place, but also necessarily complicated the narrative recounting of their lives. Yet while the plantation casts a shadow over the lives of Mootoo's characters, the novel does not represent these practices as historically bound or located. As I have argued here, in Mootoo's work vagrancy and marronage map strategies and shifting points of relations mobilized in response to contemporary social hegemonies and intimacies, which have also sought to fix and regulate lives. While critics such as Carter and Torabully have more generally sought to clarify and demarcate the relationship between marronage and vagrancy, Mootoo's work demonstrates their parallel but also overlapping sites and modes of relations. Like the cereus's complex tangle of leafage and its 'unruly network of limp green leaves', the novel reminds us of how vagrancy extends to a range of sites and relations. The text maps the operations of vagrancy and its resulting patterns of displacement and experiences of being out of place. But it also keeps in sight the moments of flourishing that open possibilities for new and renewed intimacies and encounters. It thus signals how queer marronage, as discussed here, might be situated and considered within an 'enormous branching narrative' of relations. But the text never forecloses the possibilities for new tangles and networks of intimacy, nor does it foreclose links with the past.

The novel closes with the promise of the cereus blooming. Recalling the opening representation of the novel as a vagrant text in search of its reader, the closing passage also signals possibilities of encounters and moments of flourishing. It does not solely focus on the concretization of intimacies between Tyler and Mala. Tyler writes to Asha, in the closing passage.

We await a letter and better yet, your arrival. She expects you any day soon. You are, to her, the promise of a cereus scented breeze on a Paradise night. (Mootoo 1996: 249)

In as much as the novel bears witness to dislocations, transplantations and flourishings, vagrancy and queer marronage, it also signals the promise of other moments of flourishing, other shifts, proximities and networks of relations. Queer marronage and vagrancy in Mootoo's work are situated within a branching network of mobilities, intersections and intimacies.

Chapter Five

Conclusion:

Abeng Resounded

The four chapters in this thesis have offered readings of Caribbean novels which mobilise marronage as part of their representations of queerness. These texts, as I discussed in my introduction, urge reflections on the queerness of marronage: its queer strategies of affiliation, temporal disruptions and reroutings, visibility and invisibility, practices of flight, spatialization and movement which all disrupt capitalistic logics of accumulation and heteronormative narratives of lineage and linearity. But beyond this reevaluation of the historical narrative of marronage and the consideration of its queer dimensions, this thesis has also outlined marronage as a significant trope for narrating queer Caribbean lives and experiences. Queer marronage is about the queerness of marronage but also about the marronage of queers. The maroon guerrilla practices and subjectivities I have examined are not only part of the narrative of historical marronage but are also represented in the writings of Michelle Cliff, Dionne Brand, Patricia Powell and Shani Mootoo as strategies variously used by queers in their negotiations of heteropatriarchy and in the construction of queer counterpublics.

The examination of the historical and tropological dimensions of marronage not only serves to reassess the frameworks and approaches to maroon studies but also queer studies where, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work has demonstrated, tropes have been significant to the articulation and understanding of the complex set of interrelations and taxonomies that animate queer theory. Sedgwick's work focuses

on the trope of the closet as essential to ‘an epistemology of sexuality’ (Ross 2005: 161). Her assertion that ‘[t]he closet is the defining structure of gay oppression in this century’ (Sedgwick 1990:71) perhaps still holds true to the extent that its discursive influence continues to be dominant in queer theory and activism. As Marlon B. Ross notes ‘[b]eyond political strategy and polemical tactics, the closet has become a philosophical concept grounding lesbian-gay history and queer theory’ (2005: 161). Despite challenges, particularly from critics of the Global South, who have sought, through a range of spatializing metaphors, to rethink the binary frameworks inherent in this trope (being in the closet/coming out, shame/pride, backwardness/enlightenment) and to challenge its emphasis on ‘coming out’ as the defining model of queer political activism, the closet persists as a naturalized part of the discourse of queer theorizing.

My examination of the use of marronage in these texts represents an attempt to highlight and explore another trope which offers possibilities for rethinking political narratives of queerness, discourses of closeting and coming out. With its representations of guerrilla subjectivities (strategic moments and spaces of visibility and invisibility) and its accompanying focus on a continuum of maroon practices (ranging from masking and subterfuge to flight and the establishment of alternative communal spaces), queer marronage serves to highlight other strategies and models of political action structured around contingent practices of affiliation, affect and activism. If queers of colour, and in particular those in the so-called ‘Third World’, have often been critiqued for not being ‘brave’, visible or political enough, I want to argue that the consideration of queer marronage and its temporal, spatial and affective contingencies highlights some of the ways in which their practices of political affiliation push against the narratives of political activism in the Global North. As Rinaldo Walcott has pointed out, those who live in the Third World ‘might

sign themselves queer in ways that might not constitute an intelligible speech act' (2005: 96) for those outside their communities of relation. These strategies of masking and revelation, visibility and invisibility discussed in this thesis notably depart from the post-Stonewall valorization of visibility as marker of political presence and progress. Rather, marronage as a mode of political action is linked to various guerrilla practices and strategies and is marked by discontinuous and contingent relationships. As I have argued throughout this thesis it represents an intervention in the present which maps out strategies of survival for contingent futures.

In each of these chapters I have sought to outline how these maroon strategies operate in relation to experiences of genealogical disruption, loss, distance and death. I have also mapped the mobilization of marronage in relation to the queernesses of our contemporary moment but also the perverse and alienating forms of domination which operated during slavery and which gave rise to New World Maroon settlements. In Chapter one I examined Michelle Cliff's sounding of the abeng as a strategy against isolation, distance, and forgetting. Cliff's work, I argued, highlights the importance of the abeng as an aural and affective tool to reach maroons variously dispersed. Her novel also explores the significance of reaching one another not just for maroons but also for queer characters who connect and touch in partial, embodied and affective ways across time. Alongside this focus on time, distance and touching in Cliff's work, Chapter two examined marronage in terms of distance, spatial and affective contingencies. Drawing on Dionne Brand's discourse of locations of 'not here' and her explorations of maroon flight, junction spaces, and movement beyond familiar identity locations, I explored queer marronage in terms of interstitial meetings between displaced characters--those who move out of, or do not know, their place. Their practices of maroon flight are represented as resulting in

intimacies which defy and elude the fixity of identity discourses. Brand's articulation of 'not here' – a term of negation – resists visibility. Maroon flight is narrated as movement into obscure locations which open up possibilities for new frontiers of belonging and explorations of other landscapes of desire. Locations of 'not here' are improvisational and in-between spaces where the cartographers art must grapple with maroon strategies of evasion and flight.

Chapter three dealt most directly with the experience of loss, genealogical disruption and the possibilities for initiating other affective maroon relations as a response to death. In my discussion of Patricia Powell's *A Small Gathering of Bones*, and its narration of the early days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, I considered how the experience of death shapes maroon relationships to time and space. Powell's narration of this temporal moment is not solely one of mourning; rather it foregrounds marronage as an intervention in a moment of crisis and its practices of expandability. Yet in Powell's work, as in the novels discussed in Chapters one and two, these bonds are rendered as contingent ones which hold no abiding promise of futurity. My examination of this precarious relationship to time, space and community was extended in Chapter four where I explored vagrancy and moments of flight by East Indian indentured labourers alongside practices of marronage. Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* offers a relational account of these circuits of movement, which dramatizes the unsettled boundaries of marronage. In my reading of Mootoo's work, these practices of flight were not only considered as historical strategies of mobility but also circuits of movement which enable queer intimacies and other logics of community and belonging in our contemporary moment.

In my research concerning these novels I have outlined how Caribbean writing offers one space where discourses of marronage and queer theories are

brought into conversation. These conversations are at once contestatory and generative. Queer marronage as outlined in this thesis revises and extends some of the critical frameworks of reading marronage. In particular, it questions the focus on ethnicity that marks some anthropological writings on marronage today. Instead, it foregrounds maroon practices of contingency, affiliation and survival which were integral to the formation of early maroon communities and which have also enabled queer community and counterpublics in the Caribbean across history. The examination of marronage in relation to queerness also significantly challenges the focus on the present which often marks theorizations of queerness. It offers a broader relational and critical frame for understanding and narrating queer relations in our contemporary moment.

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