MUDDY POINTS OF ENTANGLEMENTS: TRANSGLOCAL FICTIONS IN AFRICA AND THE DIASPORA

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2017

Urbana, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

"Transglocal Fictions: Narratives of Detours in Africa and the Diaspora" examines how the hybrid nature of post-colonial autobiographical fictions by women writers is connected to the formation of diasporic identities in the context of Africa and its diaspora. Although there is a large body of scholarship on the hybridity of post-colonial literatures in Africa and its diaspora, hybridity has become a loose metaphor predominantly framed within the vertical binary structure of the colonizer and the colonized, the center and the periphery, and the global and the local. My dissertation offers another story of post-colonial hybridity in literatures of Africa and its diaspora by focusing on the interconnectedness between selected autobiographical fictions in the global south rather than their relation with their European counterparts. I argue that, read in concert, these texts should be considered as what I call "transglocal fiction," a post-colonial genre of their own that sheds new lights on the hybrid dimension of literatures of Africa and its diaspora in terms of literary classification and subject formation.

I particularly focus on autobiographical fictions by women writers addressing the question of diasporic belonging: Maryse Condé's *Hérémakhonon* (1976), Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* (1976), and Marilene Felinto's *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* (1982). Building on Martinican thinker Edouard Glissant's theoretical works, I show how these texts are narratives of detours that lead autobiographical subjects to construct their diasporic selfhood in relation to a transglocal hybrid space where their multifaceted experiences of colonial traumas are entangled. I demonstrate that detour is not only a diasporic practice countering the romanticized idea of return to a point of origin as a dominant frame of analysis in diaspora, but it is also literary practice describing the process of weaving multiple literary forms together.

My dissertation is divided into four chapters that describe the various elements of transglocal fiction. I devote the introduction to the theoretical triangulation in which discourses on post-colonial hybridity, literary weaving, and diasporic subject formation intersect beyond their conventional dominant frames of analysis. In the following four chapters, I analyze how the selected autobiographical fictions shape diverse practices of detours as gestures of diasporic belonging through the portrayal of multidirectional migratory experiences intertwined with historical specificities including slavery, colonization, decolonization, departmentalization, apartheid and dictatorship. As I highlight the transglocal dimension of hybridity in the constitution of African diasporic identities, I establish that the transglocal is a paradigm central to the hybrid features of the selected autobiographical fictions. I conclude that these texts decolonize the ways in which generic hybridity has been confined within a rhetoric of appropriation fossilizing genre studies in literatures of Africa and its diaspora in the traditional colonized/colonizer paradigm.

To Bamam and Kha

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful to my dissertation advisor, Dr. Brett A. Kaplan for her guidance and support throughout the time of my dissertation research and beyond. From the first meeting at the Espresso Royale on Daniel St. in 2009 to talk about my application for the program of Comparative and World Literature to the completion of this dissertation project, Professor Brett Kaplan has been a wonderful mentor. I am thankful for Dr. H. Adlai Murdoch, Dr. Manisha Basu and Dr. Eduardo Ledesma for their continued faith and encouragement of my efforts. I am grateful for their support throughout my dissertation research and my job search.

I am grateful to the faculty and staff of the Program in Comparative and World Literature and the School of literatures and Linguistics at the University of Illinois. I am particularly indebted to Dr. Hassan Wail for his guidance as a DGS and a postcolonial scholar, Dr. Rob Rushing as a teaching mentor, Dr. Nancy Blake as a DGS and a benevolent mentor and Robb Larson who has helped a clueless international student navigate through the administration hoops of the US academic scene. I am grateful to the Program in Comparative and World Literature, the Department of Gender and Women Studies, Center for African Studies, the Center of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, the Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies for their generous academic, funding and professional opportunities.

Many professors have shaped my academic research. Dr. Maimouna Barro and Dr. Teresa Barnes, you have done a lot more than that. I am grateful for your loving and instructional support. Life in Champaign would have been a lot less propitious to learning and researching without the support of people who have welcomed me as their colleague, their friend and their family member:

To my writing group Dr. Laura Chinchilla, Dr. Jennifer Anderson Bliss, Dr. Lisa Burner, Dr. Anya Hamrick and Dr. Ben Bascom, thank you for helping me make sense of the dissertation writing process and making graduate life bearable.

To my colleagues in the Program of Comparative Literature, the Center for African Studies and the Department of French and Italian Studies, thank you for the constant support, the fun happy hours, the birthday celebrations and the continuous acknowledgement of academic achievements.

To the wonderful souls Malyoune Benoit, Lucia C. Black, Jennifer Anderson Bliss, Laura Chinchilla, Estibalitz Ezkerra, and Daniela Raducanu, thank you for your love and friendship. Thank you for listening, reading, editing and critiquing my work amid impromptu coffee dates, chocolate cupcakes, orange juice cheers, brunches, karaoke glory and fancy mocktails.

To my adoptive family Dr. Richard Beyogle, Dr. Cherif A. Correa, Rama A. Diabong, Mor Gueye, Dr. Estelle Koné, Dr. Batamaka Some and Dr. Esther Some-Guiebre, without you, I would not have been able to complete my research.

To Maimouna, Kaaw Mohamed, Deffa, Khadija and Amina, "the Barros of Savoy," thank you for the love, the support and the food enjoyed during religious and cultural celebrations.

To my siblings Raqui B. Wane, Mamadou T. Wane, Aminata D. Wane and Tamimou R. Wane, oon jaarama Seydi Wane!

To my mother Racky Wane and my late father Sada Tamimou Wane, may Allah reward you immensely! Thank you for everything!

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INTRODUCTION: TRANSGLOCAL FICTION: THE THEORETICAL DETOURS

The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House
- Audre Lorde

Subversion. Parody. Mimesis. These literary practices have been associated with the question of genre in post-colonial literatures of Africa and the diaspora since its early articulations. Indeed, in the field of post-colonial studies, scholars have investigated the ways in which post-colonial literatures have subverted, parodied or mimicked generic categories and conventions originally based on a European canon. As a result, post-colonial manifestations of a genre such as the autobiographical fiction have been considered to be merely the hybridized versions of their European counterpart. In this context, post-colonial autobiographical fiction in Africa and its diaspora has become evidently marked by what Mpalive-Hangson Msiska calls "the structure of fidelity and transgression."[1] In other words, the European model of autobiographical fiction is set as a standard against which the hybridity of the post-colonial autobiographical fiction is measured. While generic categories and conventions of the European model of autobiographical fiction have been either imposed on or adopted by post-colonial writers, it is reductive to consider that the hybrid nature of their works results solely from cross-cultural encounters between the colonized and the colonizer.

My dissertation responds to the need to resist the tendency of Western theorizing to universalize European genres by setting them as standards against which the hybridity of post-colonial literary forms is measured. In order to de-center the location of their European arch-genre in the study of autobiographical fictions in Africa and the diaspora, I claim that a coinage

[1] Mpalive Hangson-Msiska. "Fidelity and Transgression in the African Post-colonial Novel," in *Locating Post-colonial Narrative Genres*, eds. Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 76.

of a new genre is necessary. This gesture not only ensures an effective decolonization of the concept of genre in the scholarship on post-colonial literatures but also involves a perspectival adjustment to the notion of hybridity. As this project requires exploring a wider dimension of hybridity beyond colonial binary paradigms, I reroute the location of generic hybridity within the framework of multiple "post-colonial world[s] of global contacts."[2]

I argue that read in concert, post-colonial autobiographical fictions in Africa and its diaspora by women writers craft what I call "transglocal fiction" as a post-colonial genre that sheds light on the reshaping of the post-colonial onto a new spatial framework beyond binary formulations such as the colonizer/the colonized, the national/the transnational and the local/the global. As I borrow the paradigm "transglocal" from the scholar in rhetoric J. Blake Scott,[3] I focus on the agency of post-colonial women writers of Africa and its diaspora in foregrounding transglocal fiction as an effective narrative tool in the development of a post-colonial sense of diasporic self beyond the dominant definitions of identity in Africa and its diaspora.

By examining each of the selected post-colonial texts as paradigmatic examples of transglocal fictions, I intend to explore post-colonial women writers' efforts for decolonization of genre in literatures of Africa and its diaspora. What is at stake in reading post-colonial texts as transglocal fictions is their political and literary interventions into the assumptions of genre and subject formations. First, my project redefines the role of genre in the understanding of post-colonial literatures beyond the master narrative of the empire writes back to the center by transforming the tools of their masters. Second, it reformulates the relation of post-colonial people to subjectivity formation within a globalizing context at the intersection of gender, race

[2] James Clifford and Vivek Dareshwar. "Notes on Travel and Theory," in *Traveling Theories, Traveling Theorists, Inscriptions 5*, eds. James Clifford and Vivek Dareshwar, (Santa Cruz: Centre for Cultural studies, 1989), 177.
[3] Rebecca Ann Dingo and J. Blake Scott, eds. *The megarhetorics of global development*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012.

and class. Such an undertaking has raised several issues of scope and definition that require theoretical detours around post-colonial theory, genre criticism and diaspora studies.

Transglocal Fiction: Post-colonial Genre

As this project focuses on transglocal fiction as a post-colonial genre, it is necessary to sketch out the spatio-temporal implications of the term 'post-colonial' before tackling the question of generic hybridity in transglocal fictions. 'Post-colonial" is a contested term that up to now has undergone numerous stages of interpretations. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in their seminal book *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) have established probably the first interpretation of the post-colonial literatures: "We use the term `post-colonial', however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day."[4] (2) My use of the term 'post-colonial' is based on their broad definition as my project articulates a wide cross-cultural examination of post-colonial writings across multiple and diverse geopolitical and linguistic formations.

As I am bringing together autobiographical fictions staging time in different situations and experiences under the rubric 'post-colonial,' my use of the term is foregrounded on the meaning of 'post' as 'beyond' rather than merely the period after colonization. My dissertation encompasses Senegal, Guinea and Botswana in the era of decolonization and post-independences, South Africa during Apartheid, Guadeloupe in times of departmentalization, and Brazil under military rule and neocolonial control thus steering away from the pitfalls within which the term 'post-colonial' has fallen into along the years.[5] As I deal with various forms of

[4] Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin and Gareth Griffiths. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures, (*Routledge, London, 1989), 2.

[5] For more information about the meaning of 'post' in the term post-colonialism, see Anne McClintock's "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "post-colonialism" and Ella Shohat's "Notes on the Post-Colonial" in *Social*

colonization and decolonization, I cautiously reject the common chronological interpretation of the 'post-colonial' with the 'post' as a temporal marker and identify post-colonial writing from as early as the seventeenth-century settler societies.

In addition, the term 'post-colonial' suggests that writings under that denomination resist colonialism and its power politics. In considering the selected autobiographical fictions post-colonial, I recognize their sense of resistance to colonialism. Inscribed within a tradition of writing back, these autobiographical fictions capture the effects of decolonization in Guadeloupe, Guinea, Senegal, South Africa, Botswana and Brazil. As aforementioned, they address multiple forms of decolonization and the term 'post-colonial' does not imply that the processes of decolonization are complete. In that sense, my definition of the post-colonial has paralleled that of *The Empire Writes Back*'s authors. However, their initial conceptualization of the post-colonial has been predominantly based on Anglophone literatures. Even Arif Dirlik rightly denounces the fact that in their work, "'post-colonial' more often than not is associated with former Commonwealth countries rather than Third World in general."[6] Therefore, my take on the post-colonial differs from Ashcroft et. al.'s initial iterations as I include Latin America in my project.

The incorporation of Latin America in my work is two-fold. First, I selected a Latin American text, Marilene Felinto's *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo*, among the post-colonial works that I analyze in this project. Second, I establish a conversation between the Latin American and Anglo-American branches of post-colonial critics. It is necessary to acknowledge the existence

Text 31/32 (1992) and Kwame Anthony Appiah's "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post-in Post-colonial?" in *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Winter 2011).

[6] Arif Dirlik. "The Post-colonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism" in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Post-colonial Perspectives*, eds. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat, (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1997), 525.

of a vibrant post-colonial studies in Latin America and explore the ways in which it engages with Anglo-American post-colonial theory. Similarly to Shohat, I find worrisome what she calls "any kind of meta-diffusionist narrative that sees Postcolonial Study as exclusively Anglo-Saxon, or even an Anglophone thing that travels to, let us say, Brazil."[7] In light of the exclusion of Latin America in what Fernando Coronil has identified as important works on post-colonialism [8]including Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman's *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*[9], Ashcroft et. al.'s *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*[10] and Leela Gandhi's *Post- colonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*[11], the uncertain response of Latin Americanists to post-colonial studies is understandable. Yet, in 1992, the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group was founded at the Latin American Studies Association annual meeting demonstrating the growing interest of literary thinkers in the examination of colonialism in Latin America from their vantage point.

In that sense, my understanding of the label 'post-colonial' transcends the linguistic boundaries initially set within global relations comprehended by the binarism of the colonizer/colonized. By pairing Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone post-colonial literatures, my dissertation explores the potential of the blanket term 'post-colonial' to resist the tendency in Anglo-American academia of theorizing it based on the vertical connections between the colonizer and the colonized.[12] Whereas scholars like Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin evidently

[7] Ella Shohat, and Robert Stam. "'Brazil is not Travelling Enough': On Postcolonial theory and analogous counter-currents." *P: Portuguese Cultural Studies* (2012), 18.
[8] Fernando Coronil. "Latin American postcolonial studies and global decolonization." *Postcolonial Studies: An Anthology*. Pramod K. Nayar, ed. (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, 2015), 179.
[9] Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: A reader*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
[10] Bill Ashcroft et. al, eds. *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. (London and New York: Routledge), 1995.
[11] Leela Gandhi. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
[12] Anne McClintock echoes my sentiment as follows: "If post-colonial theory has sought to challenge the grand march of Western historicism and its entourage of binaries (self-other, metropolis-colony, center-periphery, etc.), the

mark post-colonial literatures within the master narrative of "writing back," I locate them within a narrative of in-between "contact zone"[13] privileging the transversal connections between local and global literatures of the global south "without an assumed or imposed hierarchy,"[14] namely beyond the binarism center/periphery.

This multicentered approach to the 'post-colonial' disassociates my study of post-colonial literatures from the "writing back" discourses that have dominated the scholarship on post-colonial literatures. Nonetheless my dissertation participates in the project of dismantling literary hegemonies by retaining the hyphen in the term 'post-colonial 'as a "space-clearing gesture"[15] that manufactures the post-colonial as a space of resistance. The hyphen clears a conceptual space that distinguishes one post-colonial experience from another. For Appiah, the hyphen is a mark of difference/distinction. As a result, under the caption 'post-colonial,' I also mark the texts that I examine in this dissertation as different sites of resistance to literary hegemonies that would confine them within a tradition of writing back to the European canon. Therefore, by identifying transglocal fiction as a post-colonial genre, I underline its focus on post-colonial literatures and its counter-discursiveness to the dominant literary narratives in the Anglo-American iterations of post-colonial studies. [16]

term post-colonialism nonetheless reorients the globe once more around a single binary opposition: colonial-post-colonial."

[13] Here I refer to Mary Louise Pratt's definition of the concept of 'contact zone:' "I use this term to refer to social spaces where cultures, meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world today." See Mary Louise Pratt. "The Arts of the Contact Zone." *Profession 91*:33–40.

[14] Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 5.

[15] Kwame Anthony Appiah. "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post-in Post-colonial?" *Critical Inquiry*, 17.2 (1991), 348.

[16] I also use the term post-colonial here in the specific manner John Thieme discusses the the function of the hyphen in this word. See John Thieme, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Essential Glossary* (London: Arnodl, 2003), 123.

Transglocal Fiction: Hybrid Genre

Since transglocal fiction deals with post-colonial literatures, it engages with the concept of hybridity which Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin call "the primary characteristics of all post-colonial societies whatever their sources."[17] Accurately noticed by Leela Gandhi in her seminal book *Post-colonial Theory: A Critical Introduction,* Ashcroft et al. have privileged the centrality of literary hybridity in their formulations of post-colonial literatures: "Throughout this book [*The Empire Writes Back*], we encounter the following imperatives (with her emphasis): '*all* post-colonial literatures are cross-cultural' (39); 'the post-colonial text is *always* a complex and hybridized formation' (100); 'colonialism *inevitably* leads to a hybridization of culture' (129)"[18] The authors of *The Empire Writes Back* are not the only post-colonial scholars who have so explicitly expressed their commitment to literary hybridity in their discussions on literatures that "are hybrid, encumbered or entangled with a lot of what was used to be regarded as extraneous elements."[19]

From the onset, hybridity has been established as the identity marker of post-colonial literatures and cultures. Building on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin on the various forms of hybridization, post-colonial scholars have considered hybridity as a condition of "post-colonial literatures combining Western and non-Western genres, languages, and literary forms."[20] It is important to recall that "hybridity as a concept came to prominence in the context of supremacist

[17] Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin and Gareth Griffiths. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures,* 189.
[18] Leela Gandhi. *Post-colonial Theory: A critical Introduction*. (New York: Columbia UP, 1998), 162, emphasis in original.
[19] Edward Said. "Figures, Configurations, Transfigurations," in *From Commonwealth to Post-colonial,* ed. Anna Rutherford, (Mundelstrup & Sydney: Dangaroo, 1992), 15.
[20] Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman, eds. *Reconstructing Hybridity: Post-Colonial Studies in Transition*. New York: Rodopi, 2007), 7.

Eurocentric accounts of racial origins and racial distinction."[21] Many critics including Robert Young have addressed the slippage of hybridity from a derogatory label to a celebratory key concept in post-colonial studies.[22] Away from its vexed history, hybridity has acquired the reputation of being "maddeningly elastic"[23] when described as "the assemblage that occurs whenever two or more elements meet."[24]

With this definition, it is not surprising that the concept of hybridity has developed such a vast applicability to multiple and diverse disciplines. One of the most prominent theorists of hybridity is the post-colonial scholar Homi Bhabha who claims that "All forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity."[25] Championed as the aesthetic condition of the post-colonial incarnations of genres originally based on European literary canons, hybridity has lost its celebratory aura in the field of post-colonial studies along the years. There is already a significant scholarship examining postcolonial hybridity through critical lenses.

In *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race,* Robert Young warns against the ideological baggage of hybridity as it is too close to colonialist discourse and language.[26] Young determines that because of its genealogy, hybridity still weights under the burden of its pedigree as "the nineteenth century word." For Abdul R. JanMohamed, "hybridity is a universal by-product of any cross-cultural encounter including the postcolonial."[27] He denounces the

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[21] Andrew Smith. "Migrancy, Hybridity, and Post-colonial Literary Studies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Post-colonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus (New York: Cambridge UP, 2004), 250.
[22] See Robert Young. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995)
[23] Marwan Kraidy. *Hybridity or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2005), 3.
[24] Nikos Papastergiadis. *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity*. (Maiden: Polity Press, 2000), 170.
[25] Jonathan Rutherford. *The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha. Identity, Community, Culutre, Difference*. (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 211.
[26] Robert J. C. Young. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. (London: Routledge, 1995) 10
[27] Theory, Practice and the Intellectual: A Conversation with Abdul R. JanMohamed.

universalist porosity and homogenizing properties of postcolonial hybridity. Along the same lines, for Ella Shohat, postcolonial hybridity is a descriptive catch-all term that does not take into account its earlier forms in other cultures: "in Latin America, 'syncretism' and "hybridity' had already been invokes decades ago by diverse Latin American modernisms, which spoke of neologistic culture, of *créolité*, of *mestizaje*, and of anthropophagy." [28] In addition, it is arguable that Leopold Sédar Senghor's concept of *métissage* is Bhabha's hybridity *avant la lettre*.

Therefore, in spite of its appealing facets, the reductionist and monolingual features of hybridity challenge the instantaneous application of this concept to post-colonial literatures considering their multiple geographies, languages, and histories. However, notwithstanding its conceptual shortcomings, I consider the notion of hybridity paramount to my project of analyzing the relationship between literary genres and identity formations in post-colonial literatures of the global south. The dynamics of hybridity that I examine in my dissertation in relation to transglocal fiction are established beyond the fact that transglocal fiction deals with hybrid literatures. In order to articulate the hybrid nature of transglocal fiction, I build on Homi Bhabha's theorization of hybridity as follows: "[…] the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'Third Space', which enables other positions to emerge."[29]

The notion of the 'Third Space' is useful for the spatio-temporal configuration of transglocal fiction as it is "a space of new forms of cultural meaning and production blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorizations of culture

[28] Shohat, 108.
[29] Jonathan Rutherford. *The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha. Identity, Community, Culutre, Difference*, 211.

and identity."[30] Building up on Annie Coombes' suggestion that it is necessary to "examine the specific contexts and conditions in which hybridity operates,"[31]I suggest to explore the concepts that are employed interchangeably with hybridity. As a recalcitrant object, hybridity needs to be under scrutiny thorough an analysis of analogous terms that are specifically associated with it. This cross-reading would allow me to set the different patterns of hybridity at play in postcolonial literary genres. I still claim that hybridity is a key-concept of postcolonial studies. I mainly add that there is the need of a discursive metaphoric trope that still works within the patterns of hybridity and avoids falling into the pitfalls of homogenization and universalism.

By doing so, I parallel Jan Nederveen Pieterse as he states: '"what hybridity means varies not only over time but also in different cultures and this informs different patterns of hybridity"[32] while thoroughly examining of different models of hybridity relevant to the literary traditions that I cover in this dissertation. Similarly to Shohat and Stam, my objective is to "go beyond ethnically defined nation-states to a relational, transnational view of nations as palimpsestic and multiple."[33] Ultimately, what post-colonialists would need to do is to look beyond the French and British empires and look at the "crisscrossing diasporic" theories in order to avoid the "ahistorical, uncritical celebration of hybridity discourse."[34]

Joshua Lund has already started to incorporate Latin America in the ongoing debate on the discourses of hybridity demonstrating that multiple Latin American thinkers such as José Vasconselos and Gilberto Freyre. In his seminal book *The Impure Imagination: Toward a Critical Hybridity in Latin American Writing*, Lund acknowledges the fact that there is an array

[30] Paul Meredith. "Hybridity in the Third Space: Rethinking Bi-Cultural in Aotearoa/ New Zealand," Te Oru Rangahau Maori Research and Development Conference. Massey University, 8 July 1998. Conference Paper.
[31] Coombes, 90.
[32] Jan Nederveen Pietersen. "Hybridity, so what? The anti-hybridity backlash and the riddles of recognition." *Theory, Culture & Society* 18.2-3 (2001), 219
[33] Shohat and Stam.
[34] Shohat and Stam

of discourses on hybridity in Latin American writing including "*mestizaje*, *criollismo*, transculturation, luso-tropicalism, racial democracy, heterogeneity, syncretism, *nuestra América*, *antropofagia*, di-and heteroglossia, *lo real maravilloso*, *modernismo*, the postmodern, and *culturas hìbridas*."[35]

By examining how these discursive formations of hybridity in Latin America, Lund demonstrates that discourses on hybridity have been dealt with in Latin American writing a long time before Bhabha's concept of hybridity for example. In addition, Lund shows that neither the celebratory nor the emancipatory nature of hybridity in Latin American writing can escape the discourses of race that have generated its theorization. Therefore, he calls for "hybridologies" that examine the relationship between theories of hybridity and their underwritten discourses of race, culture, and history.

This approach to hybridity prevents the systemic application of the concept of hybridity to any context. For example, debates on transculturation should not just focus on its applicability to literatures of Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean. It should include a "hybridology" of the concept to understand its shifts from let's say Fernando Ortiz's iterations of transculturation to Angel Rama's and Mary Louise Pratt's. Such a study would reveal the discursive formations of transculturation. Therefore, hybridity needs to be moored in order to avoid becoming "too pliable, like any other concept that might be too easily decontextualized."[36]

My purpose in identifying transglocal fiction as a hybrid genre that emerges from the "Third Space" is to demonstrate how certain post-colonial texts should be assigned a new classification that not only transcends the boundaries of traditional Eurocentric genres but also

[35] Joshua Lund. *Toward a Critical Hybridity in Latin American Writing*. (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2006), 4.
[36] Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, eds. *The Creolization of Theory*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 25.

configures a crucial site of resistance and solidarity for the constructions of identity beyond the "politics of polarities"[37] that have traditionally fixed post-colonial subjectivities in binaristic paradigms. Transglocal fiction is a new literary form that has originated in cross-cultural contexts as a response to the growing complexity of rhizomatic post-colonial subjectivities within and across cultures in Africa and the diaspora. A new genre, as Tzvetan Todorov and Richard M. Berrong claim, is always the transformation of one or several older genres—by inversion, by displacement, by combination.[38]

By conceptualizing transglocal fiction in the literary landscape of Africa and the diaspora as a new genre, I add another dimension to Todorov's description of a new genre: the notion of negotiation. In light of Bhabha's work on negotiation, I posit that transglocal fiction is performatively produced through a complex, ongoing process of negotiation that "seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of [generic] transformation."[39] Indeed, for Bhabha, "the question of hybridity is precisely to draw attention to the way in which the process of negotiation is continually placing and replacing the members of that act of cultural or social or political interaction.... We are always in the middle of difference."[40]

Therefore, negotiation should be thought of as rearticulation and reconstitution. Transglocal fiction is produced through ongoing acts of generic interactions leading to the redefinition of pre-given generic boundaries. Since transglocal fiction stems from processes of hybridization by negotiation, it acquires a sense of unpredictability that resists the fixity of its categorization. As a new taxonomy, transglocal fiction not only crosses the borders of pre-

[37] Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*, 39.
[38] Tzvetan Todorov and Richard M. Berrong. 'The Origin of Genres.*" New Literary History 8.1,* (1976), 161.
[39] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 3.
[40] Quoted in Thomas West, and Olson Gary A. "Rethinking Negotiation in Composition Studies." *JAC* 19.2 (1999), 241.

existing genres, it also sets up its shifting boundaries contingent to its positionality and scale. In conceptualizing transglocal fiction, my project is an act of declassification and reclassification.

In this project, transglocal fiction is a site of negotiation of multiple genres including autobiographical fiction. The reason why I choose to focus on post-colonial texts classified as autobiographical fictions because autobiographical fiction is a narrative of self that counter-discursively crosses and relates to multiple genres by blurring the boundaries between truth and fiction. Indeed, renowned life-writing scholars Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson refer to autobiographical fiction as an "unstable fiction"[41] since the boundaries between fiction and autobiography are blurred. According to them, it is a genre with "textual markers that signal a deliberate, often ironic, interplay between two modes."[42]Therefore, I consider that the generic flexibilities of autobiographical fiction participate in the counterhegemonic characteristics of transglocal fiction as a "crossover genre."[43]

Carole Boyce Davies specifically conceptualizes the idea of a "crossover" genre within the context of the life stories that challenge the oral/written separations and unite these forms as they maintain their distinct textualities.[44] As I apply the concept of crossover genre to transglocal fiction, I seek to highlight the fact that while transglocal fiction blurs the boundaries of multiple genres including autobiographical fiction, it also is a site of negotiation in which each and every literary form challenges and maintains its textual specificities. To a certain extent, transglocal

[41] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives.* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2001)
[42] Ibid.,
[43]Carole Boyce-Davies. "Collaboration and Ordering Imperative in Life Story Production" in *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography,* eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992) p. 482.
[44] Ibid.

fiction is an "out-law genre"[45] that transgresses the law of genre namely the law of classification which determines which literary group a text belongs to. Channeling Jacques Derrida, I suggest that the post-colonial texts that I study in this project "participate without belonging" to the genre of transglocal fiction.[46] In that sense, transglocal fiction is an emerging hybrid genre constituted by post-colonial texts and does not act as a set of conventions to which post-colonial texts are subjected. Therefore, in this project, I approach transglocal fiction as a genre that not only expands the generic boundaries of literary forms including the fictional autobiography but also transcends the traditional understanding of genre as a paradigm of classification by establishing it as a participatory practice.

Transglocal Fiction: A Transversal Genre

In my investigation on the relationship between literary forms and the construction of identity in literatures of Africa and its diaspora by women writers, I adopt a cross-cultural perspective. It is in that cross-cultural context that transglocal fiction emerges as a genre that fittingly addresses and engages with the multiplicity of diasporic experiences in literatures of Africa and its diaspora. In other words, it is through cross-cultural literary encounters that the creation of new genres such as transglocal fiction occur. Inspired by post-colonial scholars Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, I acknowledge the importance of discerning cross-cultural comparisons in a specific framework of space. Calling into attention what Martinican thinker Edouard

[45] Caren Kaplan. "Resisting Autobiography: Out-Law Genres and Transnational Feminist Subjects," in *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography,* eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992) p.
[46] Jacques Derrida. "The Law of Genre." *Critical Inquiry* (Autumn 1980) 65.

Glissant calls "transversalities," Shohat and Stam argue that cross-cultural comparisons take place across "fluid transnational spaces."[47]

As Shohat and Stam direct comparatists towards the potential of Glissant's concept of transversality[48] as part of a counter-discourse in which connections in multiplicity are articulated, I locate my cross-cultural reading of post-colonial texts to this term of lateral connectivity. In the Caribbean context, Glissant theorizes transversality in opposition and replacement of universality as "the way of crossing and going beyond ethnic, lingual and cultural boundaries."[49] In light of Glissant's definition, transversality reflects the way in which transglocal fiction crosses and goes beyond ethnic, lingual and cultural boundaries. In that sense, I also counter the badge for universality ascribed to literary forms within genre criticism; in other words, transglocal fiction is theorized in opposition to the idea of universal genres that has permeated genre theory.

As a transversal genre, transglocal fiction is able to transcend geopolitical boundaries imposed by histories of imperialism and colonialism in a way that other generic categories deemed universal were not capable of. The question of universality in literatures of the global south such as African, Caribbean and South American literatures have been a controversial subject among literary critics. The treatment of themes considered universal by writers in the global south have been applauded by numerous literary scholars producing what Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe has called "colonialist criticism."[50] He provides an example of colonialist

[47] Robert Stam and Ella Shohat. "Transnationalizing Comparison: The Uses and Abuses of Cross-Cultural Analogy." *New Literary History* 40.3 (2009): -499

[48] Édouard Glissant, and J. Michael. Dash. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. (Charlottesville: U of Virginia, 1989) 66-67.

[49] Ed. Persram, Nalini. *Post-colonialism and Political Theory.* Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2007.

[50] Chinua Achebe. *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1988) 46.

criticism quoting how Charles Larsen, a specialist of African literature, speaks of the universality of the novel Lenrie Peters' *The Second Round*:

> That it is set in Africa appears to be accidental, for, except for a few comments at the beginning, Peters's story might just as easily take place in the southern part of the United States or in the southern regions of France- or Italy. If a few names of characters and places were changed one would indeed feel that this was an American novel. In short, Peters's story is universal.[51]

Based on such a reading, for Achebe, it seems "As though universality were some distant bend in the road which you may take if you travel out far enough in the direction of Europe or America, if you put adequate distance between yourself and your home."[52] After clarifying the meaning of universality in colonialist criticism, Achebe expresses the wish to "see the word 'universal' banned altogether from discussions of African literature until such a time as people cease to use as a synonym for the narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe, until their horizon extends to include all the world."[53] The Eurocentric connotation of the ideal of universality has been well established in post-colonial literary theories since Achebe's acute response to colonialist criticism.

Yet, it appears that some writers associated with African literature for example still respond positively to the appeal of universality. Quite recently, in 2015, British writer of African descent Aminatta Forna expressed her frustration against post-colonial literary critics who classified her first as an African writer and later on as a transnational writer. In an article penned "Don't Judge a Book by its Author" in *The Guardian*, Forna confronts the urge of post-colonial critics to locate her work in geopolitical and linguistic categories and self-identifies as a

[51] Charles R. Larson. *The Emergence of African Fiction*. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1972) 230.
[52] Ibid. 49
[53] Ibid.

universal writer.[54] Forna's appeal for universality has been interpreted as a call for resistance against classification altogether:

> All this classifying, it seems to me, is the very antithesis of literature. The way of literature is to seek universality. Writers try to reach beyond those things that divide us: culture, class, gender, race. Given the chance, we would resist classification. I have never met a writer who wishes to be described as a female writer, gay writer, black writer, Asian writer or African writer. We hyphenated writers complain about the privilege accorded to the white male writer, he who dominates the western canon and is the only one called simply "writer."[55]

To a certain extent, Forna's understanding of universality could be considered as an act of resistance against the over-labelling processes that no white male writer who dominates the western canon has experienced. In addition, Forna is not the first writer to question this type of multiple fragmentation. The authors at scrutiny in my dissertation have all expressed a desire to resist classification altogether. They are Maryse Condé, Bessie Head and Marilene Felinto.

Each of these writers have expressed a desire not be rigidly classified within and outside their literary traditions. Appropriating Aimé Césaire's words in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, Maryse Condé states "Je ne suis d'aucune nationalité prévue par les chancelleries."[56] [I am of no nationality recognized by the chancelleries.] She later on adds: "J' habite ma langue, la langue de Maryse Condé."[57] [I inhabit my language, the language of Maryse Condé.] Bessie Head echoes these statements: "I have always been just me, with no frame of reference outside of anything beyond myself."[58] Unsurprisingly Marilene Felinto declares: "Até porque nem me acho muito nordestina mais, me acho tão misturada, não me acha nada. Nem nordestina, nem negra, nem branca, não sou nada, nada examente."[59]

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[54] Aminatta Forna. "Don't Judge a Book by its Author." *The Guardian* 13 February 2015.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Aimé Césaire. *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. (Paris : Présence Africaine, 1968) 47.
[57] Marie Poinsot et Nicolas Treiber, « Entretien avec Maryse Condé », *Hommes et migrations*, 1301 | 2013, 182-188.
[58] Bessie Head. *A Woman Alone: Autobiographical Writings*. Ed. Craig Mackenzie. Oxford: Heinemann, 1990. p. 3.
[59] Marilene Felinto. "Pequena notável." *Caros amigos. São Paulo, ano IV*47: 30.

[Because I do not even think about myself as a Northeastern, I feel so mixed, I don't think of myself as anything. Neither Northeastern, nor black, nor white, I am nothing, nothing in particular.]

As noticeable in their assertions, Conde, Head and Felinto resist labelling altogether which has been often mistaken for a desire of these authors to be considered as universal writers. Their claim echoes Celia Britton's definition of what Glissant calls "opacité," [opacity][60] "a defense against *understanding* at least in the hierarchical, objectifying way in which this usually operates between the West and the Third World."[61] Condé, Head and Felinto demand the right for opacity equated to the freedom to not only be different but also not be understood.[62] Refusing to be confined within the limits of categorical definitions of identity which undervalue their plurality and their particularity, these authors defend the capacity of their works to cross and move beyond language-based and geopolitical literary traditions.

However, in order to explore how Condé, Head and Felinto could be considered opaque writers, it is necessary to examine the ways in which Edouard Glissant articulates the concept of opacity. During a conference organized by L'institut du Tout-Monde in 2008 in Paris, Glissant reveals: "L'opacité ne se définit pas, ni ne se commente. Mais réclamer pour tous le droit à l'opacité c'est renoncer à ramener les vérités du monde à la mesure à la seule transparence d'un seul éclairage qui seraient les miens et que j'imposerai. La part d'opacité ménagée entre l'autre et moi est mutuellement consentie, garantit sa liberté et confirme mon libre arbitre dans une relation de pure partage."[63] [Opacity is not defined, nor commented. However, to demand for all

[60] Here I use Britton's translation of Glissant's "opacité" as I agree with her that the published translation of this term as "inscrutability" or "obscurity" is not sufficiently exact.
[61] Celia M. Britton. *Edouard Glissant and Post-colonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance*. (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1999) 19.
[62] Edouard Glissant. *Poétique de la relation*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1990) 203.
[63] http://www.edouardglissant.fr/penseedelopacite.html.

the right to opacity is to renounce bringing the truths of the world based on the only transparency of a single enlightenment that would be mine and that I would impose. The measure of opacity between the other and me is mutually agreed, guarantees freedom and confirms my free will in a relation of pure fair sharing."] (My translation) Glissant clearly defines the concept of opacity in opposition to transparency. In that sense, while Conde, Head and Felinto's aforementioned assertions have often been interpreted as a desire to be considered as universal writers, they in fact resist the "process of [being understood] from the perspective of Western thought [which] basis is [a] requirement for transparency."[64]

With Glissant stating that "the opaque is not the obscure, though it is possible for it to be so and accepted as such. It is that which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence."[65] Therefore, to write as Maryse Conde, to be nothing and to exist outside of any frame of reference are all forms of "subsistence within an irreducible singularity."[66] Ultimately, Conde, Head and Felinto similarly to Glissant "clamor the right to opacity for everyone."[67] The questions then are how and where do the performances of their opacities take place?

Conde, Head and Felinto's writings have been traditionally studied as marginal and marginalized women writers. Such a location of their works preserves polarizing social and cultural constructions of the center/margin binaries. Yet, scholars such as Bell Hooks and Edward Said have explored the concept of margin as a site of resistance. Indeed, for Bell Hooks, "understanding marginality as a position and place of resistance is crucial for oppressed,

[64] Edouard Glissant, For Opacity, 189-90.
[65] Ibid, 191
[66] Ibid 190
[67] Ibid, 194

exploited [and] colonized people."[68] For me, marginality inscribes writers such as Conde, Head and Felinto in a cultural ghetto as the concrete manifestation of "a gesture of enclosure and appropriation."[69] Through my take on marginality, I echo literary critic Carol Boyce Davies who has painstakingly explored the politics of location of women writers in the context of a variety of literary traditions. Through an exercise that she calls "writing off marginality," Davies examines the ways in which black women's writing "resists, decenters and transforms categorizations calling into question the very grounds on which they are constructed."[70] Building on her work, I recognize the oppositional nature of women writings in Africa, the Caribbean and South America as they disrupt monolithic categorizations including "Third World Literature" or "African Literature" or "Women's Literature" or "Women of Color Literature."[71] Davies in her later works proposes that black women's writing "should be read as a series of boundary crossings and not as fixed, geographically, ethnically or nationally bound category of writing."[72] My work diverges from Davies's as I refrain from labelling them as black women literatures. I choose the term tranglocal as it is an opaque concept that is not reducible to liminal spaces and it frees writers such as Conde, Head and Felinto from the restrictions of binary and universal thought.

By focusing on the liberating and subversive implications of Glissantian opacity, I seek to demonstrate that Conde, Head and Felinto as opaque writers negotiate and renegotiate their "being-in the world" as they "enter into worldliness." Their aforementioned assertions highlight the ways in which y make sense of their place in the world as writers. While categories such as

[68] Bell Hooks. 1990 342
[69] Glissant,
[70] Carole Boyce Davies. "Writing off Marginality, Minoring and Effacement," *Women Studies International Forum 14, 4* (1991) 249.
[71] Ibid. 250.
[72] Carole Boyce Davies. *Black Women: Writing and Identity.* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 4.

"black women's writing" are still inscribed within the market-worlds. Conde, Head and Felinto adhere in what Glissant describes in opposition to the standardizations of globalization: a poetics of worldliness. In that sense, they claim identities located "une diversité plus complexe que ne peuvent le signifier ces marqueurs archaïques que sont la couleur de la peau, la langue que l'on parle, le dieu que l'on honore ou celui que l'on craint, le sol où l'on est né."[73] ["in a more complex diversity which cannot be signified by those archaic makers such as the colour of our skin, the language we speak, the god we honour or fear, the place we are born."] This is why my take on the process of de-categorization and re-categorization differs from Davies as the term 'transglocal' resists the "the archaic markers" that have been imposed on writers and literatures of Africa and the diaspora.

In order to find out how opaque Conde, Head and Felinto are as writers, it is necessary to highlight that in light of previous statements in my dissertation, Glissant's concept of opacity is a form of resistance against and imposition. Since it has been conceptualized as undefinable, opacity has been interpreted in multiple ways by several scholars. Interested in the modalities and locations of opacity, critics including Celia Britton, Patrick Crowley, Michael Dash and Adlai Murdoch offer a wide range of meanings regarding opacity. Locating opacity in the post-colonial, Britton provides several examples of opacity as represented in Glissant's texts:

Focusing on the specificities of their work, I consider the aforementioned writers are "opaque authors." In that sense, I determine that opacity, as post-colonial scholar Celia Britton notes, "becomes a militant position"[74] that I argue, Condé, Head and Felinto occupy. Unsurprisingly, their works are also marked by opacity. I chose to focus on fictional texts that

[73] Edouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau. "Les Murs." *L'humanité*. Mardi 4 Septembre 2007. http://www.humanite.fr/node/377104.
[74] Celia Britton. *Edouard Glissant and Post-colonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance*, 19.

have been difficult to classify based on conventional generic categories. Condé's *Hérémakhonon,* Head's *A Question of Power* and Marilene Felinto's *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* have been studied as fictional autobiographies, *Bildungsroman* and *testimonio*. It is common currency to associate a post-colonial text with numerous genres and to attribute this situation to the ability of post-colonial texts to crisscross generic boundaries. Studies have demonstrated that the aforementioned texts share similarities with the conventions of fictional autobiographies, *Bildungsroman* and *testimonio*. I offer a new model for understanding the process of genre formation in post-colonial literatures that does not reinforce the myth of universality ascribed to literary forms in genre theory.

The capacity of post-colonial writing to cross over multiple genres has been attributed to the fluid nature of pseudo-universalist literary forms. Genres such as autobiographical fiction and the *Bildungsroman* are presumably considered adoptable and adaptable in a variety of contexts. While the travels of such genres have been dealt with at length in critical works across time and space, I suggest that the ability of post-colonial writing to transcend generic boundaries is simply due to the fact that they share the same "opaque" characteristics displayed by authors such as Condé, Head and Felinto. Post-colonial writing resists any conventional and dominant literary categories that are embedded in Eurocentric discourses. Paralleling Davies, I call for the re-naming and re-mapping of literary forms shaped by post-colonial literatures within the context of migrations.

Transglocal Fiction: A Migratory Genre

It is undeniable that all genres have been cutting through geographical boundaries traveling across time and space. Yet, so far in genre criticism, such an approach has been very unidirectional thus fashioning literary forms as monolithic categorizations with set conventions

and norms originating in Eurocentric literary landscapes. The question of genre in literatures of Africa and the diaspora has been faultily following the path of movement in connection to this dominant discourse. To rethink genre in such a context, it is necessary to adopt a multidirectional approach.

Considering that multidirectionality "provides a conceptual logic beyond the unique and the universal and outside the human,"[75] this approach displaces the question of genre in literatures of Africa and the diaspora beyond "the universal/particular opposition."[76] By adopting Rothberg's definition of multidirectionality as a methodology, I suggest that transglocal fiction is a genre that emerges as the result of a multidirectional convergence of seemingly disconnected literary traditions. In other words, transglocal fiction is a genre that should be approached multidirectionally in order to challenge the universalization of literary categories carelessly applied to the study of literatures of Africa and the diaspora. Evidently, this entails paying a special attention to the converging paths of literary traditions that have not yet been put in conversation because of geopolitical, geographical and linguistic boundaries mostly imposed by colonialist discourses.

In addition, multidirectionality is not only a methodology employed to approach a concept, it is also an attribute of the concept. For example, Rothberg uses a multidirectional approach to memory and he demonstrates that memory is multidirectional. My project also employs a multidirectional approach to genre and shows that genre is multidirectional despite its unidirectional application unto literatures of Africa and the diaspora. By highlighting the

[75] Michael Rothberg. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009), 36.
[76] Ibid. 27

multidirectional dimension of genre, I seek to break literary forms free from their Eurocentric origins and their sense of uniqueness.

For instance, all post-colonial texts selected in my dissertation have been categorized as autobiographical fictions by literary critics because they share common features specific to that literary form. This way of determining the generic identity of these texts connects them with the Eurocentric origin of autobiographical fiction and its set of conventions that makes it a unique literary category. Actually, it is their interconnectedness that shapes a genre that is constructed through the points of convergence of multiple literary traditions and moves in multiple directions.

As the concept of genre journeys across borders, the direction of its movement is not determined by a single point of origin and literary tradition. These characteristics are akin to what Davies has conceptualized as "migratory" in relation to the subjectivities portrayed in black women's writing. For Davies, "migratory subjects suggests that black women/'s writing cannot be located and framed in terms of one specific place, [it] exists in myriad places and times"[77] outside of the terms of dominant discourses. It is the migratory nature of literary genres that enable them to crisscross cultural, geopolitical and linguistic boundaries while simultaneously "moving to specific places and for definite reasons."[78]

However, while I borrow Davies's meaning of "migratory" and ascribe it to the concept of genre, she and I do not re-conceive the theoretics of movement similarly. My project explores the mobility of the concept of genre between the local and the global in post-colonial contexts whereas Davies focuses on the dialogics of movement of the concept of subjectivity in the context of black women's writing. One can argue that the specific authors selected in this

[77] Carole Boyce Davies. *Black Women: Writing and Identity.* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 36.
[78] Ibid.

dissertation are black women writers. Assertions on their blackness would limit their agency in constructing their identities in opaque terms.

As stated earlier, neither of the selected writers claim an identity based on monolithic categories based on race, gender and nationality. In that regard, the objective of my dissertation is not to read these particular authors as black women writers but rather to analyze how their works shape an alternative literary form that decolonizes genre from its pseudo-universalizing and Eurocentric conceptual and theoretical yoke. To label them as black women writers, literary critics render them permeable to western understanding as they use a terminology that may not be applicable based on the specificities of their experiences as writers.

I chose to focus on four canonical authors whose works have been examined at length within Anglo-American academia and constantly challenge the various lenses though which they have been read. In addition, their works have all been either written or translated in English, which has facilitated their circulation in global literary markets. Maryse Condé, Bessie Head and Marilene Felinto are household names respectively in Francophone Caribbean and African, Anglophone African and Luso-Brazilian literary studies.

Born in Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe in 1937, Condé left her country to go pursue her studies in France. She later lived and taught for twelve years in West Africa before returning to Europe. After completing her doctoral work at the Sorbonne and teaching in France, she then took positions in various institutions in the United States. As a prolific author, she has produced numerous novels, plays, essays, short stories and interviews.[79] Bessie Head was born in Natal, South Africa in 1937. She worked as a teacher and a journalist in South Africa. She later left

[79] Further bibliographical background can be found in Mohamed Mekkawi's *Maryse Condé: Novelist, Playwright, Critic , Teacher: An Introductory Bibliography*.(Washington DC: Howard U libraries, 1990) and Françoise Pfaff's *Conversations with Maryse Condé*. (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1996).

South Africa with a one-way exit permit to go and teach in Botswana. Often compared to Alice Walker, Head captured widespread critical attention through the publication of her autobiographical writings, novels and short stories written in English. She was invited to participate in writing programs, literary conferences and festivals in the United States, Nigeria and Australia. She died in Serowe, Botswana in 1986.[80] Marilene Felinto is born in Recife, Brazil in 1957. When she was 11 years her family moved from the provincial Northeast of Brazil to the industrial city of São Paulo. With a multifaceted professional career as an English teacher, translator and a writer, Felinto has published numerous novels, short stories, essays and children books. Felinto became hailed in the United States as an "important new black woman writer" after the translation in English of her first work written in Portuguese.[81]

As easily noticeable in light of my focus on their travels in the bibliographical information provided above, I locate these authors in the context of migrations. Their migratory and literary trajectories, internal or external to specific places, are among the elements used by literary critics to classify some of their works as autobiographical fictions. Those texts are: Condé's *Hérémakhonon*, Head's *A Question of Power* and Felinto's *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo*. These literary texts were classified as autobiographical fiction insofar as they draw on their respective authors' experiences of migration to depict the trajectories of their respective female protagonists. While there are striking commonalities between the authors and their protagonists' migratory journeys, to classify such works as autobiographical fictions for that reason reinforces

[80] Further bibliographic background can be found in the following website http://thuto.org/bhead/html/biography/brief_biography.htm and Maxine J. Cornish Sample's *Critical Essays on Bessie Head*. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).
[81] Further bibliographic background can be found in her official website http://www.marilenefelinto.com.br/ and Irene Matthews's Afterword in *The Women of Tijucopapo = As Mulheres De Tijucopapo*. (Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 1994).

the centrality of its Eurocentric model. Truth telling, individuality and collectivity, communication

To avoid these pitfalls, some literary critics decided to examine these texts as migration narrative. This thematic approach illustrates the alternative ways to deal with texts that resist easy classification into traditional generic categories including autobiographical fiction. From a thematic perspective, these texts are designated as part of "literature of migration" otherwise called "migrant" literature. These labels signify an attempt in destabilizing nation-based conceptions of literary culture and adopting a more transnational perspective. This is to accommodate the multidirectional dimensions of literary works that operate within multiple traditional literary genres across several cultures.

By defining transglocal fiction as a migratory genre, I not only highlight its inherent capacity to move across and beyond multiple genres and cultures but I also suggest that it needs to be situated in the literary traditions of migrant literature or literature of migration. This is significant in the establishment of the interrelationship between the concept of genre and the construction of identity as both are transformed by migration. By tracing the migratory trajectories of the protagonists in the selected migration narratives, I identify how to the migratory trajectories of their protagonists result in the creation of new identities and literary classifications. Each of the selected texts has been already participating in the consolidation of a literary tradition dealing with mass migrations in specific contexts including the emigration, "migritude," exile and rural-to-urban displacements. These migratory trajectories have created new articulations of diasporic identities therefore conferring a diasporic dimension to transglocal fiction.

Transglocal Fiction: A Diasporic Genre

Broadly defined as the dispersal of peoples, diaspora has the conceptual capacity of cutting across multiple geopolitical, geographical and linguistic borders. The paradigmatic question here is whether there is a difference between migration and diaspora and, by extension, between migratory subjects and diasporic subjects and migratory genre and diasporic genre. Opening her article "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse" with this very same question, Kim D. Butler adds, "if all movements of people do not result in diasporas, what, then distinguishes diasporas from other movements of people."[82] The selected post-colonial texts have been often situated within the literary landscape of Africa and its diaspora since the protagonists portrayed in those texts are of African descent. Although their blackness "is a color-coded, politically-based term of marking and definition which only has meaning when questions of racial difference and, in particular, white supremacy are deployed,"[83] the multiplicity of the contexts comprised in those texts makes it difficult to ascribe the black label to their diasporic experiences.

In order to identify the model of African diaspora illustrated in those texts, it is necessary to focus on one of the most distinguishable features of the concept of diaspora. As K. Butler puts it: "variations in the experience of the initial dispersion may, in fact, be the key in distinguishing between types of diaspora. Typing and labeling (i.e., naming) diaspora are very different things but they both derive from the initial dispersal."[84] Many scholars of diaspora studies including

[82] Kim D. Butler. "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies 10.2* (2001), 189.
[83] Carole Boyce Davies. *Black Women: Writing and Identity.* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 7.
[84] Kim D. Butler. "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies 10.2* (2001), 197.

Robin Cohen based their typology of diaspora on the conditions of the initial dispersal.[85] The model of African diaspora illustrated in Condé's *Hérémakhonon*, Head's *A Question of Power* and Felinto's *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* is located in the contexts of contemporary migrations in spaces interconnected by intertwined histories of colonialism.

Exploring the "heterogeneous discursive terrains now conspicuously shared by post-colonial studies and the newly emergent field of diaspora studies,"[86] there is a plethora of diasporic typologies theorized by scholars that could have been useful in focusing on a unidimensional aspect of the African diaspora paradigm illustrated in those texts. These African diasporic typologies are formulated in response to the difficulty in defining the concept of diaspora. In an attempt at deconstructing the term, Tiffany R. Patterson and Robin Kelley assert that diaspora is both a process and condition: "As a process [diaspora] is constantly being remade through movement, migration, travel and imagined through thought, cultural production, and political struggle. Yet, as a condition it is directly tied the process by which is it is being made."[87]

As I examine the protagonists as diasporic beyond the formulations of an African diaspora based on the dispersal of people of African descent, I approach this specific diaspora paradigm as "a process constituted by the cultural practices, everyday resistances, social struggles, and political organization"[88] of peoples connected with Africa as post-colonial

[85] See Robin Cohen. *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*. London: UCLP, 1994.
[86] Here I refer to David Chariandy's definition of what he calls "post-colonial diasporas" in his article "Post-colonial Diasporas." *Post-colonial* Text 2.1. (2006)
[87] Tiffany Patterson and Robin Kelley. "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World." *African Studies Review 43.1.* (2000)
[88] Agustin Lao-Montes and Mirangela Buggs. "Translocal Space of Afro-Latinidad/ Critical Feminist Visions for Diaporic Bridge-Building" in *Translocalities/translocalidades: Feminist Politics of Translation in the Latin/a Américas.* Ed. Sonia E. Alvarez, Claudia De Lima Costa, Verónica Feliu, Rebecca J. Hester, Norma Klahn, Millie Thayer, and Cruz Caridad Bueno. (Durham: Duke UP, 2004), 38.

subjects. By conceptualizing transglocal fiction as a diasporic genre, I consider the diaspora paradigm in that situation to be a "condition linked to world historical processes of capitalist exploitation, Western/white domination (geopolitical and geocultural), and modern /colonial state formation."[89]

Indeed, the dispersal of the concept of the genre across multiple borders, diaspora becomes one of its *sine qua non* conditions. In genre criticism, the concept of genre has been approached through theoretical frameworks encapsulating four conceptual metaphors such as the biological, family, institutional and the speech-act analogies.[90] These conceptual analogies, according to David Fishelov, are the frameworks within which generic norms and conventions are constituted. For example, the family analogy is useful in highlighting how "the dialectics of imitation and innovation within a generic tradition may be taken as analogous to the parent-child relationship, or to growing up within a family."[91] When the concept of genre migrates across cultures, I add diaspora as an alternative conceptual analogy that resist rigid models in defining genre.

In this context, my project uses the term 'diaspora' metaphorically similarly to Stuart Hall who admits: "I use this term [Diaspora] here metaphorically not literally: [D]iaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea."[92] For Stuart Hall, diaspora "is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of "identity" which lives

[89] *Ibid.*
[90] David Fishelov. *Metaphors of Genre: The Role of Analogies in Genre Theory*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1993) 1-2.
[91] *Ibid.*
[92] Stuart Hall. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*. Ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. (New York: Columbia UP, 1994) 402

with and through, and not despite, difference; by *hybridity*."[93] To a large extent, as Christiane Chivallon rightly notices:

> *hybridity* is the driving force behind this cultural process, producing only variable forms which have nothing to do with fixed terms of identity. Concepts like purity, authenticity, heritage or tradition no longer have any meaning unless re-examined through the prism of the logic of intermixing. In "all" post-modern, the root metaphor is abandoned as matter of course, and replaced with that of the rhizome, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari (1980), and used to express two ways of constructing the world: through filiation/heritage or through dissemination/intermingling.[94]

This metaphor of the rhizome initially developed as a philosophical concept by French thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Féliz Guattari in their seminal book *Mille Plateaux,*[95] has been appropriated by two other scholars who navigate the heterogeneous discursive terrains now conspicuously shared by post-colonial and diaspora studies: Paul Gilroy and Edouard Glissant.

While both Gilroy and Glissant use the metaphor of rhizome, they conceptualize diaspora and hybridity in different ways. Gilroy coins the black Atlantic to focus on "a set of dispersed locations of power rather than one singular all-powerful center. Shifting the focus away from the homeland [Gilroy] decisively highlights the interaction among diasporic blacks in Britain, the United States, and the Caribbean and the expressive culture generated by that interaction."[96] This accurate interpretation of Gilroy's model of African diaspora reveals the visible absentee in this schema: Africa. Gilroy's exclusion of Africa as he concentrates on African diasporic

[93] Stuart Hall. "New Ethnicities" in The Post-Colonial reader. Eds. Bills Ashcroft et. al. (London: Routledge
[94] Christiane Chivallon. *The Black Diaspora of the Americas: Experiences and Theories out of the Caribbean*. Trans. Antoinette Titus-Tidjani Alou. (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2011) xxx-xxxi.
[95] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *Mille Plateaux.* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1980)
[96] Lok Siu. *Memories of a Future Home: Diasporic Citizenship of Chinese in Panama*. (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005), 88.

subjectivities in the West. In other words, as Yogita Goyal accurately posits "Gilroy's black Atlantic lacks specificity,"[97] which is paramount to study of the post-colonial texts examined in my project.

On the other hand, Glissant's conception of diaspora and hybridity engages with African Diasporas within a framework "that avoids positing diaspora either as a (mythic or actual) return to Africa or as an endless scattering that marginalizes Africa."[98] Clearly, Glissant's theoretical focus is mostly framed within the Caribbean landscape. Yet, he still proposed what can be considered as a broad framework of diaspora encompassing multiple forms and patterns of migration:

> There is a difference between the transplanting (by exile or dispersion) of a people who continue to survive elsewhere and the transfer (by the slave trade) of a population to another place where they change into something different, into a set of new possibilities. It is in this metamorphosis that we must try to detect one of the best secrets of creolization. […] Relationship (at the same time link and linked, act and speech) is emphasized over what in appearance could be conceived as a governing principle, the so-called universal "controlling force."[99]

While Glissant's discourse of creolization addresses some of the issues at play in the "traveling" of the concept of genre and its transfer to literary landscapes other than Eurocentric ones, I employ Stuart Hall's notion of diasporization to describe "the process of unsettling, recombination, hybridization and 'cut-and-mix' arising out of 'diaspora experience'"[100] of the concept of genre. By approaching transglocal fiction as a diasporic genre, I propose to read the "traveling" of genre as a diasporic movement in which the concept of genre has been transferred

[97] Yogita Goyal. *Romance, Diaspora, and Black Atlantic Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010) 228.
[98] *Ibid.*, 232.
[99] Édouard Glissant, and J. Michael Dash, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. (Charlottesville: U of Virginia, 1989) 66-67.
[100] Stuart Hall, "Deviance, Politics and the Media' in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (London: Routledge, 1993), 293.

to another place and has thus undergone a process of diasporization resulting form that diasporic experience.

To a certain extent, I claim that the hybridization of the concept of genre corresponds to the process of diasporization specific to each of the works studied herein. I intend to demonstrate that "diaspora" should join the list of metaphors used in the conceptualization of genre by literary scholars in genre criticism. Whereas previous scholarship in genre criticism has established the importance of metaphors in analyzing the hybridization of literary genres, such scholarship has not yet included literatures of Africa, the Caribbean, and South America. My dissertation fills this gap by addressing the decolonization of genre resulting from the introduction of diaspora as a new metaphor in the study of literary genres.

Transglocal Fiction: Narrative of Detours

In diasporic contexts such as the black Atlantic, Africa has been made to occupy the mythical and mystical space of a point of origin fixed in time. Africa has become tied to one of the foundational elements in the construction of African diasporic identities: the idea of return. Indeed, the diasporic practice of a return to Africa whether it is a physical or a mental journey has been privileged in dominant diasporic narratives. There is an urgent need to examine these specific articulations of the African diaspora throughout the global south. I address this need by focusing on texts that rethink the idea of a return to a point of origin in the formation of African diasporic subjectivities.

Hérémakhonon, *A Question of Power* and *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* were all classified as narratives of return by numerous literary critics at some point. Indeed, the African diasporic trajectory retraced by Véronica, the main protagonist in Maryse Condé's *Hérémakhonon* is seemingly inscribed in the clichéd dominant narrative of the "back to Africa" movements.

Elizabeth in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* yearns all throughout the narrative for a return to the point where she could restore herself to sanity and wholeness. In Marilene Felinto's *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo,* Rìsia walks back to her mother's place of birth. All three texts portray female protagonists engaged in physical and metaphorical journeys.

In my dissertation I propose to rethink such classification and I claim that these texts should be read as narratives of detour. I borrow the term 'detour' from Edouard Glissant's theoretical repertoire as he conceptualizes it as a countering the idea of return to a single point of origin. According to Glissant, "the first impulse of a transplanted population which is not sure of maintaining the old order of values in the transplanted locale is that of reversion. Reversion is the obsession with a single point of origin: one must not alter the absolute state of being. To revert is to consecrate permanence, to negate contact." [101] Here, Glissant describes return[102] as a negative process that does not create any new set of possibilities as far as the constitution of a diasporic identity is concerned. To exorcize the impossibility of return since it does not lead anywhere, Glissant proposes to transplanted populations to practice detour (division):

> Diversion is the ultimate resort of a population whose domination by an Other is concealed: it then must search *elsewhere* for the principle of domination (which is not only exploitation, which is not only misery, which is not only underdevelopment, but actually the complete eradication of an economic entity) is not directly tangible. Diversion is the parrallectic displacement of that strategy.[103]

To read the selected post-colonial texts as narratives of detours is first to consider that their respective female protagonists embark on journeys that would lead them to new set of possibilities in terms of their migratory identities. Inspired by Glissant, I claim that their

[101] Édouard Glissant, and J. Michael. Dash. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. (Charlottesville: U of Virginia, 1989) 16.
[102] Here I use Britton's translation of Glissant's "retour" as I agree with her that the published translation of this term as "reversion" is not sufficiently exact.
[103] Ibid, 20.

migratory identities are relational and rhizomatic and thus in perpetual movement of becoming. Such an approach enables me to situate these texts within a perpetual literary tradition of resistance. In other words, by reading them as narratives of detours, I consider *Hérémakhonon*, *A Question of Power* and *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* as participating in the establishment a new form of resistance literature. Not only are these narratives resisting the traditional conceptualization of diasporic identities as root-identities but they also develop textual strategies of resistance to the ways in which the study of genre has been imposed to post-colonial texts.

The ensuing four chapters articulate the singularities of the narratives of detours in transcontinental, transnational, and transregional diasporic contexts. Chapter one argues that Maryse Condé's *Hérémakhonon,* (1976) is to be considered as the archetypal narrative of Caribbean literary detours. Challenging the narrative of return inscribed within the tradition of "back to Africa" movements, *Hérémakhonon* is a literary point of entanglement that encompasses the singularities of trans-migratory subjectivities journeying in the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa. Chapter three proposes to read madness as a transnational model of detour in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* (1973) to highlight the unsettling dimension of the labor-migration imposed by Apartheid from South Africa to Botswana. I argue that the ghostly remains that haunt South African diasporic subjectivities are located at the intersections of multiple and global narratives of oppression. Chapter four concentrates on the metaphorical and trans-regional movements displayed in Marilene Felinto's *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* (1982) going beyond transnational accounts of diasporization. Felinto's cannibalization of literary forms, including the "*cordel* literature" and slave narratives, symbolizes the muddy entanglements of Afro-Brazilian identities in Brazil. The conclusion focuses on how these

narratives of detour in particular contribute to the future of the poetics of resistance in Africa and the diaspora.

Ultimately, this dissertation exemplifies relational and multidirectional comparative readings of African postcolonial diasporic literature from a genre perspective. It neutralizes the universalizing theories predominating in genre criticism and presents critical points of departure for re-thinking traditional discourses of African postcolonial diasporas. On a larger scale, this dissertation engages with questions of race, gender, and class while articulating new discourses on memory, trauma, and identity. Through theoretical, critical, and literary detours, this dissertation argues that the decolonization of genre in the study of literatures of Africa, the Caribbean and South America does not manifest itself through a rejection of already established literary genres, it occurs through new discourses of generic hybridization.

CHAPTER ONE: ARCHETYPAL DETOURS IN MARYSE CONDE'S *HEREMAKHONON*

> Directed not toward arriving, but rather toward the various routes that are traced in the in-between spaces of repeated departures, Glissant's Detour provides the insight that becoming a collectivity is tied to a process of continual departures.
>
> Jeannie Suk

> Life is a bitch with a bum leg. She smokes a pipe and sits in the doorstep of her hut, and I'm within reach, she mutters wickedly. She has cast a spell on me and I cannot get rid myself of it. That's why I am wandering from one continent to another.
>
> *Hérémakhonon*

Reissued in French under the title *En attendant le bonheur (Hérémakhonon),* *Hérémakhonon* is Maryse Condé's first book. Already known for her critical essays and plays, Condé reveals in an interview with longtime friend Françoise Pfaff :

> [*Hérémakhonon*] was meant to provoke, get on people's nerves, irritate, and run counter to everything that was being said and done. It was written to displease, and I have been rather surprised to see how much it has displeased. The Guadeloupean and Martinican press massacred it. At first the Africans embarked on a conspiracy of silence; then they attacked the book as well.[104]

From this above statement, one can gather that *Hérémakhonon* is a provocative book that has generated negative responses that Condé maps unto an African diaspora connecting Africa and the Caribbean. In this chapter, I claim that, read as the archetypal narrative de detours, *Hérémakhonon* shows how Condé effectively inaugurates transglocal fiction as a post-colonial literary mode of resistance articulating the creation of a multi-faceted set of diasporic subjectivities in relation to Africa.

In order to establish *Hérémakhonon* as the archetypal narrative of detours, it is necessary to identify the nature of detours performed in the book by the protagonist Véronica Mercier. In

[104] Maryse Condé and Françoise Pfaff. *Conversations with Maryse Condé*. (Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 1996), p. 32.

light of the critical scholarship that dealt with her characterization in *Hérémakhonon*, Véronica Mercier would probably have made the list of the most disliked female protagonists in literatures of Africa and its diaspora if such a list existed. This is probably because "the peripatetic shifts of [Véronica]'s consciousness […] take the reader around the Atlantic triangle in a whirl from West Africa to Guadeloupe, to France and so on."[105] Indeed, in *Hérémakhonon*, Condé retraces the journey of Véronica Mercier, a Guadeloupian teacher of philosophy who abruptly decides to go to an unnamed African country after having spent nine years in France. Calling her migration to Africa "[une] tragique erreur," (*En attendant le bonheur*, 244) ["a tragic mistake,"] (Hérémakhonon, 176) Véronica ultimately decides to go back to France. The swirling motion of Véronica's journey reflects also her unwillingness to get involved in the affairs of the unnamed African country illustrating the political turmoil in Guinea under the rule of Sékou Touré.

There is a large body of scholarship that traces Véronica's migratory movements. According to H. Adlai Murdoch, Véronica "establishes an interpellative triangle whose operative poles are Guadeloupe, France, and Africa, reworking the Atlantic triangle of the slave trade."[106] Indeed, Véronica specifically reworks the positionality of "Africa" in the Atlantic triangle. I claim that Véronica challenges the idea that Africa is a point of origin to which diasporic Africans of the Atlantic triangle yearn to return. By deciding to leave the unnamed African country to go back to France, Véronica establishes Africa as one of the multiple points of departure necessary to the formation of an African diaspora in which Africa is no longer "an illusory solution to the condition of the exile."[107]

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[105] Christopher Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade*. (Durham: Duke UP, 2008), p. 357.
[106] H. Adlai Murdoch, "Divided Desire: Biculturality and the Representation of Identity in *En attendant le bonheur*," *Callaloo* 18.3, (1995, p. 590.
[107] Mireille Rosello, "Caribbean Insularization of Identity in Maryse Condé's work from *En attendant le bonheur* to *Les derniers rois mages*,"Callaloo 18.3 (1995), p. 614.

The fact that Véronica challenges the myth of return to Africa in the constitution of an African diasporic self has been treated at length by numerous scholars including Françoise Lionnet, Christopher L. Miller and Julie Nack Ngue. In order to deal with the significance of Véronica's voyage to Africa in her quest of identity, Lionnet, Miller and Ngue borrowed Edouard Glissant's concept of "*détour*" that I analyzed in the theoretical chapter. For Lionnet, *Hérémakhonon* is the narrative of an "aimless detour."[108] For Miller, Condé's first book is the narrative of a "transparent detour."[109] As for Ngue, Véronica's story is the narrative of a therapeutic detour.[110] Uncontestably, the notion of detour has proven itself useful in the study of *Hérémakhonon* to uncover the meaning of Véronica's temporary migration to an unnamed African country.

My reading of *Hérémakhonon* differs from the aforementioned examples. While Lionnet, Miller and Ngue engage with various forms of detours, these are interpreted as unproductive forms of detours. For Lionnet, Miller and Ngue, Véronica's detours led up to what Glissant calls "une situation 'bloquée.'"[111] [a 'dead-end' situation.][112] I argue that Véronica's voyage is a productive model of detour that led to a space characterized by possibilities of survival and resistance against the "coloniality of power."[113] In doing so, my objective is to establish that *Hérémakhonon* (hereafter HMN) should be read as a narrative of archetypal detours. The Glissantian articulations of detours have developed into productive forms of resistance.

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[108] Françoise Lionnet, "Happiness Deferred: Maryse Condé's *Hérémakhonon* and the failure of enunciation" in *Autobiographical voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989), p. 168.
[109] Miller, 357.
[110] Julie Nack Ngue, *Critical Conditions: Illness and Disability in Francophone African and Caribbean Women's Writing*, (Plymouth : Lexington Books, 2012), 63.
[111] Edouard Glissant, *Le discours Antillais*, (Paris : Le Seuil, 1981), p. 11.
[112] Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. Trans. Michael Dash, (Charlottesville: U of Virginia, 1989), 1.
[113] Anibal Quijano. "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America," *International Sociology* 15.2, (2000), p.215.

Hérémakhonon not only creates new avenues in reexamining the assumed connections between Africa and its diaspora but also develops narrative strategies which, at the intertextual and paratextual levels, perform textual modes of detours shaping transglocal fiction as a literary model of resistance.

Gestures of Unbelonging: Exorcizing the Obsession of a Single Origin

In light of Véronica's trajectory, *Hérémakhonon* is a series of repeated departures. The first departure from Guadeloupe to France was a form of "fuite" ["escape"] that Véronica gradually invalidates after nine years. (HMN, 52) Her second departure from France to an unnamed country in Africa took the form of a quest for a "thérapie] (En attendant le bonheur, 53) "therapy." (HMN, 29) Her third departure from the unnamed country in Africa to Paris was "ma fuite- encore une!" (*En attendant le bonheur*, 244) ["yet, another flight!"] (HMN, 176) These series of departures prompted the literary critic Christopher L. Miller to state that "Hérémakhonon is a series of flights around the [Atlantic] triangle."[114]

Miller subtly maps Véronica's journeys into the Atlantic triangle based on her psychological, temporal and geographical movements.[115] Based on the continental spaces that Véronica crosses throughout *Hérémakhonon*, Miller's location of her movements in the Atlantic triangle is correct. Yet, the multidirectional dimension of Véronica's travels does not resemble the clichéd narrative of return to a single point of origin, Africa. Actually, Véronica's journey to Africa is a counternarrative rethinking the myth of Africa in dominant discourses of African diaspora. Véronica engages in this detour not only to exorcize her obsession with a single point

[114] Miller, p. 357.
[115] Ibid., p. 358.

of origin but also to perform gestures of unbelonging to the master narrative of home/homeland in the dominant discourses of African diaspora such as the black Atlantic.

From her first departure to the last one, some "malentendus" (*En attendant le bonheur*, 21) ["misunderstandings"] (HMN, 4) have plagued the relationship between Véronica and the collectivities she was connected to. Subject to multiple forms of misplacement and misnaming, Véronica has resorted to flights in order to search not only for a "valid place of enunciation"[116] where she could "rompre ce silence." (*En attendant le bonheur*, 244) ["break the silence."] (HMN, 176) All throughout *Hérémakhonon*, Véronica has been constantly bombarded with derogatory images of herself. For example, her father calls her: "Intellectuelle de gauche. Putain." (*En attendant le bonheur*, 28) ["left-wing intellectual. Whore."] (HMN, 9) She later flees to France in order to escape "mon milieu familial, le marabout mandingue, ma mère, la négro bourgeoisie qui m'a faite, avec , à la bouche, ses discours glorificateurs de la Race et, au Coeur, sa conviction terrifiée de son infériorité." (*En attendant le bonheur*, 86) ["the family, the mandingo marabout, my mother, the black bourgeoisie that made me, with its talks of glorifying the Race and its terrified conviction of its inferiority."] (HMN, 52) Clearly, Véronica is not just running away from the derogatory names that her father called her, she was also avoiding the label "black bourgeoisie" that would have located and fixed her identity onto the post-colonial spaces of Guadeloupe.

Véronica's disassociation with the figure of the black bourgeois is validated by the fact that as post-coloniality in Guadeloupe moves into globalizing frenzy, the black bourgeois will not survive outside of its borders. This situation is all the more complicated by the ambiguous status of Guadeloupe as integrated overseas department of France. As Hershini Bhana Young

[116] Murdoch, p. 582.

accurately puts it, Véronica's Guadeloupe "occupies a curious in-between space as neither wholly post-colonial nor colonial."[117] In this configuration, Guadeloupe is a space where there is no possibility for Véronica to survive as anything else but as a member of the black bourgeoisie.

Indeed, Veronica's disdain for the black bourgeoisie echoes that of Frantz Fanon who in *The Wretched of the Earth*, states that "only a sort of little greedy caste, avid and voracious, with the mind of a huckster, only too glad to accept the dividends that the former colonial power hands out to it. This get-rich-quick middle class shows itself incapable of great ideas or of inventiveness. It remembers what it has read in European textbooks and imperceptibly it becomes not even the replica of Europe, but its caricature."[118] Veronica's relentless attempts at putting some distance between herself and her mother and sisters culminates with her love affair with a mulatto which leads her to leaving Guadeloupe. Deaf to her family's glorifications of the race, Veronica refuses to become a caricature of Europe which "is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labour"[119] in Guadeloupe. Therefore Véronica's emigration to France, camouflaged as the consequence of family misunderstandings, is Véronica's ultimate gesture of unbelonging to a "home" inhabited by the black bourgeoisie who, after all, "ne représente que deux ou trois poignées de familles." (*En attendant le bonheur*, 110) ["only represents three or four families."] (HMN, 71) If she had stayed in Guadeloupe, Veronica would have been "completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type."[120]

Home therefore is a complicated notion for Véronica. When Saliou, Véronica's friend and the director of the institute where Véronica was assigned to teach as an expatriate,

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[117] Hershini Bhana Young, *Haunting Capital: Memory, Text, and the Black Diasporic Body*, (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2006), 191.
[118] Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Constance Farrington. *The Wretched of the Earth*. (New York: Grove), 1965, 141
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.

welcoming her to 'Africa' said: "Vous êtes ici chez vous," ["Consider yourself at home,"] Véronica had a sarcastic response: "Bon, il efface d'un coup trois siècles et demi." (*En attendant le bonheur,* 21) ["With one word, he wiped out three centuries and a half."] (HMN, 4) Clearly for Véronica, 'Africa' is not home. By uttering silently these words, Véronica destroys the myth of Africa as "home" for people of African descent. Saliou's Africa after nearly four centuries cannot be the point of origin to which communities and individuals of the African diaspora yearn to return. Saliou's Africa is an unnamed African country fraught with political turmoil and economic instability under the dictatorship of Mwalimwana, the "Father" of the nation. Some paratextual information on the book cover reveals that the unnamed country is Guinea and that Mwalimwana is no one else but Sékou Touré. Yet, the name of the country all throughout the book remains anonymous. When asked if the anonymity of the country was deliberate, Condé responded affirmatively adding that only Africans would know which country she is talking about.[121]

In Saliou's Africa, Véronica claims her identity as "étrangère" (*En attendant le bonheur,* 110) ["foreigner."] (HMN, 71) For her, the unnamed African country is the space "où l'on me catapulte dans des conflits dontj'ignore l'a, b, c." (*En attendant le bonheur*, 110) ["where I'm torpedoed into matters which I know neither head nor tail."] (HMN, 71) Once again, "misunderstandings" dislocates Véronica's attempt at connecting with a collective identity. While she acknowledges her friendship with Saliou, she desires to confide in him without listening to him. Véronica's failure to participate actively in the political affairs of the unnamed country can be understood as a consequence of her love affair with Ibrahima Sory, her "nègre

[121] Maryse Condé and Françoise Pfaff. *Conversations with Maryse Condé*. (Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 1996), 12.

avec aieux" ["her nigger with ancestors,"] the minister of interior in the government of Mwalimwana.

However, Véronica's deliberate deafness to Saliou's rambles (HMN, 60) can be interpreted as Véronica's lack of connection with an Africa parceled into nation-states by former colonial powers. This reading is corroborated by Véronica's subtle redirection of her purpose of visit: "je ne suis pas venue pour me lancer dans des débats sur la voie africaine du socialism. Il faut que les rabs quittent mon esprit et retournent à la pointe de Sangomar." (*En attendant le bonheur*, 55) ["I didn't come to be mixed up in a debate on African socialism. I must rid myself of these *rab* and send them back to Sangomar."] (HMN, 30) "Sangomar" refers to Pointe de Sangomar, "a tiny peninsula in the Sine Saloum region in Senegal that, with every passing year and rising water levels, came closer to separation from the mainland. Originally, it was a hybrid space – containing land, river and sea- subjugated to the elements. A *presqu'île*, it moved with certainty towards a new geographical entity."[122] Véronica is not interested in the hybrid ideological space embodied by African socialism because it not only comes from the contacts between Europe and Africa but also has become after the independence the trademark of African nationalist movements. Véronica seeks to relate to another form of hybridity, a more organic one that predates the scramble of Africa.

Etymologically, Sangomar stands for *song o maag* which means in serer, one of the many local languages spoken in Senegal, "those who put out to sea."[123] Not only is Sangomar a point of arrival and departure for serer fishermen, it also plays an important role in serer traditional beliefs. The ever-changing position of the peninsula in addition to its hybrid nature is somewhat

[122] Julie Nack Ngue, 69.
[123] Personal interview with Gana Ndiaye, graduate student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

reminiscent of Véronica's in various local spaces. Like the peninsula, Véronica is moving with certainty towards a new space in which to locate her identity.

Regarding the spiritual significance of Sangomar, the serer community used to pour libations (water or milk) to honor their ancestors, the gods of their traditional beliefs and other spiritual beings. While the word "*rab*" is a Wolof word, they are spiritual entities that are found in Serer, Wolof and Lébou communities in Senegal. Their nature varies from one ethnic group to the other although they share some common features that Mueller lists as follows:

> *Rab* spirits are invisible beings that live in a parallel world to humans. They have personalities, professions, religions, and genders. While many *rab* are indifferent to human life, some *rab* desire an alliance with the human world. These alliances are built upon relationships of reciprocity. The relationships of reciprocity between *rab* and humans manifest in several ways. If humans disrespect the *rab*, by crossing through his or her territory improperly, or failing to maintain the *rab*'s altar, the *rab* may seek retribution and the human is obliged to deal with the spirit. In other cases, the *rab* may fall in love with a human and require the same attention a lover would. Depending on the relationship between the *rab* and the human(s) he or she is linked to, an *ndëpp* exorcism ceremony may be conducted to appease the *rab* and/or break the link between the *rab* and the human. Alternatively, select powerful healers establish relationships with *rab* that are mutually beneficial. The *rab* provides the healer with information and other forms of guidance in exchange for offerings and respect.[124]

Clearly not interested in "une Afrique déjà badigeonnée du vernis de l'Occident" (*En attendant le bonheur*, 161) ["an Africa already painted with a Western varnish,"] (HMN, 111) Véronica challenges the idea of an African nationalism stemming from the contact between Africa and the Western world. In the unnamed country, Véronica states that she has found "des aïeux tortionnaires, voilà ce que j'ai trouvé," (*En attendant le bonheur*, 225) ["a pack of ancestors who are torturing me,"] (HMN, 161) which means that if her *rab* is/are ancestral spirits, they did not

[124] Rachel Mueller, "The Spirits are my Neighbors : Women and the *Rab* Cult in Dakar, Senegal," http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=anth_honors.

follow her from La Pointe in Guadeloupe. Therefore the patterns of movement of the *rab* reveal that they are not necessarily the ancestral linkage between Guadeloupe and Africa.

The *rab* is/are ethnic-bound in Senegal. Although Véronica hints that her *rab* evolve within the Serer spiritual realm, the ways in which she describes the exorcism ceremony shows that she is actually talking about how Lebou communities perform the *ndëpp*: "Pas besoin de m'enduire le corps et de m'ensevelir sous un linge." (*En attendant le bonheur*, 65) ["No need to oil my body and bury me in cloth."] (HMN, 37) The *ndëpp* ceremony "is a ritual that takes place in several different contexts, and involves a series of rituals that culminate in dancing, singing, drumming, and trance. The most common *ndëpp* takes place when an individual is badly afflicted by a *rab* to the point where they no longer function normally in daily life. The *ndëpp* ceremony is conducted to please the rab and exorcise the spirit from the individual."[125] Within the serer community the *ndëpp* is performed by offering libations such as milk and water whereas in the Lebou communities, the person undergoing the *ndëpp* is buried in cloth. Véronica's interest in participating in a collectivity is directed towards the hybridity of spirituality and its practices in Africa rather than the hybridity of political ideology. This clearly shows Véronica's desire to avoid any connection with the post-colonial independent African nation-states.

Yet, Véronica is still not sure of which type of *ndëpp* she needs as she asks "pour moi quel *ndop*?" (*En attendant le bonheur*,55) ["which is my *ndop*?"] (HMN, 30) She does not know the identity/ies of the *rab* and which kind of exorcism ceremony should be performed on her to get rid of her r*ab*. There are many categories of *rab*: the *grand rab*, protectors of their geographical regions, the *tuur*, sometimes considered as the family ancestors or linked to familial

[125] Mueller, 83.

lineages, villages, animals, or geographic features, the *rab errant* [wandering *rab*], the most likely to cause disruption in an individual's life.[126] It is important to point out the *rab* are spirits and they have never been human. *De facto,* they should not be confused with the ancestors.[127] The question then is why numerous literary critics read *Hérémakhonon* as Véronica's search for ancestors. Many characters including her French lover Jean-Michel and her African lover Ibrahima Sory in the novel also immediately assume that she is looking for her ancestors in Africa which immediately locates her identity as part of a "nous qu'on appellee plus noblemen la diaspora." (*En attendant le bonheur,* 174) ["we, the so-called diaspora."] (HMN, 122)

As a member of the "névrosés de la diaspora" ["neurotics from the Diaspora,"] Véronica came to Africa to establish a connection with an African Other that would cure her from what Frantz Fanon would call "a nervous condition." Before setting her heart on Sory, Véronica has tried to heal herself by assuming the role of Marilisse, a historical character and black slave woman who lived with a white man and had children with him. She also read Mandingo epics in an attempt to shape a historical space of healing that would connect oral traditions predating the creation of nation-states in Africa and the Caribbean. At her arrival in the unnamed African country, Véronica realizes that "Africa was already painted with a Western varnish" as illustrated through violent political climate reflecting Condé's experience in Guinea under Sékou Touré and the Marxist African avatars that she was forced to teach at the national institute. She then resorts to establish a more contemporary relationship with the unnamed country by way of a love connection with her "nigger with ancestors."

-Notre pays vous plaît?

[126] Mueler, 53.
[127] Mueller, 51.

> Me plaire? Je n'en sais rien. Je suis une malade, monsieur le Ministre, à la recherche d'une thérapie. Je pourrai vous raconter. Mais il se lève. L'entretien est apparemment terminé.
> - Je ferai en sorte que vous vous sentiez ici chez vous. (*En attendant le bonheur*, 53)
>
> ["Do you like our country?"
> "Like? I really don't know. I am an invalid, Mr. Minister, seeking therapy. I could tell you a lot. But he's getting up. Apparently the conversation is over.
> "I'll do my best to make you feel at home."] (HMN, 28-29)

This conversationis an internal monologue set in Hérémakhonon, Ibrahima Sory's villa. Hérémakhonon means "waiting for happiness" or "welcome house" an African transnational language. Hérémakhonon is also the name of big store in Conakry, which was always empty apart from cheap toys made in China. It is in Hérémakhonon that Véronica chooses to confide in Sory and to admit her illness. This is Véronica's first out of many failed attempts to confess to Sory about her illness. As the internal monologue suggests it and the English word "invalid" suggest it, Véronica speaks but can't be heard. With such a disability, she hopes to find in Sory, "her nigger with ancestors" a confessor who could translate her sickness into a language that she can understand and exorcize the ghosts who are haunting her.

Sory immediately assumes that Véronica suffers from a disorientating condition that Homi Bhabha would call "unhomeliness" "which occurs when individuals or communities lose their traditional, stable, homogenous identities and ways of life." Under Sory's eyes, Véronica's lack of connection with his country is related to the comfortable living conditions she used to have in France and Guadeloupe. He locates Véronica's sickness within the national boundaries as for him, the nation is "home." Supposedly acting as her confessor, her confident, her analyst, her traditional healer, and her gris-gris, Sory continues to misinterpret Véronica's sickness. When, in another instance, she reveals that her societal malaise as connected to her relationship with the Mandingo marabout, her father, her mother, her sense of inferiority, and the Black

bourgeoisie in the Caribbean, Sory once again fails miserably by dismissing her sickness as an "identity" as illustrated in the following passage: "There was a young black American girl here who had the same sort of problem, I believe. She ended up having her hair plaited like our women and having herself renamed Salamata." Perhaps you are the specialist for neurotics of the Diaspora? We are after all the Diaspora!"

When Véronica discloses to Sory that her "purpose of visit to Africa" was to escape from a Caribbean self entirely constructed by what post-colonial scholar Francoise Lionnet calls "the discourse of the patriarchal Other," Sory once again fails to locate Véronica within the post-colonial Caribbean spaces. He compares her to an African American girl, whose identity is set by the transatlantic slave trade, implying thus that Véronica's return to Africa is synonymous to that of any member of the African diaspora. In that sense, Sory fails in his role of "ndëppkat," the man who is supposed to please her *rab* and send them back to Sangomar. She did not ask much from him but to understand her. Since the man thought "will be the marabout's "gree-gree" (gris-gris) and will restore her self-respect since "through him, [she] shall at last be proud to be what [she is]" (HMN, 37), Véronica seems to have failed in her quest for a cure.

From Hérémakhonon to Paris: Transglocal Detours

Throughout the book, Veronica has made sense of her life in relationship to the lovers that she met along the routes. She ultimately always leave the relationship to wander from continent to continent. As I consider that Veronica set on this journey to Africa to find people who would understand her and not classify her arbitrarily, it is interesting that the only tangible connection she was able to make was not with men or women but with Hérémakhonon, Ibrahim Sory's villa.

First, Hérémakhonon is a space where Véronica performs an act of memory is compared to a vital act of breathing or drinking. The return to Hérémakhonon implies to "stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial."[128] This particular act of remembering allows Véronica to make connections between her personal life and slavery as she retrospectively realizes that what has troubled her all along is her bourgeois identity that likens her family to the Southern American O'Hara and her nurse Mabo Julie to Scarlett's maid.

In the villa, Véronica enters what could be considered as a "womb of memory" where she tries to reconcile herself with the entanglement of her problematic Bourgeois status and her race. Hérémakhonon thus is *a lieu de mémoire* where a post-colonial African diasporic female subject witnesses at the same time, the lieu where her post-colonial status as a Guadeloupian bourgeois woman intersects with her African diasporic subjectivity. By mentioning Scarlett's maid and re-appropriating her image to integrate it within the "sickly-sweet images" of her childhood, Véronica situates her story from both a national, historical and diasporic perspectives. Ultimately, the return to Africa, to Hérémakhonon, is a "useful ploy"[129] to place her subjectivity within an African diasporic framework allowing her to wander from Guadeloupe to the United States in the womb of memory. By way of diversion, Véronica thus uncovers new routes and detours drawing the strategic ways of shaping the African diasporic subjectivities. For Véronica,

> Il y a un charme dans cette maison. Charme au sens littéral. On le respire dans l'air ou on le boit dans le jus de pamplemousse. Enfin je ne sais pas où il est caché, mais il agit. Dans ce fauteuil je sombre dans un extraordinaire bien-être. Le temps s'arrête. Le temps recule en arrière. J'ai cinq ans. Je suis dans la cuisine. Je regarde Mabo Julie préparer le repas du soir […]
> Elle a une grosse figure que j 'ai vu quinze plus tard à la bonne de Scarlett O' Hara. Il y a une servante dans la cuisine. Une maigrichonne et jaunâtre. Une

[128] Nora, 19.
[129] Glissant, 26.

> chabine… J'ai dix ans peut-être. Je suis couchée sur les galets au bord la rivière Rose. Des baigneurs crient de joie dans l'eau. Maman Julie m'appelle:
> -Chouboulou' à maman, viens vite.
> Des images douces, fades à force de douceur. Neuf ans que je ne suis pas rentrée chez moi. (*En attendant le bonheur,* 61-62)

> This house has charm. Charm in the literal sense of the word. You breathe it in or drink it in the grapefruit juice. I don't really know where it's hiding, but it's there. Abdoulaye brings me a grapefruit juice and the magazines the way they do at the dentist's. What if I were to go home/ stop kidding yourself… it is obvious that nothing will make me budge. That'll wait. This house has charm. Charm in the literal sense of the word. You breathe it in or drink it in the grapefruit juice. I don't really know where it's hiding, but it's there. This armchair gives me an extraordinaire feeling of well-being. Time stands still. The clock is going back. I'm five. I'm in the kitchen. I'm watching Mabo Julie make the evening meal. She is singing. [..]
> She has a big face that I saw fifteen years later on Scarlett O'Hara's maid. There's another servant in the kitchen. A thin, yellow-skinned girl… a quadroon. I'm ten. I'm lying on the peebles by River Rose. People are splashing happily in the water. Mabo Julie calls me:
> "come on chouboulou a maman."
> Sweet sickly –sweet images. I haven't been back for nine years. (HMN, 34-35)

This is particularly significant for it exemplifies accurately how Véronica's personal past crosses path with slavery as a collective past.

In other words, Véronica exorcizes herself from "the impossibility of return by what [Glissant] calls the practice of diversion"[130] in Ibrahima Sory's house. The first time Véronica goes to Hérémakhonon, she experiences a very strange situation:

> Brusquement je m'assieds et quelque chose cède en moi. Comme si toutes ces dernières semaines, tous ces derniers mois, toutes ces dernières années, j'avais vécu en haute tension et soudain n'en pouvais plus. Peut-être l'extrême fraicheur de la pièce ou son silence ? Dans cette ville, on désapprend le silence, la débandade des tam-tams, la sarabande des pilons, la voix flutée des balafons et à intervalle la plainte haute et rauque du muezzin. C'est cela, le silence. Heremakhonon est une ile où n'a pas abordé la Santa Maria et pas de syphilis pour les futurs Peaux-Rouges. (*En attendant le bonheur*, 52)

[130] Glissant, 18.

> [Suddenly, as I sit down, something gives inside me. The tension with which I obviously been living over the past weeks, months, years, breaks. In this town you forget what silence is, the sound of drums, the pounding of the pestles, the melodious voice of the balaphon, and from time to time the high, raw voice of the muezzin. Here, all is silence. Hérémakhonon is an island, of course of the Santa Maria- no syphilis for the future Red Skins. I close my eyes, perhaps sleep.] (HMN, 28)

Véronica clearly experiences a feeling of wellbeing as soon as she enters the house. Since this is Ibrahima's house, it is easy to be misled and to associate Véronica's wellbeing to the presence of her "nigger with ancestors." Still, the meaning of Hérémakhonon in Mandinka is significant as it is actually the space, the lieu that has such an effect on Véronica. Hérémakhonon means "while waiting for happiness" in Mandinka. It is in this in-between space that Veronica's personal experience of therapy puts in dialogue the economic domination of maids in Guadeloupe and the slavery system in the United States. The personal experiences of Veronica in terms of her regular interaction with Sory's houseboy, her recollections with their family maid in Guadeloupe Mabo Julie and her literary knowledge of the plight of Scarlett O'Hara's slave relate to global forms of economic exploitation. Hérémakhonon is all the more significant in the sense that it is basically the reason why Condé decided to reprint this book. She states in the preface of *En Attendant le bonheur (Heremakhonon)* that she needed to elucidate the title of her book for the leader to better understand Veronica.

All throughout the book, Veronica was looking for ways to be understood by her family, her lovers and her friends. The authorial intervention in uncovering the opaque layers of Hérémakhonon reflects its importance for the text and the enunciation of an African diasporic subjectivity for Veronica. For me, the journey to Africa is not the detour that leads Veronica to a shared elsewhere in order to resist the concealed manifestations of oppression and domination. Véronica's journey to Africa ends where it began, at the airport. It is significant that her detour

began in what Marc Augé calls a "non-lieu."[131] [non-place] In respect to the airport, the anthropologist says: "Si un lieu peut se définir comme identitaire, relationnel et historique, un espace qui ne peut se définir ni comme identitaire, ni comme relationnel, ni comme historique définira un non -lieu."[132] [If a place can be defined in terms of identity, is relational and historical, a space that does not embody a sense of identity, is neither relational nor historical, is a non-place.][133]

It is fitting that Véronica starts and ends the journey through which she intends to "me réenraciner," (*En attendant le bonheur*, 86) ["put down roots within [her]self,"] (HMN, 53) in a transitional and deterritorialized space. As Young puts it accurately: "Hérémakhonon specifically speaks to the displacement and the crisis of identity of a racialized, fragmented subject, displaced by transnational capital and labor flows."[134] While a I agree with Young, I would add that Veronica is not the only "racialized, fragmented subject, displaced by transnational capital and labor flows" featured in this book, she should include Abdoulaye, Sory's houseboy, Mabo Julie and Scarlett's maid. While multiple mythical, historical and family figures have seemingly haunted Véronica, there is only one individual that she wants to please: the street cleaner of the rue de l'Université who just like her is a racialized, fragmented subject, displaced by transnational capital and labor flows.

In the following passage, she recalls the first time that he haunted her dreams:

> Ce soir je retournerai à mon hôtel et la tête sur l'oreiller, je m'endormirai. Et peut-être qu'il ne viendra pas hanter mes songes, car depuis que je suis en Afrique, il m'a laissée en paix. Chaque matin il balayait la rue de l'Université. Il

[131] Marc Augé, Non-lieux : introduction a une anthropologie de la surmodernité, (Paris : Le seuil, 1992), p.100.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Marc Augé, *Non-Places : Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London and New York : Verso, 1995), p. 34.
[134] Ibid, 182.

> nous regardait Jean Michel et moi, sans haine ni colère, ni intolérance, ni stupeur. Certains vous hèlent au passage :
> - Quel pays, ma soeur?
> Lui ne disait rien. Il nous regardait. Moi, mon architecte aux cheveux mi-longs en costume de velours rouille. La première fois que j'avais rêvé de lui, j'étais soufflée. Rêver d'un balayeur ! (*En attendant le bonheur*, 34-35)
>
> [Tonight I'll go back to my hotel, lay my head on my pillow and sleep. And perhaps he won't haunt my dreams. Since I've been in Africa he has left me in peace. Each morning he would sweep the rue de l'Université. He would look at Jean-Michel and me, no anger, no intolerance, no amazement. Some of them call out as you go by. "Where are you from, Sister" He did not say anything. Just looked. Me and my architect with long hair and rust-colored velvet suit. The first time I dreamed of him I couldn't get over it. Dream of a street cleaner!]

At first, Véronica does not understand why there is no contempt in the street cleaner's look, and why she could not get him out of her mind. When she decides finally to leave for Paris, he is the only person she anticipates to see:

> Le printemps? Alors le balayeur de la rue de l'Université aura ôté ce gros pull-over bleu à col roulé qui apparaît sous sa blouse. Est-ce qu'il aura remarqué mon absence ? Comment saluera-t-il mon retour ? Ma fuite- encore une ! Un jour il faudra rompre ce silence. Il faudra que je lui explique. Quoi? Cette erreur, cette tragique erreur que je ne pouvais pas ne pas commettre, étant ce que je suis. (*En attendant le bonheur*, 244)
>
> [Spring? The streetcleaner on the rue de l'Université will have taken off his thick, blue turtleneck that shows under his overalls. Will he have noticed my absence? How will he welcome me back? Yet another flight! One day I'll have to break the silence. I'll have to explain. What? This mistake, this tragic mistake I couldn't help making being what I am.] (HMN, 176)

By promising to break her silence, Véronica shows that she is ready to communicate with a diasporic other who is not fashioned by hegemonic discourses of diaspora. Veronica acknowledges now the Metropolitan class relations as she ultimately returns to Paris to speak to the street cleaner.

The indecipherability of the streetcleaner's gaze haunts Veronica. When he called her sister the first time they met, she did not reject their connection. She had to go to

Hérémakhonon to cleanse herself and be able to understand what the gaze was about. Indirectly, it is the connections that she made between Abdoulaye, Mabo Julie and Scarlett's mid that enables Veronica to "understand" her connection with the streetcleaner. According to Young, belonging is "that thing that eludes [Véronica] at every turn."[135] This is why she could not uncover the message of the gaze of the street cleaner. Indeed, Veronica does not belong to the unnamed country, or Guadeloupe, or France. Veronica is more interested in what she is becoming rather than where she could belong. While she can't belong to the streetcleaner's world, there is a clear connection between them.

Their relationship has puzzled many scholars among whom Sarah Mosher who states:

> The street sweeper is significant since, like Véronica, he belongs to the Diaspora and thus refers to her as sister. The metaphor suggested by the street sweeper is that of the cleaning, cleansing, and sweeping away of the past and history. His presence is thus symbolic of the West's desire to sweep away pre-colonial and colonial history. This symbolism is in direct opposition to Véronica's quest for the past. The fact that his work is repetitive also suggests the notion of history repeating itself. The vocation of the street sweeper is also juxtaposed to that of the architect. This intersection of the street sweeper and architect suggests that the pre-colonial pasts of Africa and the Caribbean have been swept away by the West's desire to build and construct colonial empires. Véronica finds herself caught in the middle of these two extremes and as a result, the image of the street sweeper remains embedded in her psyche while she is in Africa.[136]

Véronica's neurosis led her back to Paris, where she will connect with her diasporic counterpart to develop a strategy of resistance against the dominant hegemonic discourses of identity that would have kept them apart. Paris thus is the transglocal space where all of Véronica's connections with the patriarchal other entangle the white other, the African other and the diasporic other and where she acknowledges the existence of a diasporic other with whom she

[135] H. B. Young, p. 179.
[136] Sarah E. Mosher, "Maryse Conde Heremakhonon as Fictitious Autobiography and Autobiographical fiction," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 16.1 (Spring 2010), 154.

could communicate in a space where Africa's encounters with the colonial powers and its subsequent decolonization struggle do not separate it from other spheres of African diaspora.

With the streetcleaner, Véronica will attempt at establishing a network of solidarity that would not only liberate her from the former demons of black bourgeoisie and her positionality as an expatriate but also that would create new possibilities of developing indirect modes of resistance to the global forces subjecting subaltern subjects. The image of African immigrants sweeping Paris has become part of the landscape to the point that nobody questions their presence and their predicament. Through her desire to communicate with the streetcleaner, Veronica offers him a chance to enunciate who he is beyond the category black brotherhood. Paris therefore is not home as Vévé Clark suggests it. Paris is a transglocal point where local forms of oppression and economic exploitations are in dialogue with the concealed global form of domination. While articulating a sphere of African diaspora beyond the dominant diasporic narratives, *Hérémakhonon* still represents an example of diasporization that is intercontinental. Whereas Maryse Condé diverts the trajectories of her diasporic subject, she still retraces the routes within the same familiar triangular passage between the Caribbean, Europe and Africa which gives it an archetypal dimension.

> -Si mademoiselle parlait de Paris?...
> De Paris ! Non, pas moi.
>
> Dites à vos frères de le faire. L'un 'entre eux balaie la rue de l'Université et nous regarde matin après matin. Moi et mon blanc. Pas de mépris dans son regard et c'est pourtant celui qui me hante.
>
> Paris ? Que vous dirai-je de Paris ? Mon Paris de toute façon ne saurait pas être le vôtre. Pour vus les hautes poubelles plastiques sombres, les courtes vestes qui paraissent phosphorescentes avant le lever du soleil. Pour vous les weekends vides à flipper dans les cafés dont le patron fait la gueule. Avec tous ces nègres, sa clientèle d'autre couleur a fui. (*En attendant le bonheur*, 48)

> ["Could mademoiselle tell us about Paris?"
> Paris! No, not me.

> Ask your brothers. One of them sweeps the street by the rue de l'Université and looks at us every morning. Me and my white man. No contempt in his look, and that's what I can't get out of my mind.
>
> Paris? What can I say about Paris? Anyway my Paris wouldn't be yours. Yours is the tall dark plastic dustbins and the short phosphorescent jackets in the dawn. Yours is the weekends, playing pinball in the cafes, whose owners are fed up. All these niggers and the other colored customers have fled. (HMN, 25)

Indeed, taking for example Condé's *Hérémakhonon*. Sarah E. Mosher proposes an article to analyze "Véronica Mercier's fictional autobiography while comparing it to elements and experiences from Maryse Condé's life, in order to show that *Hérémakhonon* doubles as a work of autobiographical fiction."[137] The ways in which Mosher tackles the complex relationship between fact and fiction is paved on Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's definition of autobiographical fiction as "an unstable fiction"[138] in which the boundary between fact and fiction is often blurred. Due to the limits of autobiographical fiction as a genre, Mosher's reading of *Hérémakhonon* does not acknowledge neither the discourses of power at play in tracing the common traits shared by the book and the genre she assigns nor the interactivities performed simultaneously by the literary critic, the author and the text.

Therefore, the boundary between fiction and fact with a focus on the 'bios' element of autobiographical fiction remains fixed in its earlier conventional iterations. Yet, such a reading is contriving as it limits the interpretative possibilities of the text as the focus is on Veronica's "failure of enunciation."[139] However, Veronica manages to make the reader "become the confessor for whom [she] has been searching."[140] Vèvè Clark calls this device "allusion: [a]

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[137] Sarah E Mosher. "Maryse Condé's "Hérémakhonon" as Fictitious Autobiography and Autobiographical Fiction." *Journal of Haitian Studies* 16.1 (2010): 144-56.
[138] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 200, 186.
[139] Françoise Lionnet. "Happiness Deferred: Maryse Condé's Hérémakhonon and the Failure of enunciation," in ed., *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).
[140] Vèvè A. Clark. "Developing Diaspora Literacy." In *Out of Kumbla; Caribbean Women and Literature*. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido, eds. (Trenton: Africa World Press Inc. , 1990), 313.

symptom of her inability to be present and accountable, [it] reveals the complexity of the protagonist's character while it structures discourse in the novel."[141] Clark clarifies that:

> Maryse Condé has interpreted the customary role allusion has assumed in literature by using terms unfamiliar to a general readership without the aid of footnotes or a glossary. Consequently, *Hérémakhonon* includes, what may be for some, obscure references to Euro-America and to African diaspora as the well cultivated and popular arts from both cultures. […] More than one hundred and twenty-five allusions, both explicit and indirect, appear in the novel. Direct allusions cross cultural lines between Marivaux and Césaire, from Buñuel to the Supremes. Indirect allusions assume a level of sophistication in the reader.[142]

Hérémakhonon is thus an opaque "site of converging paths"[143] that demands for an opaque reading performed by a reader able "to read comprehend the discourses of Africa, Afro-America and the Caribbean from an informed, indigenous perspective. In such environment, names such as Sundiata, Bigger Thomas, and Marie Chauvet represent mneumonic devices releasing learned traditions. To re-read *Hérémakhonon* as a transglocal fiction "requires social and political development generated by lived experiences."[144]

[141] Ibid. 303.
[142] Ibid. 307.
[143] Ibid. 304.
[144] Ibid. 304.

CHAPTER TWO: DISEMBODIED DETOURS IN BESSIE HEAD'S *A QUESTION OF POWER*

> I have always been just me, with no frame of reference outside to anything beyond myself.
>
> —Bessie Head.[145]

Bessie Head's assertion of self-identification is the ultimate expression of freedom. With such an ontological proclamation, Head provides a new concept countering the fact that identity politics always seemed to imperatively call for the existence of a frame of reference. The question that arises is how to define selfhood without a frame of reference. In *A Question of Power*, Head portrays Elizabeth whose world vacillates between "dreams perceptions" and "a waking reality." (QP, 22) In her waking reality, Elizabeth is a South African exiled, poor, obese and mentally disabled coloured woman. In such a representation within normative frames of reference, Elizabeth is identified in terms of her nationality, class, race, gender, corporeal body and mental normalcy. In her dream perceptions, Elizabeth becomes bodiless, genderless and stateless. Crisscrossing between "waking reality" and "dream perceptions," Elizabeth, I argue, traces diasporic routes relating the multiple fragments and layers of her identity located at the entanglement of local and global traumatic histories.

In 2013, the Bessie Head Society along with the Khanna III Memorial Museum organized a symposium in Serowe, Botswana to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the publication of Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* with the participation of scholars from the United States, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa. While such an honor demonstrates the status of *A Question of Power* as a landmark in African fiction, it also highlights the possibilities in developing new lines of critical thought on Bessie Head's most popular novel forty years after its

[145]Bessie Head, *A Woman Alone: Autobiographical Writings*, Craig MacKenzie ed., (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990), p. 3.

publication in 1973. This chapter participates in such a project by reading *A Question of Power* as a narrative of detours rethinking the centrality of the return to sanity and wholeness in texts dealing madness as a sequel of historical traumas such as slavery, apartheid and colonialism.

In *A Question of Power*, the protagonist Elizabeth flees from South Africa with her son. They went to Botswana to escape from the tribulations of the apartheid regime. Classified as a coloured woman within the racial hierarchies established by the apartheid system, Elizabeth's life in South Africa is mapped in what Françoise Lionnet calls a "geography of pain."[146] Elizabeth feels that she is being denied the most elementary form of recognition and visibility which ultimately made her leave South Africa. In Botswana, as a stateless woman, Elizabeth feels exiled in an unhospitable land. Three months after her arrival in Motabeng, Bostwana, she starts to experience a series of mental breakdown during which she is tormented by three hallucinatory figures named Sello, Dan, and Medusa.

While in the previous chapter, I demonstrated that Véronica's journey to Africa was a network of detours connecting multiple in-between spaces, I intend to show how Elizabeth's madness performs as a kind of detour leading to the location of a diasporic consciousness within physical and mental borderlines. Instead of focusing on in-between spaces as sites of resistance and survival to hegemonic dominant narratives of African diaspora, I will concentrate on the ways in which madness in *A Question of Power* conceptualizes what Elizabeth calls the "soul-personalities" as sites of survival outside of pre-existing frames of normative embodiment. I will explore the multi-dimensionality of madness as a detour exorcizing the obsession with the fantasy of normality in matters of embodiment. Head uses madness as a trope to create a space in

[146] Françoise Lionnet. "Geographies of Pain: Captive Bodies and Violent Acts in the Fictions of Myriam Warner-vieyra, Gayl Jones, and Bessie Head". *Callaloo* 16.1 (1993): 132–152.

which selfhood can be defined without a frame of reference marked by gender, race or class. In doing so, she offers new avenues of identification challenging the two-dimensional perception of the self and the traditional dualisms that permeate identity politics such as man/woman, black/white, colonized/colonizer and good/evil.

Ultimately, it is through madness that Elizabeth is able to develop strategies of resilience that allow her to locate her diasporic subjectivity in connection to Africa within a network of local and global solidarities. This leads Elizabeth to the point of entanglement where she participates in the establishment of a collectivity embodied in the fertile transplantations of seedlings in a cooperative garden in Motabeng, Botswana.

Gestures of Unbelonging: Disembodying Madness

The connection that I draw between madness and embodiment is that madness embodies theoretical, spatial and textual frameworks that shed light on the nature and location of Elizabeth's identity. Madness enables Elizabeth to make sense of her identity outside of the binary logic of the body and mind. Throughout the book, Elizabeth's madness has been configured as a form of mental illness, multigenerational and intergenerational trauma[147] and post-traumatic refugee syndrome.[148] These embodiments of madness situate Elizabeth's selfhood within dominant narratives of trauma and healing that somehow homogenize and standardize her condition as a woman subjected to various forms of oppression. Therefore, they locate Elizabeth's identity within normative frames of reference reinstating the conventional categories of identity based on gender, race and class. I argue that Elizabeth's story resists the

[147] Nicolas Abraham's "Notes on the Phantom: Complement to Freud's Metapsychology," in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel,* (Chicago: Nicholas T. Rand, 1991), 171.
[148] Here I am channeling Joy Degruy's concept of post-traumatic slave syndrome.

aforementioned dominant narratives of trauma and healing by disembodying the conventional forms of madness through gestures of unbelonging.

Madness has various meanings: "while it can be an agitated state of mind such as frenzy, rage, rapture, recklessness, it is also a synonym for insanity that is a mental disorder, a psychopathology. [...] The definition of what constitutes a mental 'disorder' or a state of 'insanity' depends on what a given society defines as 'normal' or 'sane'"[149] In light of Flora Veit-Wild's statement, an examination of Elizabeth's madness would be based on what society in South Africa and Botswana defines as normal or sane. In a sense, madness is socially conceptualized from the outside/sane world with its laundry lists of symptoms, diagnoses and therapies. When madness is an agitated state of mind, it does not necessarily require a diagnosis and a therapy. When madness is assimilated to a mental disorder, it has to be scientifically diagnosed and calls for a therapy or a cure. The depictions and manifestations of her mental breakdowns suggest that Elizabeth's madness could be a case of mental disorder even if the "only psychiatrist of the country never bothered to probe the causes of her breakdown" (QP, 185) when she was admitted in a mental facility.

Dis-placing Madness Beyond the Body and the Mind

After realizing that her marriage was a sham, Elizabeth decides to leave South Africa with her son to begin a new life as a teacher in Botswana. Soon after her arrival in Motabeng, Botswana, Elizabeth starts to experience psychotic bouts that she calls "journey into the inner self" (QP, 14) and a "journey into hell and darkness." (QP, 190) Is Elizabeth's madness an agitated state of mind? Or is it a mental disorder? To determine the nature of Elizabeth's turmoil,

[149] Flora Veit-Wild. *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature*. (Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 2006). p. 2.

scholars have developed numerous interpretative frameworks such as a Mariner's guide to paranoia[150] and Lacanian psychosis.[151] Despite its Eurocentric and universalizing characteristics, psychoanalysis has been paramount in the examination of Elizabeth's madness.

Drawing a connection between madness and the body is Freud's discussion on the symptoms of hysteria: ""two states of consciousness existed side by side, the first in which the patient was psychically normal, and the second, which we can readily compare with the dream, as far as it concerns the richness in fantasies, hallucinations, large gaps of memory, lack of inhibitions, and lack of control of encroaching thoughts." [152] Elizabeth describes her "journeys" as moments "when mentally, the normal and the abnormal blended completely in [her] mind." (QP, 15) To make sense of her sensory hallucinations, Elizabeth tries to gloss them over by considering one of the hallucinatory figures Sello as "just an intangible form" before realizing that "yet, he was so alive." (QP, 23) Under Freudian lenses, her hallucinations are hysterical symptoms that would diagnose Elizabeth's mental state as a kind of hysterical psychosis.

In her "*condition seconde,*" Elizabeth fosters a relationship with two men, Sello and Dan. In Elizabeth's mind, "most of what applied to Sello applied to her, because they were twin souls with closely-linked destinies." (QP, 11) By describing her relationship with a hallucinatory figure in this manner, Elizabeth acknowledges that she is "living with an 'other self." (QP, 58) This symptom illustrates Elleke Boehmer's take on Freud's discussion on hysteria: "According to Freud, a key symptom of hysteria is the tendency to take metaphor literally or anatomically, as

[150] Eva Evasdaughter,"Bessie Head's A Question of Power Read as a Mariner's Guide to Paranoia," *Research in African Literature* 20 (1989), 1.
[151] Patrick Colm Hogan "Bessie Head's A Question of Power: a Lacanian Psychosis," *Mosaic 27.2* (1994), 95-112.
[152] Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer. *Studies in Hysteria.* translated by A. A. Brill. (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Company, 1936).

described by or inscribed on the body. Putting it another way, the hysteric expresses her condition through converting 'mind' to 'body,' translating her fears and repressions into a language of body images."[153]

Elizabeth makes sense of the duality of her conscious state, earlier mentioned by Freud regarding the hysterical manifestations of psychosis, by realizing that her hallucinations are projections of her "inner hells: " (QP, 12) "It gave her a strange feeling of things being there right inside her and yet projected at the same time at a distance away from her." (QP, 22) The term "projected" is significant in the sense that Elizabeth describes the basic structure of Freudian psychosis. For Freud, the psychotic subject projects in the outside world what his mental inside world cannot comprehend. The process of projection is in itself a 'normal' mental process as he describes it in *Totem and Taboo*: "Under conditions whose nature has not yet been sufficiently established, internal perceptions of emotional and thought processes can be projected outwards in the same way as sense perceptions; they are thus employed for building up the external world, although they should by rights remain part of the *internal* world."[154] The psychotic subject takes it to another level as the distinction between the external world and the internal world becomes blurred, displacing the psychotic subject in a borderline space in and out of the outside and inside world. The realm of madness is explored from the outside, which echoes Shoshana Felman's assertion that "madness occupies a position of exclusion."[155]

For instance, Elizabeth's inner thoughts on race, nationality and gender are projected and materialized in the form of hallucinations in what she perceives is the outside world. When

[153] Elleke Boehmer, *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2005), 269.
[154] Sigmund Freud. *Totem and Taboo.* New York: Moffat Yard and Company, 1918. 64.
[155] Shoshana Felman. *Writing and Madness: Literature/Philosophy/Psychoanalysis.* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003) 13.

Elizabeth ponders "but who was she," (QP, 14), she expresses her loss of self in a world in which she has to be identified according to race, nationality, gender and class. Indeed in her nightmarish world, she engages with the hallucinatory figures in deep discussion on religion, nationality, gender, poverty etc. She deconstructs racial identification when stating, "In South Africa, she had been rigidly classified Coloured. There was no escape to the simple joy of being a human being with a personality. There wasn't any escape like that for anyone in South Africa." (QP, 44) She underlines the confining feature of race as a category of identification. She summarizes her take on identification at the onset of the novel as she points out the incidental aspect of identity categories based on one's nation, race, gender, class...: "It seemed almost incidental that he was an African. So vast had his inner perceptions grown over the years that he preferred identification with mankind to identification with a particular environment. And yet, as an African, he seemed to have made one of the most perfect statements: 'I am just anyone'. It was as though his soul was a jigsaw; one more piece being put into place." (QP, 11)

Though these words are attributed to Sello, Elizabeth reckons that "most of what applied to Sello applied to her," (QP, 12) which means that she projects on Sello her conception of herself as a "jigsaw." For her, the selfhood is defined by complex patterns and cannot be limited to pre-determined and incidental /random categories. This is the reason why, in her dream perceptions, Sello and Dan puts in a place outside of the traditional twofold process of identification. For them, Elizabeth has "not got a vagina," (QP, 13) she does not "know any African languages" (QP, 44) and she has "never really made an identification with the poor." (QP, 31) Yet, in the real outside world, she definitely has a vagina, speaks an African language and is poor. In short, what Elizabeth projects onto Dan and Sello is her resistance to traditional predetermined identification process as well as her repressed desire of existing in a world where

the boundaries created by those processes of identification are broken loose. Therefore, Elizabeth's madness is a site of resistance in which she expresses her repressed issues with traditional identity category. It is only through a psychotic state that she can make sense of herself.

Therefore, Elizabeth's self in the real world is trapped within the confines of race, gender, class etc. and to a certain extent her madness can be perceived on one hand as "the impasse confronting those whom cultural conditioning has deprived of the very means of protest or self-affirmation"[156] On the other hand, as I demonstrate earlier it is a site of resistance in which Elizabeth deconstructs the conditioning identity category imposed by dominant ideologies/paradigms. Elizabeth's madness is a space in which she paints the irrationality of identity categories and frees the self from their boundaries. During some of the instances in which Elizabeth deconstructs race, gender and class, it is important to focus on one entity in order to highlight her process of deconstruction that led to soul as the only valid identity category for Bessie Head. Ultimately, Elizabeth's madness could be read as a Freudian hysterical psychosis outside of the binary logic of the body and mind.

I choose to explore the concept of embodiment in Elizabeth's dream perceptions for the positionality of the body is at the core of post-colonial, psychoanalytical and gender subjects. Indeed, the body "serves as the margins joining/separating one subject from the other, one sex from the other, one race from another, the sane from the mad, the whole from the unhealthy and so on. It functions as a sorting mechanism whereby the culturally dominant and the culturally

[156] Shoshana Felman ."Review: Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy." *Diacritics*, vol. 5, no. 4, (Winter 1975) 2-10.

marginalized are assigned their 'proper' places in the body politic."[157] In other words, the body is read as the blueprint of society. The next step is to examine the ways in which bodies are produced. For Judith Butler, the body is a "visual production." She argues that the gaze "produces bodies" [158] and that the gaze is never neutral. Such a take on the body underlines the relevance of the visual in the conceptualization of embodiment. Interestingly enough, non-western theorists such as Oyeronke Oyewumi find that the West "privileges the visual over the other senses."[159] She quotes the feminist theorists Evelyn Fox Keller and Christine Grontkowski who state in their work "The Mind's Eye": "We [Euro-Americans] speak of knowledge as illumination, knowing as seeing, and truth as light. How is it, we might ask, that vision came to seem such so apt a model for knowledge? And having accepted it as such, how has the metaphor colored our conceptions of knowledge?"[160]

Yet, in *A Question of Power*, Elizabeth's worldview does imply a sensory faculty of sight. The verb "to see" is repeatedly recurrent in the novel. Elizabeth seems obsessed with eyes. While depicting any of her encounters, she carefully pays attention to their eyes and what characterizes them. For instance, the first time she met with Dan, this is the first detail she provided about him as she glanced briefly at him: "He had pretty eyes, large, luminous, black, with a thick cluster of lashes. His eyes gave his face a wonderful expression of innocence and friendliness." (QP, 27) The Asian man that she randomly met has "pitch-black eyes and seemed half mad, his expression was ferocious." (QP, 31) Medusa's eyes are "large, full, powerful." (QP, 37) Sello in the brown suit has "narrow, mean eyes." (QP, 130) Elizabeth's body has been

[157] Sidonie Smith. *Subjectivity, Identity and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993. p. 10.
[158] Judith Butler. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex.* New York: Routledge, 1993. p. 136.
[159] Oyeronke Oyewumi. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. p 15.
[160] *Ibid*.

exposed to the gaze of her torturers all throughout her neurosis. Considering J. Butler's conceptualization of vulnerability in which the body is central, Elizabeth's vulnerability is expressed through her fixation on the eyes of her torturers since her body is exposed to their policing and disembodied gaze. The production of Elizabeth's body through the gaze of Dan, Medusa and Sello is arguably her nightmarish reality in which the materiality of her body is not real.

Paradoxically, instead of seeing bodies, Elizabeth sees souls: "she had grown accustomed to seeing things, in pictures and imagery, but she had not seen such a spectacular display of soul-power." (QP, 104) This echoes the common saying according to which "eyes are the windows to the soul." So, there is a clear distinction between "seeing" and "seeing" for Elizabeth acknowledges, "she was not given to "seeing" things. The world had always been two-dimensional, flat and straight with things she could see and feel." (QP, 22) Elizabeth distances herself from her oppressors since her gaze cannot produce bodies. Her inability in seeing their bodies reveals that she can actually see that Dan, Sello and Medusa are the embodiments of social and institutional structures that have policed her body as a woman, as a South African and as a Colored. To a certain extent, by manifesting a dimension of her vulnerability, Elizabeth is resisting the dehumanizing gaze of racist, sexist and xenophobic institutional structures embodies by her hallucinatory perpetrators. In other words, Elizabeth's corporeal porosity is the source of an ethical connection with the other.[161]

This distinction between "seeing" and "seeing" is reflected in the structural body of the novel in itself. The reader does not see Elizabeth in the structure of the book as the novel is

[161] Carver, Terrell, and Samuel A. Chambers, eds. *Judith Butler's precarious politics: critical encounters*. Routledge, 2008, 94.

divided into two parts respectively entitled Sello and Dan and does see Elizabeth in the body of the novel since she is the main protagonist. This is not fortuitous at all. By rendering Elizabeth invisible in the external structure of the book, Bessie Head illustrates the power dynamics at play between a creator and its creation. Like Sello and Dan who are the dominant powers in the novel at the level of the fiction, Bessie Head erases Elizabeth's existence from the structure of the novel. At the fiction level, Sello and Dan overshadowed (even in the Jungian sense) Elizabeth's real outside world. Ultimately, Elizabeth's self is disassociated to the structure of the book. Her invisibility from the "corporeal" (material) book parallels the invisibility of minority/other/marginalized subjects from grand narrative of subjecthood. Knowing that Dan and Sello are part of Elizabeth's self, there is no doubt that Elizabeth is the main protagonist of the novel. Her self is just trapped in between those two allegorical figures.

In other words, in Elizabeth's dream perceptions, the body is no longer the material envelope that encloses the self. In the light of the formation of Medusa and Sello in the Brown Suit, bodies are interchangeable, soluble and even transcendent: "Then from out of himself he projected a man his replica, except that the man was clothed in a brown suit. Out of the fainting away woman stepped a powerfully built woman. She wore a simple, white sleeveless dress. She was flat chested, narrow-waisted with broad hips. She was pitch-black in colour and her long black hair flowed loosely about her. Her black eyes were large, full, powerful. She walked towards Elizabeth. She walked towards Elizabeth and past her. She brushed past her so violently, the gesture said loudly: 'get out of the way.' her face had assumed a mean expression. She swung around near the man in the brown suit who looked like Sello and looked at Elizabeth like a wild-eyed Medusa. (QP, 37) It almost seems that in *A Question of Power*, bodies are illustrated as corporeal envelopes that can be taken off. They are similar to garments that would not provide

any relevant details about your personality or misguide people's judgment. Throughout the four years that her psychosis lasted, Elizabeth would see bodies coming in and out of Sello's and walk through her.

In an attempt at displacing the concept of body, Bessie Head injects in Elizabeth's psychotic bouts the language of unspeakable obscenity. She does so in her representation of Dan and Elizabeth's relationship. In fact, according to Elizabeth, Dan has the power to turn everything "perverse, obscene" (Head, 119) As a matter of fact the description of the sexual encounters between Dan and the seventy-one women of his harem is very graphically depicted in the novel. Relating the denomination of the seventy women: "Miss Pelican-Beak, Miss Chopper, Miss Pink Sugar-Icing, whom he was on the point of marrying, Madame Make-Love-On-The-Floor where anything goes, the Sugar-Plum Faire, more Body Beautiful, more of the Womb, a demonstration of sexual stamina with five local women, this time with the lights on, Madame Squelch Squelch, Madame Loose Bottom, the list of them was endless. " (QP, 148) The explicit character of the names is illustrated through their physical appearances/ bodies too. The names stress the body parts and their functions/relevance from a male perspective within traditional patriarchal relationship.

By resorting to obscene sexual images to depict Dan's representation of women as fragmented bodies, When Dan chastises Elizabeth's sexual prowess, she considers that "it's just sex for "sex has never counted in the strenuous turmoil of destiny behind Elizabeth." (QP, 63) To a certain extent, Elizabeth minimizes the importance of sex within people's life as a determiner of one's destiny/life. She has found another way/entity of making sense of her life inhabiting the constraints of any frame of reference: the soul. *A Question of Power* is a story recounting the "soul-evolution" of a "soul-personality" within "a soul-reality." The concept of "soul" recurrent

in the novel is the sole identity referent that does not have a connotation of hierarchy within its ontological meaning. The soul as represented in the novel is not a social construct that bears the markings of normativity or law or regulation or history or culture. The things of the soul are human. Therefore identity politics based on the soul are not exclusionary compared to those based on sexuality, gender, race, nationality or mental health. Elizabeth's self-identification as a soul is in response to the calls for identification that are pressed on her in her nightmares. Her discursive approach to identity and embodiment escapes the dead-end that identity politics seem to have reached. Elizabeth is indeed just herself, with no frame of reference outside of anything but her soul. The story of her madness therefore does not belong to the dominant narratives of mental disorder.

Localizing Madness Beyond the National and the Transnational

As a narrative of migration, *A Question of Power* illustrates the physical and psychological dis-location of Elizabeth. Interestingly enough, Elizabeth's journey somewhat mirrors the mass displacement of South Africans during apartheid. Many South Africans fled the evils of apartheid to seek asylum in neighboring African countries and suffered from some form of mental disorder. To some extent, Elizabeth's diasporic trajectory is weaved within a nationalist framework. In this context, Elizabeth's story exemplifies the ways in which her identity remains territorially defined within the confines of her experience in South Africa. Therefore, to read *A Question of Power* solely in parallel with the traumatic history of colonialism in South Africa shapes Elizabeth's identity in connection to one single place, South Africa. In the following section, I will show how Elizabeth performs multiple gestures of unbelonging to relocate her diasporic lived experience in a "world of inextricable relations."

From this point of view, Elizabeth's diasporic identity is still located and framed in connection with South Africa. While she acknowledges the resonances of national mass migration in the formulations of their diasporic identities, Elizabeth develops practices of unbelonging that allow them to divert the diasporic routes traced by nationalist histories. Elizabeth redirects the linear trajectories of the national mass migration by tracing complex paths of diversions that lead to multiple points of entanglement where they can oppose the principle of domination that subjugated them. In doing so, she re-positions herself within a post-colonial diasporic landscape.

In *A Question of Power*, Elizabeth initially describes herself as "essentially a product of the slums and hovels of South Africa." (*QP,* 20) By positioning herself at the margins of South African society, Elizabeth highlights that the forced dispersal of Black, Coloured, and Indian South Africans into segregated areas during the Apartheid regime in South Africa is a rhizomatic component of her identity. Elizabeth's identification with the slums, which are singular peripheral locations, dismantles the fantasy of wholeness that permeates the rhetorical constructions of national identities. The singularity of the Apartheid regime oddly establishes a collective sense of national belonging based on exclusion and separatism. By confessing her marginal position, Elizabeth respects the terms of her filiation with South Africa by occupying the space nationally carved for her.

Yet, in South Africa, Elizabeth was "living with a permanent nervous tension." (*QP,* 12) Her neurosis in South Africa is, to borrow Jean-Paul Sartre's statement in the preface of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, a "nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler with [her] consent."[162] (Fanon, ii v) To cure that neurosis, Elizabeth takes an exit permit

[162] Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Constance Farrington. *The Wretched of the Earth.(* New York: Grove, 1965) iiv.

with “a never to return clause” (*QP*, 12) as an ultimate resort. Such an act can be interpreted as a desperate search for asylum or an attempt at being included in a new national equilibrium. Her neurosis then is read in direct relation with her classification as a coloured person within the South African societal organization.

Thus a post-colonial/Fanonian reading of *A Question of Power* presents Elizabeth’s psychosis as the manifestation of her repressed responses to Apartheid/colonialism in South Africa and Xenophobia in Botswana. Her psychopathology is a normal response to the life she has experienced so far. Elizabeth grasps the interconnection between her state of mind and her lived experience as she posits that she “felt that some of the answers lay in her experiences in Botswana. That they were uncovered through an entirely abnormal relationship with two men might not much be due to her dubious sanity as the strangeness of the men themselves.” (QP, 19)

In South Africa, Elizabeth has always felt trapped within the confines of a racial group: “In South Africa she had been rigidly classified Coloured. There was no escape from it to the simple joy of being a human being with a personality. There wasn’t any escape like that for anyone in South Africa.” (*QP*, 41) According to the ‘Population Registration Act of 1950,’ “a coloured person means a person who is not white or a native.” (Nixon, 108) Thus, Elizabeth’s sense of national belonging is based on a segregationist compartmentalization disguised as filial ties between citizens and the mother country. Elizabeth refuses to belong to the ‘coloured’ community to come to terms with a homogenized national identity.

The national itinerary imposed to Elizabeth as a coloured person by the South African government starts with what was deemed as an “illicit carnal intercourse between a European and a non-European” (Apartheid’s Immorality Amendment Act, 1950) which translates Elizabeth’s racial identity as a corollary offence to the state. Elizabeth’s mother is a white

woman who had an affair with a "stable boy, who was native." (*QP*, 9) Elizabeth is the visible and perpetual reminder of a crime committed outside the legal boundaries of the state. Her mother is put in a mental institution while her father just disappears altogether. This national narrative does not allow for Elizabeth's parents to survive beyond the illicit space carved by the South African state. Elizabeth's filial ties to her parents, although concretely inexistent from her standpoint, rigidly classify her as a coloured person in South Africa.

For Elizabeth, the state has woven together series of rejection stories as the child warfare committee fails to find her a home. When she finally was placed in a family like her, "part African, part English," (*QP*, 8) Elizabeth shares an affinity with her foster-mother to whom, she says, "she really belonged emotionally." (*QP*, 9) Interestingly enough, Elizabeth is well aware that her foster-mother was paid to take care of her. Her love for that woman does not cloud her understanding of the politics of identity at the intersection of race, class, and gender that determine their relation.

Once again, Elizabeth was taken from her foster-mother's care and sent away to attend a mission school when the South African war began. Symbolically, this is where Elizabeth learned about her 'roots'. The principal of the mission school that Elizabeth attended revealed to then thirteen-year old Elizabeth 'the original sin' that marked has marked her even before her birth and which is associated with her mother's "stigma of insanity." (*QP*, 10) Elizabeth's story in a national landscape aims at reinforcing the stigma of insanity she has to bear as a coloured person. "In a country where people are not people" (*QP*, 11) but "races," (*QP*, 41) Elizabeth's life has been pre-designed to remain permanently in a position of exclusion.

Elizabeth's mental disorder connected to her national identity as a coloured South African woman makes her occupy a position of exclusion that ultimately led to a physical and

mental displacement. From her birth to her exile, Elizabeth has been confined in a racialized space with no escape. On the surface, her relocation to Botswana appears as an attempt at breaking free from the "prison garment" of the coloured. However, the narrative of exile from South Africa to flee the Apartheid regime has been incorporated in the contemporary nationalist accounts which classify Elizabeth as a South African refugee. In this context, it is tempting to assimilate Elizabeth's psychotic bouts with the nervous breakdowns that "a lot of refugees have." (*QP*, 49) Her neurosis could then be easily assimilated to the common nervous condition shared by all South African refugees with no distinction of race, class, and gender.

In Botswana, Elizabeth's life was between what she calls "dreams perceptions" and "a waking reality." (*QP*, 22) After a particularly climatic episode, the principal of the Motabeng Secondary School, an Afrikaner man from South Africa brought her to the hospital. He began to associate his experience as a refugee with Elizabeth's: "I suffer, too, because I haven't a country and know what it's like." (*QP*, 49) When touched by his sympathy, Elizabeth tried to explain to him the nature of her breakdowns, he refused to listen. To some degree, Eugene, the Afrikaner man, silenced Elizabeth's attempts at explaining the singularity of her mental disorder and only conceded one possible diagnostic to her condition: Eugene was assuming that similarly to all South Africans, Elizabeth was still traumatized by the racialist system of Apartheid.

For Elizabeth, the experiences of South African refugees cannot be homogenous considering the racial inequalities that permeated South Africa during Apartheid. In other words, Elizabeth finds that there is a clear distinction between the nervous conditions of coloured South African refugees and those of Afrikaner South African refugees. She then distances herself from narratives that would blend both very distinguishable experiences by weaving new connections with other oppressed South African oppressed groups notably the homosexuals and the poor. By

stating that as a coloured woman, Elizabeth "could not help but identify with the weak, homosexual men," (*QP*, 43) the connection between two different identity markers, one based on race and the other on sexuality, reveals the multiplicity of forms of domination to whom Elizabeth as a coloured person is subjected.

In this sense, Elizabeth's physical relocation to Botswana is still part of the national trajectory imposed to her as a coloured. Her impossible identification with neither the Batswana nor the Motswana, both dominant ethnic groups in Botswana, are the sequels of her father's absence in her life: "Definitely, as far as Botswana society was concerned, [Elizabeth] was an out-and-out outside and would never be in on *their* things." (*QP*, 20) Elizabeth cannot relate to the "tribal affairs" (*QP*, 108) of Botswana because her tribal filiation is untraceable. Therefore, whereas in South Africa, Elizabeth's nativeness was concealed as a coloured person, in Botswana, it is questioned by her disassociation with the "tribal Africans." (*QP*, 154)

This shows that Elizabeth still resists to all conventional forms of classification whether in South Africa or in Botswana. Elizabeth does not develop a sense of national belonging to Botswana for she is "a stateless person" (*QP*, 11) in her host country. Hence, Elizabeth's identity diasporic or not is not localizable in neither national nor transnational contexts. Ultimately, for Elizabeth, the principle of domination not only resides in the Apartheid regime *per se* but it is also embedded in seemingly universal, rigid and pre-determined identity categories. Elizabeth uncovers the "principle of domination" concealed in any national construction of identity-defining classifications. Her physical and mental exile is the ultimate gesture of unbelonging to any identity-defining categories. Elizabeth is not on the quest for belonging to any national territory, narrative, and community. Neither her physical voyage nor her mental journey belongs to the master narratives of intergenerational trauma and post-traumatic refugee syndrome.

Disembodied Detours: Globalizing Trauma, Localizing Healing

Elizabeth's physical and mental journey is a detour that she takes in order to understand the principle of domination she has been subjected to. Tormented by nightmarish figures, Elizabeth shows how mythologies, creation stories, and religion have taken part in labelling people according to fixed, rigid identity categories. By juxtaposing multiple histories and temporalities in her hallucinatory world, Elizabeth exposes the real "insanity" in adopting pseudo-universal concepts such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, and nationality. It is by trying to belong to specific groups through national or local filiation that Elizabeth fails to connect with Motabeng for example. It is during her psychotic bouts that she connects local and global histories of oppression. By doing so, she retraces a relational network of local and global repression embodied by the inequities of globalization. She therefore realizes that she can participate in the local solidarity network established in Motabeng connecting diverse international communities. Madness is thus the kind of detour that led Elizabeth to define her identity in relation to others.

Entanglement of Mythologies

When journeying into her inner hells, Elizabeth defines herself in relation to Sello, Dan and Medusa. Each of them embodies multiple forms of powers to which Elizabeth is subjected. Sello and Dan take on universal disguises of dominant power structures that prey on "soft-shuffling, loose knitting personalities." (*QP*, 4) For example, Sello is appointed a religious personality which locates him in the spiritual frameworks of Hinduism, Buddhism, Ancient Egypt pantheist religion, and Greek pantheon. Portrayed as a local man who embodies the multiplicity of the divine figures, Sello is said to be incidentally African which suggests that

anyone can basically claim the attributes of God. Sello's transformation from a local man into supreme divine figures from Asia (Hinduism/Buddha), Africa (Egyptian gods) and Europe (Greek gods) and his identification with epic heroes including Rama (*QP*, 8) and Caligula (*QP*, 38) shows that at the transglocal scale, while different, religion and national epic narratives conceal a similar institutional system of domination.

Bessie Head strategically reproduces the dualist paradigms that confine the subject's identity. For Elizabeth, Sello and his reincarnations represent "the prophet of mankind" who incidentally happens to be an African with many reincarnations and vesture garments" (QP, 25) Dan Molomo is the "epitome of the African male." (QP, 137) Although both Dan and Sello are actually "real" people that she has never met, Elizabeth refers to both of them as gods and the "Father" with an array of suits. Whereas Sello is incidentally African, Dan is the true African for Elizabeth. In a sense, Sello and Dan are respectively the embodiment of the Universal Man and the African male.

Since female bodies were projected out of Sello's body, it seems that Sello as the Universal man is an accurate identification as the narrative of the Universal Man overshadows all origin stories since Sello has "the long history of the human race in his heart." (QP, 201) This is why Elizabeth reckoned that what applied to him applied to her as well. Elizabeth's relationship with Sello is platonic in the philosophical and spiritual term until his death at the end of part one of the novel. Sello's universalism does not only lay in the sole fact that he is associated to all these religions and narratives; it also is connected to the fact that he could put on many "vesture garments" such a brown suit or a white-robe. Initially identified as a black man, his vesture garments can be considered as race markers resulting in considering that black Sello, Sello in the brown suit and white-robed Sello are all reincarnations of the Universal Man.

Elizabeth's relationship with Dan was of another caliber. She is involved in a sexual relationship with Dan. His "extreme masculinity" attracted her. (QP, 105) Compared to Sello, who reincarnates into a monk, Dan is a womanizer and an African nationalist. During his encounters with Elizabeth, he has "his pants down, as usual, flaying his powerful penis in the air" (QP, 13) having sex with her or with the seventy-one types of women (they are his nice-time women/harem). He points out Elizabeth's frigidity while having sex with the Womb whom he considers as his favorite. He is also playing with Sello's name "the father." All these characteristics suggest that Dan represents the patriarchal power at play in Africa. His desire destroys both Sello (the embodiment of the universal man) and Elizabeth (the embodiment of the African woman) can be interpreted as an attempt at centering the African man within the narrative of the universal Man. He has many records that he would turn on in Elizabeth's mind about homosexuals, Africans and women. He represents the patriarchal power that all African women have to espouse.

Therefore, as allegorical figures, Sello and Dan epitomize myth such as the universal man and the hyper-masculine African man. One can consider that such a portrayal universalizes the forms of oppressions that they represent. While this is a valid argument for the adepts of universalism, it could be interpreted in reverse. There has been an ongoing debate regarding whether myth is universal or culture specific. Bessie Head's use of myth in order to depict one of Elizabeth's psychotic bouts shows how she adapts them to the local situation. In that episode , Sello "produced a brief reconstruction of the story of Osiris and Isis. He had been the Osiris who had been shattered into a thousand fragments by the thunderbolts of Medusa. She had been the Isis who had put the pieces together again. The details did not unfold. What unfolded fully was the picture of the reconstructed man, with the still sad, fire-washed face of death." (QP, 39) This

episode is interesting in the sense that it connects two myths from different mythological traditions and geographical areas. It somehow reconnects Greek and Egyptian mythologies the way it might have happened at Elizabeth's local fantasy space. Both mythologies echoing Elizabeth madness are stories of disembodiment. Intertwined with one and other they reveal the extent of the various powers of oppression.

Considering that in (Eurocentric) history textbooks, those mythologies are celebrated and claimed as part of a universal history/ mythological legacy, it seems that Bessie Head's use of these specific myths attempts to situate her character's psychosis on a universal level. By doing so, it seems that she can deconstruct the body as a universal entity. Indeed, normatively, the body is a universal corporeal entity. When the subject of a study or a theory is the body, it is assume that there is such a thing as the universal physical body that every human being shares with no distinction except in terms of disabilities etc. It is assumed that the body is a whole material/physical/corporeal unity. Yet, clearly a white body is not interchangeable with a black body and a female body is not interchangeable with a male body. However, for psychotic Elizabeth, the world "world is peopled with a "cursorily improvised" humanity (to use Schreber's term) — people reduced to the role of coat hangers.

To go back to the reconfiguration of the myth of Osiris and Isis, the connection between Medusa and Isis in Sello's version is that instead of having Seth murdering and shattering Osiris's body all over Egypt, it is Medusa who dismembers Osiris/Sello and she is also the Isis who puts the pieces back together. As Elizabeth states that details did not unfolded, I wonder if the detail that did not unfold was the part in which Medusa/Isis is supposed of creating/making a phallus for Sello/Osiris. The reconstruction of the myth is relevant at two levels. It illustrates first, the ways in which myths reflect the collective unconscious of a dominant group and shape

people's consciousness. Second, the subversion of the myth of Osiris and Isis highlights the destructive and procreative power of mythological female figures.

Following the reconstruction of the myth by Sello was Elizabeth's take on mythology: "Nearly every nation has that background of mythology – looming monstrous personalities they call 'the gods.' Personalities who formed the basis of their attitudes to royalty and class; personalities whose deeds were hideous and yet who assumed powerful positions, presumably because they were in possession of thunderbolts like medusa." (QP, 40) She channels Jung in the sense that for him mythology is a projection of the collective unconscious. However, she is actually reconstructing the most important archetype according to Jung: the Self. Sello as the Jungian self (he reincarnates into Buddha in the narrative) is the reconstructed body of Osiris in Elizabeth's psychotic mind. As I mentioned contrary to the original myth, it's Medusa who fragmented Sello's body associating her with to the chaos/disorder that the Egyptian God, Seth represents.

Medusa has been extensively under the scope of psychoanalytical and gender studies. Even, Elizabeth acknowledges that fact by stating: "how much status had she not acquired during the dark times of mankind's history? How deep had she sown her seeds in the subconscious life of human souls? Wherever relentless cruelty and hatred erupted, it was like the dark geyser of Medusa's soul, erupting." (QP, 92) The Freudian Medusa symbolizes the complex of castration. In "Medusa's Head", Freud argues that to "decapitate = to castrate. The terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something."[163] Once again, "sight" is privileged as the dominant sense. Elizabeth's Medusa shares almost the same horrific features

[163] Sigmund Freud. *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love.* New York: Touchstone, 1997. p. 202.

than the Freudian Medusa especially regarding the destructive power on Sello. The main distinction between the two versions of Medusa, the Freudian one does not deal with Medusa in terms of her effect on and representation for women. For Freud, Medusa's head is either a representation of the castration complex or the sexual pleasure that arouses men. In *Question of Power*, Medusa is particularly targeting Elizabeth to destroy in her any sense of humanity.

A feminist reading of the myth of Medusa offers a more positive outlook on her powers. For Helene Cixous, Medusa is beautiful and smiling countering thus Medusa's terrible assessment in psychoanalytical studies: "Too bad for them, if they fall apart upon discovering that women aren't men, or that the mother doesn't have one. But isn't this fear convenient for them? Wouldn't the worst be, isn't the worst, in truth, that women aren't castrated, that they have only to stop listening to the Sirens (for the Sirens were men) for history to change its meaning? You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and laughing...." [164] In this context, Medusa becomes a powerful feminine figure that reflects the constructive wrath of women. This is mirrored in *A Question of Power* since, at the end, Medusa is the one who reconstructs Sello's body. She then becomes Isis, the sister/wife/mother figure, who reaffirms some of the positionalities of women within patriarchal society. The intertwinement between Isis and Medusa's features serves to demonstrate that both myths are still inscribed within a pseudo universality paradigm. Both figures reconstruct the Universal man Sello. On another scale, this shows the limits of both psychoanalysis and gender theory for they both fail to offer a new alternative reading of the myths that manages to be outside of language since it is the same that it reconstructed over and over again. They both adhere to the fantasy of reconstruction, re-embodiment after dismemberment and wholeness that I claim Head

[164] Helene Cixous. "The Laugh of Medusa ." in *Signs* 1. 4. Summer 1976.

deconstructs in *A Question of Power*. These myths in their original version and their truncated one perpetuate the same myth to a return to wholeness.

While Elizabeth cannot identify with Sello, Dan and Elizabeth, she also struggles to find common markers of identification with the other people present in her nightmares: she has to "take off" her garments to identify with the poor people; in her "dream perceptions," she is not a "whole" woman because she does not have a vagina or does not valorize it, she is not African because she does not speak the African language, and she is not African because her hair is not African hair-like. She is "too funny for words." (QP, 45) Yet, very subtly, Head manages to relate the local forms of oppression (local to her nightmares) to global traumas that occurred in the "real" world.

As earlier stated Elizabeth's nightmares have been easily associated with her life in South Africa during Apartheid and her status as a coloured woman in South Africa. The presence of coloured homosexuals, poor people, two black men hanging from a tree among others is particularly interesting because it shows that through Elizabeth's mental condition enables her to make meaningful connections between her personal trauma, South African apartheid, U.S. segregation and the Holocaust. For example, in the following passage she associates Medusa with a group of lynch mob:

> She had a picture of a Southern lynch mob, a whole group of white men and women. Two black men hung dead at a tree. The lynchers were smiling. Medusa smiled like that in her mental images, but Medusa was as close as her ow breathing, and each night she looked straight into Medusa's powerful black eyes. It was tracing the evil to its roots. The eyes of the lynch mob were uncomprehendingly evil. Medusa's eyes were full of comprehension, bold, conscienceless, deliberate: 'I will it. Nothing with stands my power. I create evil. I revel in it. I know no other life. From me flows the dark stream of terror and destruction. (QP, 92)

In addition, Elizabeth compares her son to the children "whose father has been lynched by the Ku Klux Klan in America."(QP, 92) The interconnections that Elizabeth is drawing in terms of perpetrators and victims reflect the principle of domination that Glissant mentions in his definition of the point of entanglement where a detour is supposed to lead transplanted people. Mentally, Elizabeth is negotiating the rifts between the local and the global the ways in which traumatic histories crisscross cultures through time and space. It is in a textual space where the boundaries of sanity and insanity are blurred that Elizabeth is able to uncover the principle of domination.

Elizabeth also likened the situation of coloured people before Apartheid and colonialism to that of the Jewish people before Hitler's government. She recalls that a German woman, with whom she used to live, told her how she felt when a Coloured was mistreated at her office: "I thought I was back in Hitler's Germany this morning." (QP, 42) Granted this episode happened before Elizabeth started to have hallucinations, this shows how Elizabeth links the histories of European colonialism , the holocaust and Apartheid. The strategy of resistance and survival in a world in which the principle of domination crosses cultures, histories, fantasies and lives is to establish a solidarity network with the same boundary-crossing feature that the principle of domination holds. In Motabeng, Elizabeth developed a way of surviving by shaping an identity that interconnects her personal life, the earth and the savoir-faire of people from diverse communities.

Entanglement of Seedlings

Elizabeth demands the right to not be understood by shaping an identity "too funny for words" (*QP*, 41) in connection to hallucinatory intangible figures: Sello, Dan, and Medusa. For

Elizabeth, Sello and his reincarnations represent "the prophet of mankind" who incidentally happens to be an African with many reincarnations and vesture garments" (QP, 25) Dan Molomo is the "epitome of the African male." (*QP*, 137) Both Dan and Sello are local black people in Motabeng that Elizabeth barely knows and projects in her hallucinations. Her nervous breakdowns are described as follows: "the mentally, the normal and the abnormal blended completely in Elizabeth's mind." (*QP*, 8) While the normal is associated with the local in Elizabeth's 'waking reality,' "her journeys into hell" go beyond than the rural environment of Motabeng and extend to what can be easily misinterpreted as the universal.

When she arrived to Motabeng, Elizabeth was amazed at how different life in South Africa and Botswana is: "It was so totally new, so inconceivable; the extreme opposite of 'Hey, Kaffir, get out of the way,' the sort of greeting one usually was given in South Africa." (*QP*, 14) She settled in the central part of the village and had a sense of home in the village through routine interactions with the people. Then, "her life began to pitch over from an even keel, and it remained from then onwards at a pitched-over angle." (*QP*, 15) This disequilibrium seemingly detached Elizabeth from reality and illustrated her repeated interactions with hallucinatory figures. It is only three months after her arrival in Motabeng that Elizabeth started to have these visions blurring all forms of dividing lines.

As Elizabeth confesses that "she was not given to 'seeing' things. The world had always been two-dimensional, flat and straight with things she could see and feel," (*QP*, 22) it almost seems like when she realized that Botswana was not that different from South Africa in terms of the societal compartmentalization, Elizabeth created a world in parallel where all boundaries will be blurred. Her hallucinations are ways to cope with her profound sense of unbelonging to realities determined by classifications. Her delirious interactions with Sello, Dan, and Medusa

form “an entanglement of negativities accepted as such, in which it is not possible to make a clear-cut distinction between active and passive, choice and constraint, or even victory or defeat.” (Britton, 27) Elizabeth’s madness is a form of detour with Motabeng as the transglocal point of entanglement.

“Motabeng means the place of sand. It was a village remotely inland, perched on the edge of the Kalahari Desert. Seemingly, the only reason for people’s settlement there was a good supply of underground water. It took a stranger some time to fall in love with its harsh outlines and stark, black trees.” (*QP*, 13) This description locates Motabeng in relation to the Kalahari Desert, a transnational space. From the onset, Motabeng is identified on local (village), national (Botswana), and transnational (Kalahari Desert) terms. The ordinariness of life in Motabeng is starkly at odds with Elizabeth’s torment. It is only when she joins the market gardening project that Elizabeth felt a sense of belonging to the land.

Motabeng becomes a site of entanglements defined by “voluntary labour” (*QP*, 207), “friendliness” (*QP*, 128), and “solid respect of work partnership.” (*QP*, 207) With multiple factors of interaction beyond the conventional identity markers, international and local communities could develop gestures of belonging such as gardening to settle harmoniously in Motabeng. The garden project not only provides food to both communities, it is also a space of belonging in which people from foreign backgrounds including English volunteers and Danish exiles come to exchange their agricultural and commercial skills. The strength of the “seedlings” arises from the multiple and diverse methods of metaphoric and agricultural transplantation. Transplanted in Motabeng, Elizabeth “like the Cape gooseberry, settled down and became part of the village life in Motabeng.” (*QP*, 163)

Noteworthy is the fact that Elizabeth has suffered throughout the book two psychotic crises. At the end of the second episode, Elizabeth came back to work at the garden. She met her friend Kenosi and expressed her willingness to work in the garden once again. Kenosi told her how much they lost because of her absence and pulled out the garden record book of vegetable sales and handed it to Elizabeth: "There in a shaky, painstaking handwriting was a meticulous record of all she had dosld. The spelling, oh the spelling was a fantastic combination of English and Setswana: 'Ditamati 30c, 'she wrote 'Pamkin 60c, Dibeeteruti 45c, Dionions 25c, Dibeans 20c, Dispinach 15c, Dicarrots 25c, Ditamati 45c…" (QP, 131) This illustrates the creative dimension of an inclusive solidarity network that incorporates figures from many nations and races, American, African, English, Danish, white, black, and coloured.

Elizabeth's process of diasporization then is not based on the common sufferings of people relocated in Motabeng. It is related to the voluntary cooperative labour. A significant detail is the diversity of the members of the cooperative not only in terms of nationalities but also in terms of race, gender, and class. Elizabeth's unlikely friendships with Tom, the American Peace Corps volunteer, Kenosi, the Botswana woman, Eugene, the Afrikaner South African refugee balanced her everyday life in Motabeng when she is not having her psychotic bouts. Ultimately, while I interpret Elizabeth's psychosis as a detour, I contend that Motabeng is a transglocal point of entanglement where Elizabeth manages to experience the relational identity politics impossible to assume in South Africa. *A Question of Power* is not a narrative of return to sanity. It is a journey from exclusion to inclusion.

Eventually, this section illustrates how the construction of post-colonial diasporic identities is connected to transglocal points of entanglements in Head's *A Question of Power*. Motabeng creates a series of transglocal points of entanglements where Elizabeth cultivates a

"poetics of solidarity in diversity." [diversité solidaire] Indeed, Elizabeth participates in sustainable local agriculture supported with global agricultural techniques. Overall, Elizabeth's journeys are a practice of detour that led her to Motabeng where she not only resists conventional identity politics but also she identifies globalization as one of the principle of domination she has been all along subjugated to. This transglocal fiction is a post-colonial narrative of detour embracing multiple forms of diasporization. This section is the first articulation of the transglocal as a post-colonial spatial framework that broadens the conventional notions of diaspora beyond the return to a single point of origin and binaristic paradigms such as colonizer/colonized, center/periphery, and global and local. It also locates Bessie Head in a post-colonial diasporic framework fashioning therefore a relational, multi-centered and multi-perspectival approach to comparative literature studies.

CHAPTER THREE: MNEMONIC DETOURS IN MARILENE FELINTO'S *AS MULHERES DE TIJUCOPAPO*

In the tradition of Brazilian literature, *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo [As Mulheres de Tijucopapo]* is considered a narrative of migration. Felinto's book is an epistolary narrative that Rísia, a woman who "venho de índios e negros, gente escura […]" (*MT,* 36) ["from Indians and Blacks, dark-skinned people,"] (*WT,* 23) addresses initially to her mother. In her letter, Rísia narrates her journey from the urban outskirts of São Paulo to the rural backlands of Tijucopapo in Northeastern Brazil. She revisits her memory to recount different episodes of her life that occurred in various towns: Poti, Manjopi, São Paulo, and Tijucopapo. Rísia was born in Poti, went to school in Manjopi, moved to São Paulo when she was a teenager and finally decided to return to Tijucopapo, her mother's birthplace. Recounting her memories from all these different places, Rìsia retraces the zigzaging roots/routes that led her toTijucopapo.

Initially, Rísia returns to Tijucopapo in search of the story of her mother, Adelaide, as a possible way to recover their history, reinstate her mother's dignity and reunite with her childhood friend. She does a round trip to São Paulo, a trip back to Recife and to Tijucopapo which is nowadays a poor neighborhood in Recife. In that sense, the story has been often considered as a narrative of return to the point of origin. Rìsia, I argue, draws a mnemonic map of personal and collective traumas that shape a post-colonial African diasporic space, a form of diaspora from within that disembodies the myth of nation-state and is "at once local and global."[165]

The rural northeast domestic migration to the urban southeast in Brazil is one of the major themes of Brazilian literature. Initially considered as a regional problem, the mass

[165] Brah, Avtar. "Global Mobilities, Local Predicaments: Globalization and the Critical Imagination". *Feminist Review 70* (2002): 30–45.

displacement of Brazilians following the industrialization of the South gained visibility on the national landscape. From 1930 on, northeast migrants became the new Brazilian proletarians. Therefore, Rísia's itinerary seemingly fits into the national story of rural exodus at the origin of many diasporic identities. Rísia's diasporic identity is exclusively fashioned by her transregional movement confined within the borders of the Brazilian nation-state

From this point of view, Rísia's diasporic identity is still located and framed in connection with Brazil. While she acknowledges the resonances of national mass migration in the formulations of her diasporic identity, Rísia develops practices of unbelonging that allow her to divert the diasporic routes traced by nationalist histories. I identify these practices as cultural forms of remembrance. Rísia redirects the linear trajectories of the national mass migration by tracing complex paths of detours that lead to multiple points of entanglement where they can oppose the principle of domination that subjugated them. In doing so, she re-positions herself within a post-colonial diasporic landscape.

Rísia's voyage is the reverse journey of many Brazilians who left their rural Northeastern region for the promises of urban São Paulo. *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* offers a new approach to Brazilian internal migratory movements that occurred in the 1930s. These singular migrations were often at the heart of regionalist novels produced during the second phase of the modernist period of Brazilian literature such as Rachel de Queiroz's *O quinze* (1930) and Clarice Lispector's *A hora de estrela* (1977). In reverse mode, the regional displacement is at the core of *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* as Rísia at first seems to reclaim her identity as a Northeastern by undertaking the reverse journey of Northeaster migrants from Southern to Northern Brazil. I argue in this section that Rísia's reversal of a journey foundational to the formation of regional and national identities in Brazil is a gesture of unbelonging that illustrates Rísia's desire to be

located outside territorially defined spatial frameworks. It also rejects narratives of modernization proposed by developmentalist models under Vargas's regime in the 1930s and during military dictatorship in the 1960s.

Gestures of Unbelonging: Mapping Nothingness

In the Brazilian racial landscape, Rísia is categorized as a *mestiça*. In *Race in Another America: Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*, Edward Telles defines *mestiçagem* as "race mixture or miscegenation […] that forms the foundational concept of Brazilian racial ideology. Race mixture represents a set of beliefs that Brazilians hold about race, including the belief that Brazilians have long mixed across racial lines, more so than in any other society, and that nonwhites are included in the Brazilian nation. Miscegenation has long been a defining metaphor of the Brazilian nation…" [166] Rísia descends from Indians and Blacks, "gente escura' (*MT*, 36) ["dark-skinned people,"] (*WT*, 24) as she puts it. Her grandmother was "uma negra" (*MT*, 35) ["a Negress,"] (*WT*, 23) and her grandfather was "ìndio" (*MT*, 36) ["Indian."] (*WT*, 24)

Yet, Rísia does not celebrate her racial hybridity challenging thus the conventional positive perspectives on Brazilian multiracial identity amply exposed as a myth, by now. Rísia interprets racial miscegenation as a mirage, a fantasy, an illusion, an unstable and fragile mirror reflection: "Era a Poti, uma vila-lua onde nasci e onde sei que meu avô foi ìndio. Ás vezes eu me olho no espelho e me digo que venho de ìndio e negros, gente escura, e me sinto como uma árvore, me sinto raiz, mandiocas aindo da terra. Depois me lembro que não sou nada." (MT, 36) [It was in Poti, a moon-town, where I was born and where I know that my grandfather was an Indian. Sometimes I look at myself in the mirror and I tell myself I come from Indians and

[166] Edward Telles. *Race in Another America: Significance of Skin Color in Brazil.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014, 3.

blacks, dark-skinned people, I feel like a tree, I feel rooted, a manioc plant coming out of the ground. Then I remember that I am nothing."] (*WT*, 23-24) Rísia shows that the Eurocentric tree identification based on racial ancestry and lineage leads to emptiness, invisibility, and nothingness with Brazilian miscegenation. To a certain extent, Rísia does not fit into the narrative of an identity quest shaped by the Eurocentric tree identification that installs a longing for a verifiable and recoverable single root. In a context of Brazilian miscegenation akin to the whitening of Brazilians, the manioc plant as a botanical metaphor fixates Rísia's genealogical identity within a national landscape in which her racial category is not defined exclusively by ancestry.

Indeed, throughout her journey, Rísia defines different ways in which she is "nothing" and retraces her "nothingness" to the *Branqueamento*, the institutionalization of a racist immigration policy immediately following Brazil's abolition of slavery in 1888. White Europeans were encouraged to move to the country and ultimately whiten the face of Brazil and its culture. In the following passage, Rísia reminisces how her grandmother's daughters were subjected to the *Branqueamento* policies and how they became "Mulheres tão sem de nada, mulheres tão de nada. […] O ultimo originário de mamãe se apagou com os raios da lua na noite de luar em que ela foi dada. Tudo de mamãe é adotado e adotivo. Minha mãe não tem origens, minha mãe não é de verdade. Eu não sei se minha mãe nasceu." (*MT*, 35) ["women so nothing." "Mama's last native link died out in the rays of the moon on the moonlit night when she was given away. Everything about mama is adopted and adoptive. My mother has no origins; in reality, my mother does not exist. I don't know if my mother ever was born."] (*WT*, 23) In Rísia's mnemonic travels, Poti represents the whitening space articulating the sterile feature of the racial notion of miscegenation. *De facto*, Brazilian miscegenation resulting from the

Branqueamento erases all traces of origin for the *mestiços (as*). This illustrates the inadequacy of the model of root-identity that Edouard Glissant considers as being "an obsession with a single point of origin."[167]

However, Rìsia re-appropriates nothingness as her identity since it is one feature that she shares with her mother and her grandmother. She then tries to define her nothingness: "Um dia me olho muito no espelho […] olhava-me no espelho em busca de algum rastro de como é que as pessoas estavam me vendo. É que não sabia se agüentava pessoas me vendo, Nema. Queria ver como estava sendo vista. Eram visões e visagens minhas." (MT, 49) ["One day, I looked hard at myself in search of some trace of how other people were seeing me, Nema. I wanted to see how I was being seen. Those were my visions and visages." (WT, 36)] In the majority of narratives of Afro-Brazilians' articulations of blackness and Africanness, the quest for rootedness in Africa is always predominant. Rìsia considers that her identity is based on what other people see. In Rìsia's case, nobody sees anything but her:

> Eu não encontro um modo sequer de ver sem deformer o objeto visto. Eu uso a palavra 'coisa' para definer tudo que quero e que já está tão sem forma que não tem um nome ou cujo nome se perdeu mesmo sob a poeira branca do que não se fala e depois reaparece em forma de coisa.
>
> A palavra "coisa" é a pròpria indefinição de tudo.
> A palavra "coisa" é a pròpria indefinição de tudo.
> A palavra "coisa" é a pròpria indefinição de tudo. (*MT*, 49)

> [I can't even find a way of seeing without deforming the object seen. I use the word *thing* to define everything I love that's already so formless it no longer has a name , or whose name was actually lost under the white dust of what nobody talks about, and which later reappears in the form of a thing.
>
> The word *thing* is the correct undefinition of everything.
> The word *thing* is the correct undefinition of everything.
> The word *thing* is the correct undefinition of everything.] (WT, 37)

[167] Ibid, 6

Here, Rìsia evokes the historical amnesia that has plagued Brazil as a nation-state. For Rìsia the term *thing* represents historical tragedies such as the loss of land and sovereignty for Native communities and the terrors of the Middle Passage and Slavery for Africans and Afro-Brazilians. Rìsia has no other word to address the historical amnesia in Brazil. There is no space for remembering in Rìsia's life other than "um caminho sem zigues-zagues." (MT, 49) ["a road without zigzags"] (WT, 36) Therefore, all throughout the book, Rìsia maps her memories within a landscape in which she is one of the numerous victims of Brazil's historical amnesia. In doing so, she develops practices of unbelonging since her first attempt at identifying with the structures of power such as the dictatorship, the Brazilian nation, the flag, the white elite, the wealthy, the patriarchal family and São Paulo:

> E de tarde eu desfilaria orgulhosa de mim na minha roupa da gala. […]Eu desfileria orgulhosa ao som da fanfarra, o bumboestrondando tum dum lá na frente. Tum dum, tum dum, tum dum. Á merda, á bosta, ao cocô em boletes. As cornetas prá prá prá afinando a marcha. […] Os pratos estalando. Tudo brilhando, cintilando. E eu me sentido orgulhosa. E eu esquecendo que não beijara o rosto de Dona Penha no fracasso que for a Manjopi; me esquecendoque precisava de Libânia, me esquencendo que papai era um merda, que mamãe não me abraçara, que Papai Noel tinha outras Mulheres e por isso eu não ganhava meias com pompons, que… átras de mim uma placqa de cimento contra quale u bati a cabeça escorrengando do tamborete. […] Eu caì para o abismo que os demaios levam… A queda de maior indignidade. Ume queda são sempre essas indignidades monstruosas. (*MT*, 124)
>
> [And in the evening I'd join the parade [to commemorate independence] proud of myself in my gala dress …I would march proudly to the noise of the brass band, the big drum thundering boom de boom up there in front. Boom boom, boom boom, boom boom. Go to shit, to dung to pellets of caca. The trumpets pra pra pra tuning in the march… The plates shining. Everything bright, sparkling. Me feeling proud of myself. And me forgetting that I hadn't kissed miss Penha's face in the Manjopi disaster. Forgetting that I needed Libania; forgetting that papa was a shit, that mama hadn't hugged me, that father Christmas had other women and that was why I didn't get pompoms on , that…Behind me a slab of cement. I banged my hand and I slipped off the stool… I fell into the abyss that a fainting fit brings on ...the most undignified fall. A fall is always those monstrous indignities.] (WT, 108-109)

Rìsia associates her participation to the celebratory commemorations of Brazilian independence to the biblical fall that embodies the demise of humankind's innocence. To a certain extent, she can't remain confined in the blissful ignorance of the very political and social realities that has so far marginalized her.

Yet, as Cheryl Sterling puts it in *African Roots, Brazilian Rites: Cultural and National Identity in Brazil*, "identity arises from what group members choose to emphasize in their cultural repertoires: by selecting stories, songs, dances, texts and rituals based on their use value, they create new artifacts and cultural practices to meet their needs. The agency of such cultural selection derives from what is accepted, what survives, and what is transmitted."[168] Rísia initially chooses the celebratory commemorations of Brazilian independence as one of the cultural repertoires in which her identity seemingly arises. After her "undignified fall," she becomes aware of how her identity mapped in a national landscape amounts to no more than nothingness. This explains why Rìsia keeps self-identifying as 'nothing,' because this sense has been transmitted from her grandmother to herself. The concept of postmemory explains the relevance of Rìsia's self-identification as nothing: "'postmemory[169] describes the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before — to experiences they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among those with which they grew up." Indeed, this is the kind of connection between the past and the present that is not achieved through memories transmitted through stories since those were erased and forgotten in order to fit the narrative of homogenization inscribed national

[168] Cheryl Sterling, *African Roots, Brazilian Rites: Cultural and National Identity in Brazil*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3.
[169] Marianne Hirsh, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*. (New York: Columbia UP, 2012.)

construction of Brazilian identity. Rísia bears a relationship with the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of her grandmother and mother to experiences she remembers through moral and physical affects/emotions such as headache and shame instilling a sense of guilt and self-loathing reminiscent of how trans-Atlantic slaves were made to feel.

Rìsia uses another revelatory figure to recollect the memories associated with her identity: ships. Whenever Rìsia is overcome by "rain like feelings" such as "damp and dripping,"

> Eu tive um sentiment me empurrando como barquinho para lugares longìnquos que é como um lugar onde nunca fui e preciso ir para me afstar dessa melancholia toda molhada que me escorrega os pés em poças d' água. Pra lugares onde dever ser o depois da terra, essa terra preta em que pisam grãos de areia, essa terra preta que aloja os pingos da chuva. Porque as gotas de meu sentiment, vindo assim de altas altitudes, dançam doidas embriagadas em busca dum lugar onde cair e se alojar. (MT, 42)
>
> [She had a feeling propelling [her] like a little boat toward far-off place, as if a place I've never been and need to reach to get away from this saturated melancholy that sloshes my feet through puddles of water. To places where the after-earth must be, that black earth trampled by grains of sand, that black earth that harbors the raindrops. Because the drops of my feelings, coming as they do from high altitudes, dance crazily, drunkenly, in search of a place to fall and stay."] (WT, 29-30)

Taking one of Paul Gilroy's early modern chronotopes that he uses to evoke the slave trade, Rìsia is embodying the African diaspora conceptualized as the black Atlantic. Rìsia embodying the boat functions as "a cultural and a political unit, a mobile element that through its dislocations linked and connected otherwise fixed and distant spaces."[170] Risia seems to locate her African diasporic identity within the configurations of Gilroy's black Atlantic. Yet, a moment later, she associates the little ships that she makes with paper as follows: "De raiva, eu preparei um dia cem barcos, uma frota. Santa Maria, Pinta, Nina, mamãe, papai, Leide, Lùcia,

[170] Simone Pereira Schmidt, "Cravi Canela Bala e Favela; Luso-Afro-Brazilian Feminist Post-colonialies" in *Translocalities/Translocalidades: Feminist Politics of Translation in the Latina Americas*.

Uilma, Mia, Ismael… Cem barcos, uma frota, uma caravan de caravelas que me levassem para o mundo que eu começava a descobrir que não era aquela simples mentira do fim da minha rua." (MT, 43) ["In a fit of temper, one day I made a hundred ships, a fleet, the Santa Maria, the Pinta, the Nina, mama, papa, Leide, Lucia, Wilma, Mia, Ismael… A hundred ships, a fleet, a caravan of caravels to carry me around the world which I was beginning to discover was not just that simple untruth of the end of my street."] (*WT*, 31) Here, Rìsia refers to the boats of the explorers and mocks the myth of "discovery." By embodying and making boats, Rísia tries to embark on reverse routes that she hopes would lead towards a homeland where she could anchor her identity. The fantasmagoric reverse reenactments of journeys undertaken in the context of slavery and colonialism reveal at best the contradictory nature of Brazilian subjects whose national identity trapped by colonial symbols demands the self-apotheosis of historical crimes that "made" Brazil. Rísia realizes that she cannot construct her identity based on a racial ancestry whitened by racist ideologies.

In addition, the physical impossibility of these voyages led Rísia to embark on an alternative reverse journey undertaken in the context of internal migration from rural northeast to urban southeast 1930s Brazil. Rísia did not just stop at reversing the trajectory of this internal migration, she also changed the causes and purposes of the voyage. What was initially a migration of labor is reversed into a quest for collective and individual identity: Rísia "Sài de minha casa e da cidade porque perdi o começo, o nascimento de minha mãe […] (MT, 74) ["left [her] home and the city because [she] lost the beginning, the birth of her mother […]"] (*WT*, 62). In order to recover and claim her beginning, Rísia sets up on mnemonic nonlinear travels in terms of time and space. Zigzagging across Poti, Recife, Manjopi, São Paulo and Tijucopapo

between past and present, Rísia literally "walks" her way to a diasporic identity that breaks free from Euro-Western assumptions in the construction of diasporic selves.

Whereas Rísia's reminiscences start in Poti, her birthplace, Recife specifically represents experiences of her childhood that "ela sa espalha no que eu sou até hoje." (MT, 71) ["spreads out into what [Rísia is] right up until now, into what [she will] always be." (*WT*, 58)] Describing her childhood as a space of anxieties, Rísia claims that her childhood shaped her existential anxieties in response to her precarious condition. In terms of race, it is during an outing with her classmates to Manjopi that Rísia was faced for the first time with the notion of racial relations: in Manjopi, she had her first group experience (*WT*, 58) and she learned how different she was. (*WT*, 59) Rísia realizes that her "meus cabelos não eram lisos como os Libania ou de Maisa." (MT, 72) ["hair wasn't as smooth as Libania's or Maisa's"] and that she "era bolsista na minha classe gordas rosadas." (MT, 72) ["I was a scholarship student in a class of plump pink girls."] (*WT*, 59)

Within the context of hair politics in identifying blackness, Rísia understands that the fact that her hair is coarse and kinky determines her racial identity. The texture of her hair as well as the ways in which her mother used to her hair acts as racial markers and practices of belonging. Hair as a racial marker is deeply entrenched within a discourse of racial identification in the US[171] and other parts of Latin America. Rísia's blackness thus is made visible through the texture of her hair. Coupled with her self-identification as "dark-skinned," the coils of Rísia's hair do not necessarily refer to blackness as constructed in other African diasporas. Noting Rísia's mother's use of brilliantine to straighten her daughter's hair, it is important to mention

[171] See Bell Hooks. "Straightening Our Hair." *New York: Avant-Garde Z Magazine* (1988).

that such a bodily performance relates to hair traditions in the Brazilian backlands. For example, the *Cangaçeiros*, a group of northeastern social bandits led by Lampião, one of many leaders of rural banditry movements in Brazil, especially used brilliantine for its distinct odor that would allow them to mark their presence. To a certain extent, Rísia's memories of her mother's hair practices weave together a black racial marker and an indigenous revolutionary act.

At this point of the narration, the performance of Rísia's mother is read as another attempt at whitening her daughter. Such a reading is supported by Rísia's confession she was winning swimming races in the River at Pedra Branca, a town that literally means "white stone." She compares her swimming achievements with her intimidation in front of "aquela piscine toda azul." (MT, 72) ["The perfect blueness of the swimming pool" in Manjopi.] (*WT*, 59) Depreciating her skinny legs, Rísia suggests that her body is not ill-fitted to swim in the pool. Her feeling of unbelonging is exacerbated by the economic inequalities between her family and her classmates': "Além disso as meninas eram filhas de sargento ricos. Eu era pobre e minha mãe era crente." (MT, 72) ["On top of the rest, the girls were the daughters of rich sergeants. I was poor and my mother was a believer."] (*WT*, 59)

In a Fanonian moment recalling the post-colonial scholar's emphasis on the racialization of inequalities, Rìsia thinks about the relationship between her racial identity and her precarious economic condition as she states:

> Eu sou pobre de pai e mãe. Pobre, pobre. E justo? Eu me pergunto se e justo perguntar se e justo. E justo? […]o que pode ser considerado justo? Eu caminho pela ponte e hà esmolares margeando meu caminho. E hà ladrões e prostitutas. não me identifico portanto. E me identifico. Eu os fito sem me achar na pupilla dos olhos deles. E me acho. Eles não refletem, eles não são o espelho claro e limpido. Eu me vejo."(MT 74)
>
> ["I am poor in father and in mother. Poor, poor." (*WT*, 61) She later adds: "I walk on the bridge and there are beggars lining my path. And robbers and prostitutes.

> So I don't identify with them. And yet I do. […] They don't reflect, they are not a clear, limpid mirror. I see myself."] (*WT*, 61)

In this passage, Rísia includes race in the social and economic stratification of precariousness. In doing so, she exemplifies the juxtaposition of racial, social and economic difference. By identifying with the lumpenproletariat, she is also juxtaposing different scales of experience. Out of place within a Eurocentric family tree model, Rísia develops a sense of identification in relation to the precarious communities of the downtrodden. Yet, by associating miscegenation to self-hatred from the onset of the novel, Rísia expresses her hatred of her mother. As a matrophobic[172] protagonist, Rísia manifests the desire to reclaim a lineage different from her mother's.

Indeed, her journey from São Paulo to Tijucopapo is a response to her identification with people in a precarious condition. Reversing the national and regional migration initiated by Northeasterners to leave the backlands for São Paulo in an attempt to better their economic and social condition. By partaking the migratory movement in reverse, Rìsia takes the ultimate decision to construct her identity in her terms. She states that in São Paulo, she almost lost her speech and started to stammer. (78) With the desire to find the words who could define her fittingly at different scales of experience, Rìsia embarks on a 9-month mnemonic travel that she hopes will lead her to who she is.

Rísia's fractured identity does not fit in the uniformity of any group whether it is that of her family or her classmates. Her atypical migratory journey does not create a location of unbelonging where she could identify with a specific group. As a migrant subject, she redefines her identity as "nothing" in a gesture of unbelonging which should not be misread as a blurring

[172] Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born; Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, New York: Norton and Company, 1986.

or a subversion of identity categories. It is a gesture disrupting the discourse of identity which constructs migrant subjectivities as defined by points of origins. By challenging the rigidity of identity markers and acknowledging their local and global singularities, Rísia in *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* interrogates the conventions of narratives of migration.

As a metaphor of displacement, migration implies a movement "to specific places and definite reasons."[173] Rísia's narratives of migration complicate that model of migration considering her gestures of unbelonging and her unconscious search for the principle of domination. For Rísia, Brazil is the mythical Promised Land that permeates discourses of diaspora. She resists her inclusion into national historical narratives of travel by crossing, distorting and eluding space and time. Indeed, Rísia crisscrosses, deforms and collapses three national historical narratives of migration that are part of the construction of a national identity in Brazil: the trans-Atlantic slave trade, European colonialism and Brazilian industrialization that resulted in *nordestino* migration. Rísia projects herself in intangible worlds reversing and diverting the movements of mass migration at different geopolitical scales conflating local and global and national and regional as her memories entangles traumatic histories that link the Americas, Africa and Europe simultaneously. Yet, those alternate movements are not completely detached from 'reality,' they are the deformed, disoriented and disorderly echoes of Rísia's diasporic lived experiences.

In *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo,* Rísia engages in routes leading to the construction of transversal, wandering, and muddy points of entanglement that ultimately establish what I call 'transglocal diasporas'. The 'transglocal space' is a post-colonial point of entanglement where the local and the global, the personal and the collective, the historical and the mythical, and the

[173] Boyce-Davies, 37.

national and the transnational collide neither vertically nor horizontally. Since there is no sense of hierarchy and linearity in the ways in which Rísia crisscrosses them, the conflations of the local and the global, the personal and the collective, the historical and the mythical, and the national and the transnational are transversal.

After examining both protagonists' wandering movements as practices of unbelonging eschewing the regional, national, and transnational borders within which Rísia was confined, I argue that Tijucopapo in *As Mulheres De Tijucopapo* is a transglocal point of entanglement that reveals the multiplicity of border crossings forming Rísia's multilayered diasporic identities. Paralleling national mass migrations, the aim of Rísia's metaphorical and physical travels is "se renasce" (MT, 27) ["to be reborn"] (*WT*, 13) as a post-colonial diasporic figure.

Muddy Entanglements: Recovering From Historical Amnesia

Collective memory, says Bruce Gronbeck "works by symbolically building bridges between past and present. In essence, through evocation of collective memories, past and present live in a constant dialogue, even in a hermeneutic circle where neither can be comprehended without the other."[174] One place in *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* has been building historical, geographical and symbolical bridge between past and present by conflating the local and the global, the national and the regional and the historical and the mythical: Tijucoapo.

Tijucopapo is at first introduced as Rísia's motherland: "Foi em Tijucopapo que minha mãe nasceu. Embora tudo seesconda de mim. Mas sendo que sei sobre o que ela me contou em acessos de um desespero triste, e sobre o que sei que sou e que é dela e escutei no bucho dela e que està traçado na testa dela e no destino nosso, meu e dela." (*MT*, 14.) ["It was in Tijucopapo

[174] Bruce Gronberg, The Rhetorics of the Past: History, Argument, and Collective Memory', in K.J. Turner (ed.) *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1998) 47-60.

that my mother is born. Although all that is hidden from me. But still I do know what she told me in moments of sad desperation, and about what I know I am, and about what comes from her, and about what I heard inside her belly, and about what is traced on her brow and in our fate, my fate and her."] (*WT*, 13) Yet, as mentioned earlier, Rísia's mother was said to be born in Poti. Rísia herself realizes her confusion as she states: "Mas minha mãe nasceu foi em Tijucopapo. Às vezes eu confundo as vilas dizendo que é na Poti que nascem essas Mulheres dadas como minha mãe. Mas é que tudo é tão enluarado que, de repente, eu esta aluada." (*MT*, 36) ["Sometimes I confuse the towns saying that it was in Poti that those women were given away like my mother were born. But what happens is that everything is so moonshine that all of the sudden I become moonstruck."] (*WT*, 23) The moon in this sentence symbolizes the *Branqueamento* policies that whitened the black and indigenous populations. Her confusion is therefore a direct consequence of the implementation of racist ideologies. Indeed, the policy of *embranquecimento* or *branquemaento* [social whitening] (1889-1911) prevailed after slavery:

> Governmental policy banned all immigration of African and Asian peoples and, in turn actively sponsored the immigration of whites in order to lighten the population […] the legacy of institutionalized embranquecimento is reflected in popular beliefs that undergird the social fabric of Brazilian society: by blacks, that through gradual whitening caused by miscegenation all social and economic impediments will disappear and, by whites, that with a whitened (less backward) population, Brazil will take its place as a model of modernity in the world. [175]

Therefore, due to the 'whitening' of Brazilian national identities, Tijucopapo as a historical space has been erased from the collective memory of Brazil. Rísia unearths a silenced and unmapped past which she strives to translate in her contemporary world. Looking for ways of improving a speech impediment she caught in São Paulo, (*WT*, 78) Rísia embarks on a nine-

[175] Cheryl Sterling, *African Roots, Brazilian Rites: Cultural and National Identity in Brazil*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 5.

month journey to Tijucopapo: "É com grande dor de cabeça que hoje vou pelo mundo. Meio-dia é a prior hora. Eu já fui a medicos. Minha dor de cabeça é da vida. O começou com o nascimento da minha mãe. Se estende hoje a todas as partes minhas. Desse meu corpo que vai. Que vai se renasce em Tijucopapo onde nasceu mamãe." (MT, 27) ["Today I wander the world with a big headache. Midday is the worst time. I've already been to one doctor after another. And it began with the birth of my mother. And now it extends to every part of me. Every part of my body travels. That travels to see if I can be reborn in Tijucopapo where my mama was born."] (WT, 13) Therefore, it is the place where Rìsia reconnects with her mother's story and history.

The choice of Tijucopapo as a camouflaged destination point is not fortuitous. Besides the fact that it might or might not be the birthplace of Rísia's mother, Tijucopapo is "the space of insurrection" (*WT*, 105) where Brazilian women fought back against the Dutch army in the 17th century. Inscribed within the colonial past of Brazil, Tijucopapo witnesses the insurrection of Brazilian women against Dutch invaders in Pernambuco. As she weaves the personal memory of her mother with historical figures of resistance such as the women of Tijucopapo, Rísia reinvents for herself a glorious past when women fought against colonial oppression, highlighting its international characteristics. The revolt of these Northeastern Brazilian women is all the more interesting as the women of Tijucopapo defeated the Dutch army with weapons including cooking pots.

There is no mention of those specific historical events in Rísia's description of the women of Tijucopapo besides their warrior attributes:

> "Donde vieram essas mulheres assim, a minha herança, mulheres de matéria do tijuco, cabelos grossos arrastando pela crima do cavalo, escanchadas no lombo do bicho semsla, amazonas. Era uma noite, uma vez, minha mãe nasceu no seio do pântano. Num sertão da lama. Mulheres como minha mãe trazem a sina das que desembes mundo adentro escanchadas em seus cavalos, amazonas, defendendo-se não se sabe bem de quê, só se sabe que de amor. Só se sabe que do que o amor as fez traídas. São amazonas

> acavalo vindo fazer marca no tijucopapo, lá onde é tudo lamaçal. As mulheres de tijucopapo: é como fica tão tudo a ponto de ser herança. As mulheres de Tijucopapo: sou eu com minha sina de lama, eu que saí, bicho da lama , tapuru, onde a praia encontra a lama." (*MT*, 57)
>
> ["Where those women came from, my heritage, women made of the substance of the *tijuco*, thick-haired, dragging on their horses' manes, straddling the beasts bareback, amazons. Once upon a night, upon a time, my mother was born in a heart of a swamp. In a mud plain. Women like my mother bear the mark of certain women who take off to face the world straddling their horses, amazons defending themselves no one knows exactly from what, except, as we know love. They are amazons on horseback coming to make their mark on the Tijucopapo, where everything's a mire. The women of Tijucopapo: horseshoes. The women of Tijucopapo: it's as if so little remains of everything; and it's as if so much remains when it turns itself into a heritage. The women of Tijucopapo: they are me with my mark of mud, I who emerged, a mud creature, a worm, where the beach meets the mud. The women of Tijucopapo: yes. I'm coming. I'm slippery."] (*WT*, 46)

In this passage, Rísia clearly articulates her identification with the women of Tijucopapo colliding personal and collective memories. Tijucopapo can be read as a "*lieu de mémoire*," (Nora, 1) in which Rísia's memories gestate a muddle of historical moments as demonstrated by Paula Jordão:

> "As a reminder of the heroines who fought the Dutch invaders in Pernambuco in the seventeenth century, Tijucopapo is not just an element of Rísia's symbolic reality but is also part of Brazilian reality and (mythical) history. Moreover, by passing on her recollection of that (mythical) place to other generations, Rísia fulfills the task attributed to the *lieux de mémoire* - the enrichment of its meaning to a community, and in this particular case, to (a part of) the Brazilian Northeastern community. Finally, by reviving events that are part of a forgotten history in which women played an essential role, Rísia broaches another aspect of Tijucopapo as *a lieu de mémoire*, namely the making of another history or of a renewed history that belongs to the legacy of gender of the Brazilian Nordeste." (Jordão, 8)

I would add that to designate Tijucopapo as a *lieu de mémoire* still confines the women of Tijucopapo within national histories. Read as a transglocal site of entanglement, Tijucopapo puts in the same space local and global figures of women resistance movements. To associate the

women of Tijucopapo with the Greek amazons re-locates Rísia's personal history on a global scale.

With the "unpredictable proliferation of its ramifications," Rísia reconnects some scraps of memories with contemporary historical moments: "Bem, mas antes minha mãe nascera. E fora em Tijucopapo. Era 1935 e nem imagino como poderia ser, come se podia ser, como se podia nascer. Como se podia nascer em 1935?" (*MT*, 90) ["Before that my mother had been born. And it had happened in Tijucopapo. It was 1935 and I can't imagine how things might have been, how one could have been, how one could be born. How could one have been in 1935?"] (*WT*, 7) By setting her mother's date of birth in 1935, Rísia relates her mother to the Vargas government as the first failed communist coup in Brazil occurred in 1935. Bearing in mind, the passive nature of Rísia's mother, such a connection is plausible since the coup failed. However, 1935 also records the peasant revolts in the Northeast led by the *Cangaceiros*. The *Cangaceiros*, meaning 'those who can't adapt' in Brazilian Portuguese, were social bandits whose most famous leader is Virgulino Ferreira da Silva commonly known as Lampião.

Lampião, or Virgulino Ferreira da Silva, was born on his father's ranch in Vila Bela, Pernambuco on 7 July 1897. Explanations as to why he became a bandit point to a conflict between his father and a neighbor, José Saturnino. Bad feelings between the two families erupted into armed skirmishes, and ultimately involved other families linked to the Saturninos.[176] Seeking vengeance for wrongs suffered at the hands of the Saturninos and their allies, Lampião led attacks on those he saw as responsible, including local police. In retribution, on 18 May 1921, police killed Lampião's father. He then took up *cangaço* [banditry]. He gained the

[176] Billy Jaynes Chandler, *The Bandit King: Lampião of Brazil.* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1978), 21-28.

nickname Lampião, literally, 'street lamp', because of the rapidity with which he fired his rifle, which produced a flashing light.

His audacious raids continued, and his ability to evade the police caused his reputation to grow throughout the Northeast. The fact that his wife, Maria Bonita, accompanied him added to his notoriety, as did reports that his band typically sang the tune Mulher Rendeira [Lace-making Woman] when they rode in to attack a town. Newspapers in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo reported on his exploits, thereby linking banditry and the Northeast, an association that exists to the present day. Lampião died in an ambush in the Sergipe town of Angicos in 1938, along with Maria Bonita and several other of his followers. Their heads were cut off and put on display to convince people that Lampião truly was dead. They subsequently remained on display for 30 years in a museum in Bahia.[177] In collective memory, then, Lampião was a creation of the injustice he suffered, a man who admittedly did evil, but only because of the evil done to him. In this, his remembered life story incorporates the vision of the Northeast as a suffering exploited region.

Once more, Rísia forges for herself a lineage merging male and female, and national and regional histories and myths of insurrection. Her meeting with Lampião at the entrance of Tijucopapo (*WT*, 102) could suggest that in reality, Rísia identifies with his girlfriend Maria Déia more commonly known as Maria Bonita. Her status as a folk heroine in *cordel* literature mirrors that of Rísia who stars in her own "historias de batalhas por uma justa causa." (*MT*, 117) ["stories of battles for a just cause."] (*WT*, 102) Ultimately, Tijucopapo is " [u]ma passagem. Um passe de fantasia, quase um interval entre pensamentos, um ùnico passo." (*MT*, 28) ["a passage. A permit to fantasy, a sort of interval between thoughts, a single step."] (*WT*, 114). Rísia

[177] Ibid, 203.

dismantles the conventional paradigm of migration centered on a point of departure and a point of arrival. As soon as she arrived to Tijucopapo, Rísia sets up on another reversal journey for what she calls "uma justa causa" (*MT*, 117) ["a just cause."] (*WT*, 120). In her fantasy world, she follows Lampião instead of staying in Tijucopapo. The elasticity of Tijucopapo which "desemboca na rua onde vivi là em Recife" (*MT*, 18) "runs into the street [Rísia] lived on up there in Recife" (*WT*, 6) implies that Tijucopapo embodies any space of insurrection whether local or global and national or regional.

Rísia's trajectory traces diasporic lines embedded in different forms of resistance. After unveiling the principle of domination in Tijucopapo, Rísia sets up to engage in different movements of resistance ranging from social banditry to women warriors in her contemporary time. By recording the stories of battles for a just cause, Rísia liberates herself from the nationalist narrative of migration. Rísia now belongs to a new race which relays, rallies, and relates the women of Tijucopapo, the women of Poti, the Amazons, and the *Cangaceiras* as, along the migratory route, she managed to identify the power structure that have excluded her: the nation, the patriarchy, and the white establishment.

Another feature of Tijucopapo encompasses Rísia's racial identity as Tijucopapo means "negro tijuco" (*MT*, 57) ["black mud clay"] (*WT*, 45) in Tupi-Guarani. Tijucopapo is "onde a praia encontra a lama." (*MT*, 57) ["where the beach meets the mud, […] where the beach turns into mud."] (*WT*, 45) As a mestiza, Rísia's identification with blackness has been determined by filial ties to her black grandmother. However, the existence of her grandmother has been whitened in Poti until invisibility. Rísia embraces her diasporic identity at the muddy point of entanglement in which her blackness becomes indigenous. She does not link diasporicity to a specific environment, or a territorially defined identity. For her, Africa is a *detour* that leads to

Tijucopapo, the diasporic point of entanglement where Rísia becomes connected to multiple histories and multiple spatial structures. Her diasporic identity is neither metaphorically nor physically territorially determined. The transglocal dimension of her diasporic identity addresses the muddiness of Rísia. Her slipperiness translates in Glissant's world as opacity which is "the demand of the right to not be understood." To a certain extent, Rísia survives in a world that has no words to identify her as belonging to a specific community.

Transglocal Fiction: Literary Miscegenation

As Mulheres de Tijucopapo is shaped simultaneously as a conversation between Nema and Rísia, a letter that Rìsia wants to write to her mother, a letter that Rísia wants to write in a foreign language like in the movies and an aria, a form of melody sang on solo, to narrate her journey. Rìsia's personal life parallels the political evolution of Brazil especially at times of conflict and dictatorship. In *As Mulheres de Tijucupapo*, Felinto employs many words from the Tupi-Guarani community. In none of the narratives forms including the epistolary and melodic forms adopted by Rísia's account of her journey, the knowledge of native language would be justifiable or verifiable. How did Rìsia recover the language (and the tongue) of the Tupi-Guarani?

At the beginning of her account, Rísia mentions that her letter addressed to her mother is written in Portuguese even if she wishes she could write it in a foreign language, i.e. English, for then the letter would be "more international." In a sense, Rísia's narration blurs the limits of conventional literary forms such as the epistolary, the lyrical and the cinematic and diverts some of the standard features of autobiographical fiction by creating a hybrid literary model in which historical, personal and mythical temporalities and languages cross at a point of entanglement where diasporic subjectivities are (being) born. For example, Felinto's manipulation of the

confessional genre by conveying it via multiple literary forms is also illustrated through the plurality of confessors in *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo*.

Indeed, Felinto displaces the politics of the confessional from a Eurocentric space to an Afro-Brazilian transglocal space. She articulates Rìsia's diasporic experiences within the confessional modalities. The historical perspective on confession evokes the religious context of its conceptualization. With Michel Foucault highlighting the power relationship involved in the politics of the confession, I argue that Felinto's *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* fictionalizes the modalities of the confession genre in order to disentangle her narrative from the conventional snares of confessional writings.

As Foucault rightly asserts "Western societies have established the confession as one of the main rituals [they] rely on for the production of truth."[178] In Rísia's case what is the truth to be produced. She does not have the voice, the words and the language to produce "the" truth. Therefore, Rìsia's autobiographical practice breaks free from the conventions of Western confessions as there is no truth that could be remembered or uncovered as it is in the Christian tradition, there is no voice that could be heard, and there is no language that could be spoken. Rísia adds another subversive layer to her confession as she struggles to dedicate her story/history: "*Se pudesse dedicar essa história…"* [*If only I could dedicate this story…]* (italics in original). This line is the ominous epigraph of the book. There is no indication as of the reasons why this book can't be dedicated in the epigraph. A confession stemming from European literary traditions gives a prominent role to either God (St- Augustin), the public (Rousseau) or to a confessor. Rísia as well as for Felinto do not identify a specific confessor/dedicatee. While Rísia initially addresses

[178] Michel Foucault and Robert Hurley. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. (New York: Random House, 1978), 56.

her letter to her mother, one can see that she also addressed the letter to her best friend Nema and her late lover Jonas.

The impossibility of communicating Rìsia's story to others is first revealed through her desire to translate her story in English:

> Eu quero que essa tal carta vá em inglês porque inglês é a lingua mais viva desse mundo. As outras línguas parecem mortas perto do inglês. Imaginar que até as línguas morrem... Existem línguas mortas. E-a-mor-te-eu-não- a-güen-to-não. [...] Inglês é dum material estrangeiro que me fascina eme separa dessa proximidade toa de enviar uma carta de mim na língua de minhas pessoas, a minha língua. Não quero que saibam de mimassim, tão proximamente. Quero não me entendam. Inglês me dà distância." (*MT*, 65)

> [I want this particular letter to go in English because English is the most alive language in the world. The other languages seem dead alongside English. Just imagine that even languages die […] Dead languages exist. And-no-I-can't-stand-death… English is made of foreign stuff that fascinates me and separates me from all that closeness of sending a letter from me in a language of my own people, in my own language. I don't want them to know about me like that, so closely. I want them to not understand me. English gives me distance.] (*WT*, 53)

While conventional, the confession is an intimate practice that seeks to bring confessee and confessors closer, Rìsia's decision to translate her letter into English stems from a desire to bring some distance between herself and her people. This is an act of concealment akin to the Glissantian detour in which the diasporic subject finds alternative of making sense of his experience in the transplanted land and re-appropriates for instance the language of the master by communicating in creole which excludes the master. Because Rìsia realizes that she will never been able to confess in the language of her father, in Tupi-Guarani, she decides not to use the Portuguese language and to resort to English so that she will stay opaque and reach out to other Afro-Diasporic communities who would understand this desire of concealing one's subjectivity.

Paradoxically, in Rísia's case the language of the master is Portuguese although the British have colonized This explains her desire to have her letter translated into English so that she can

exclude not only Brazilians which at this point are assumed to be her "own people" but also the persistent remnants of Portuguese colonial enterprise in Brazil. Rísia's ambivalent sense of subjectivity reflects the ambivalence of Brazil's post-colonial condition. Indeed, in his article "Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-identity," Boaventura de least Sousa Santos as he focuses on the question of situated postcolonialism in countries with Portuguese as the official language notices:

> "[the] double ambivalence of representation affects both the colonizer and the identity of the colonized. It may well be that the excess of alterity [he] identified in the Portuguese colonizer could also be identified in those he colonized. Particularly in Brazil, one could imagine, hypothetically, that the identity of the colonized was, at in some periods, constructed on the basis of the double other, the other of the direct Portuguese colonizer and the indirect English colonizer. As we shall see, this doubleness became later the constitutive element of Brazil's myth of origins and possibilities for development."[179]

The problematic relationship that Rìsia has with language is not just in terms of their geopolitical belonging but also in terms of their meaning. For her, the English language is associated to Hollywood movies feeding people with happy endings and with songs by the Beatles. Felinto in a way denounces the ambivalent nature of the English language. Being a global language, it separates local communities from their peers and it also sells the western capitalist dream to Brazilians. My reading is that for Rìsia, the Portuguese language is just similar to the English language as neither are her native language and both places some distance between herself and her people. At this point of the narration, Rísia still struggles to identify "her" people. She is still part of what Glissant has defined as "a transplanted population that becomes part of a multiple whole."[180] I would add that as a displaced person, Rísia occupies what Edward Said has called "the

[179] Boaventura de Sousa Santos. "Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism and Inter-identity."*Luso-Brazilian Review.* Vol. 39 Issue 2, (2002), 19.
[180] Edouard Glissant. *Caribbean Discourse and Selected Essays,* 17.

perilous territory of not belonging."[181] The exilic condition of Rísia as an alienated subject within Brazilian national boundaries reflects also the contradictions of the Brazilian subject shaped by an excess of alterity.

Therefore, to write this letter in Portuguese is akin to writing it in English for in both cases it does not allow her to communicate effectively with to feel a connection to any place. Her problematic with language is not just linked to the geopolitical dimension of these European languages. Interestingly, it is because of the English translation of her book that Marilene Felinto was categorized as an Afro-Brazilian woman writer. English gave to the Anglo-American audience access to understand the ways in which Rìsia constructs her black diasporic identity. In a way, Felinto weaves various languages looking with ultimately the claim to remain opaque and not understood.

Ultimately, Rísia yearns to become an animal, a mare who would only be able to communicate in a non-human manner: "Ah, se estivesse e mim não falar sobre nada eu queria poder me calar por dias e mais dias. Ah se pelo menos eu pudesse falar em língua estrangeira. Ah, se pudesse somente grunhir. Ah, se eu podesse ser um bicho […] hoje, eu sou , entre outras coisas, uma mulher que tentou ser égua e não conseguiu." (MT, 36) ["Oh if only I had it in me to not talk about anything. Of if I were at least able to talk in a foreign language. Oh, if only I could grunt. Oh, if only I could be an animal. […] Today I'm among other things, a woman who tried to be a mare and didn't succeed."] (23)

A post-colonial reading of her resistance in using a comprehensible language could be easily inscribed within the tradition of the subaltern who can't speak as conceptualized by Gayatri

[181] Edward Said. *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003, 7.

Spivak who presents the subaltern as a figure who can't be heard. Yet, by embracing the opaqueness of her language, Rìsia creates new departure stories which would culminate in a return to the transglocal point of entanglement namely Tijucopapo and to create alternative pasts, memories, roots and stories decolonized from any obsession or exorcism remaining from the slave trade. By refusing to give in to the Eurocentric subjectification based on an essentialist construction of being, the diasporic subject enacting a detour frees the self from mental slavery and inscribes such identity in a logic/narrative of becoming. Thus narratives of return can sometimes actually be narratives of detour.

While these linguistic detours highlight the diasporic trajectories intersecting in Rìsia's narrative, it is important to mention the ways in which Rìsia uses a crude language ranging from obscene insults to overt sexual references. This language breaks form the original confession which is very contained and formal. For example, within the religious context, a confessional always start with a statement of forgiveness whereas Rìsia's sentences are often violent aiming at hurting her main confessor namely her mother repeating over and over that "mamãe era uma merda."(*MT*, 25, 133) ["Mama was a shit."] (WT, 12, 123, 50) However, Rìsia's trouble in communicating was just not linked to her inability to choose the right locally rooted language. It was also linked to her class positionality:

> […] amanheci gaga. E durante muito tempo em menina fui gaga e magra. A história de minha gagueira é longa e subit. É muito ruim ser pobre porque pose-se sùbito ser um gago ou um magro. A história de minha magreza... eu era tão magra que me chamavam Rísia Popeye. Quando mamãe nos contou sobre papai e tia, eu fiquei gaga de novo. Agora eu já não gaguejo mais, agora eu emudeço de vez ou falo direto em língua estrangeira. Ou vou me-embora. Mas, não poder falar, ser gaga, é um verdadeiro corte, é o sinal mesmo da ruptura, é o espanto maior de todos. Ser gaga, então, me calava muito. Eu já fui uma verdadeira muda.
>
> Mas sinto que preciso deixar de besteira, porque ficar me lembrado de mim gaga é besta e feio; deixando, pois de besteira, pois que todo indivíduo gago é um

> magricela fraco demais, e eu não suporto mais gente tão fraca assim, deixando de besteira, falarei, Nema, sobre como são os domingos em São Paulo. [...] Mas nos domingos aconteciam as piores dores, e icava as piores lembranças." (*MT*, 41-42)
>
> [I woke up stammering. And for a long time as a little girl I was a stammerer and skinny. The story of my stammering is long and sad. It's horrible to be poor because you can suddenly become a stammerer or a skinny thing. The story of my skinniness. I was so skinny that they used to call me Rìsia Popeye. When mama told us about papa and auntie, I started stammering again. Now I don't stammer any longer, now I just get completely dumb or I talk directly in a foreign language. Or I leave straight away. But not being able to speak to talk, being a stammerer, as a real incision, it's the very sign of a rupture, it's the greatest fright of all. Being a stammerer, then made me shut up a lot. I became truly dumb. But I think I should leave off talking nonsense, because getting stuck remembering my stammering is nonsense and vile. Leaving off nonsense, then, since every stammering individual is also a feeble spindleshanks, and I can't stand such weaklings like that, so leaving off all the nonsense, I shall speak about Sundays in São Paulo. But it was on Sundays were the worst torments happened, and the worst memories remained.] (WT, 28)

Rìsia's speech impediment is significant for stammering is the linguistic manifestation of Rìsia's neurosis. Within the Brazilian context, her neurosis is due to her poverty and her belonging to a working class. It is her arrival in São Paulo that positions her among the lumpenproletariat. In other words she became aware of her class status once she reached *São* Paulo. The neurotic expression of her desire to belong to a community different from the oppressed categories she was put in does not allow her to communicate efficiently with a society that has been whitened to erase any traces of previous histories of revolution. In order to survive in such an environment, Rìsia feels the need to develop her own language since she can't express herself in Tupi-Guarani.

Therefore Rìsia resorts to the revolutionary language of Lampião, the cultural icon of Northeastern Brazil. While the introduction of Lampião in the narrative results in carving a transglocal dimension to this narrative of detours, it also incorporates one literary form that is part of the popular cultural legacy of Brazil: the *cordel* literature. As a regional hero, Lampião is part of the literary landscape of the *cordel* literature. The *cordel* stories are originally a European

medieval literary genre which functioned as a form of epic narrative. Usually written in prose, the *cordel* stories entered Brazil though Portuguese epic narratives. Presented as "littérature de colportage" in the French literary medieval landscape, this literary genre is meant to be circulated among the masses. With local influences in the nineteenth century, the *cordel* literature became a Brazilian folk literary form. It has kept some elements such as its nature as a medium of masses. It has also acquired other characteristics which led the Brazilian northeastern version of the *cordel* literature to outlive its European ancestors.

A characteristic of the *cordel* literature in Brazil is the fact that they are counter-narratives to the dominant national histories that situate the Northeastern myths like the women of Tijucopapo in the margins of literary tradition/canon. By incorporating the story of Lampião to her book, Felinto constructs the hybrid form of a *cordel*, an already hybrid literary form. Felinto follows the biographical elements of the *cordel* literature by substituting the story of the social bandit with that of a woman who was reborn as a revolutionary figure in the lineage of the women warriors of Tijucopapo. More so, she displaced the narrative outside of its northeast locale to inject it in the national narrative by making Rìsia go back to *São* Paulo after deciding to follow Lampião for a just cause. While the *cordel* literature was produced, circulated and consumed in the Northeast the fact that the story of Rìsia is retraced back to the streets of São Paulo is very significant in revealing Felinto's attempt at putting it on the national literary landscape.

When Rìsia abandoned her project to have a letter written in English in order to dictate it to Lampião, she borrows Lampião's revolutionary language. She carves a poetics of revolution interjected with a regional sentiment. Lampião's narrative acts like a literary detour taken by Rìsia in order to inscribe her story in a local tradition of resistance with a foreign origin. During the dictatorship period from 1964 to 1985, the *cordel* literature was censured by the government which

also shows how *As Mulheres de Tiucopapo* is challenging the censorship order by transforming a regional literary form into a global literary one that speaks to the construction of diasporic identity.

The elements of the poetics of survival and resistance developed by Felinto in *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* explore the creative possibilities performed by Rìsia during her journey from São Paulo to Tijucopapo. By extracting the story of the women of Tijucopapo from the dusty history textbooks that she recalls having seen in school to "cast a shade at midday," (118) Declaring that "every person is a story" Rìsia recognizes the multiplicity of voices that she embodies from a regional, national and diasporic point of view which makes it difficult for her to dedicate her story as mentioned earlier. The confessional tone of the text is made indiscernible because it is written in a transglocal language of resistance.

Felinto's transgression of literary genres by producing a narrative of detours through the miscegenation of literary forms like the confession, the *cordel* literature and the epistolary narrative establishes what I call a transglocal poetics of resistance that is inscribed within the literary tradition of Africa and its diaspora that transcends the local and the global. Such poetics I argue lies in the rituals at play the crossing of boundaries. The fact that Rìsia's journey is ultimately revealed as being metaphorical speaks to the poetic nature of the narrative: "eu já estava em Tijucopapo. Uma passage. Um passe de fantasia., quase um interval entre pensamentos, um ùnico passo. Eu cheguei a Tijucopapo por uma queda. Percorri um abismo inteiro. Num tempo de nova meses. De sol e chuva. […] Uma paisagem quase vermelha. Uma paisagem quase de cera." (*MT*, 128) ["And so I was in Tijucopapo at last. I was in Tijucopapo at last. A passage. A permit to fantasy, a sort of interval between thoughts, a single step. I arrived in Tijucopapo though a fall. I traveled through an entire abyss. In a time of nine months. Through sunshine and rain. A reddish landscape. An almost waxed landscape."] (*WT*, 114) This fall is, I argue, a symbolic fall the

creative disorder established by Glissant earlier. The creative disorder is illustrated by the breaks into the narrative through which multiple literary forms have collapsed.

One clear break is the psychological displacement undergone by Rìsia. As she thinks that she has inherited the madness of her aunts and mother, she realizes that her neurosis is not a destructive one but a productive one that allows her to tell her story in multiple ways. Such fractal spaces in the narrative are part of the formulaic modalities of transglocal storytelling that includes the story of her body: "história de minha gadeira" ["story of my stammering"] and "história de minha magreza" ["story of my skinniness"].In other words Rìsia is writing the story of her body.

The ritual of telling stories of her body engrained in the narrative is representative of the poetics of survival developed by Rìsia. She acknowledges the need to tell her own story as she develops her own language of resistance through stories and music:

> Agora quero compor uma ária que recomponha minha caminhada pela estrada. Quero compor uma ária que saia mùsica fina como as cordas do violão. Uma ária história da minha passagem dastrada para essa mata. Da minha andada pela mata. Uma ária que seja a carat que escriverei quando chegar a Tijucopapo, a terra onde minha mãe nasceu. Uma ária que seja da minha partida à minha chegada. Quero compro uma ária que recomponha a minha retirada pela estrada e da estrada para o campo, esse, onde quero encontrar as flores que pintarei naisag com lápis de cera, na carta à minha mãe. Quero compror uma ária que recompanha a minha ira e a faça calma criança amada. Quero compror uma ária de amor que ecoe nas cavernas dessa montanha onde estou. (MT, 86)

> [Now I'd like to compose an aria which will recompose my journey along the road. I want to compose an aria which will send out music as fine as the strings of a violin. An aria-history of my journey from the road through this forest. Of my travels through the forests. An aria that will be the letter I'll write when I get to Tijucopapo, the land where my mother was born. An aria that covers from my departure to my arrival. I want to compose an aria which will recompose my retreat along the road and from the road to the fields, these fields, where I hope to find the flowers I'll paint with wax crayons on my landscape, in the letter to my mother. I want to compose an aria to recompose my rage and turn it into a gentle beloved little girl. I want to compose an aria of love to echo the caves of this mountain I am on.] (WT, 75)

With the constant repetition of the words to 'compose an aria', the tone is set for an individual voice to tell her story. The aria is a musical genre that has been transplanted to Brazil from Europe. In the 1930s and 1940s, which is one of the chronological timeframe that is represented in *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* , the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos created a suite of melodies called the *Bachianas Brasileiras* including a series of arias in their scores, a mixture of Brazilian folk music and the style of Sebastian Bach which is also part of the Brazilian classical repertoire. The suite is defined as triptych, multisectional *poema* which translates the multiplicity of the sections within Rìsia's narrative.[182]

In that sense, Rìsia's story acts as a cannibalization of all these genres. Her narrative devours the elements of *cordel* literature, aria and confessional form to produce a transglocal fiction that embraces its cannibalistic features. This is a valid metaphor that shows the ways in which European literary forms are transformed yet it does not embody the creative disorder that we have demonstrated above. It is yet another approach to genre analysis in post-colonial Diasporas studies in which the generic approach to post-colonial literatures often present the European literary form as the center. In terms of genre, *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* is a multi-centered narrative that highlights the multiplicity and singularity of Rìsia's diasporic identities.

[182] Interestingly, Villa-Lobos is considered as a flagship of the cultural *anthropofagia* movement in the musical landscape of Brazil.

CONCLUSION: TRANSGLOCAL FICTIONS: THE FUTURE OF POETICS OF RESISTANCE

> If in the process of deciphering a text in the traditional way we come across a word that seems to harbor an unresolvable contradiction, and by virtue of being one word is made sometimes to work in one way and sometimes in another and thus is made to point away from the absence of a unified meaning, we shall catch at that word […] We shall follow its adventures through the text and see the text coming undone as a structure of concealment, revealing its self-transgression, its undecidability.
>
> - Gayatri Spivak

This concluding chapter addresses the "unresolvable contradictions" that stemmed from my decision as a post-colonial critic to read three post-colonial texts written by women in Africa and the diaspora as narratives of detours. At the beginning of this project, the initial objective was to explore how women writers such as Maryse Condé, Bessie Head and Marilene Felinto challenge the Euro-Western centrality in relation to conceptual frameworks of genre and diasporic identity. The objective was to investigate the ways in which these women writers dismantle concepts of genre and diaspora paved on the binary and universal logics. In doing so, my dissertation de-classifies *Hérémakhonon, A Question of Power* and *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* as autobiographical fictions as it re-classifies them as transglocal fictions. While the initial intent was to expose how these writers decolonize the aforementioned concepts by evading taxonomy altogether, my project has morphed into a paradoxical act of de-classification and re-classification of the selected post-colonial texts. Yet, the contradictory nature of this self-conscious act of un-naming and re-naming makes it possible to formulate a cross-cultural alternative model of generic classification and diaspora identity.

Transglocal fiction as the new generic taxonomy of these post-colonial texts does not aim at fixating these post-colonial texts in space and time. It engages with their unpredictability in terms of content and form, an unpredictability resulting from multiple processes of hybridization. In that sense, transglocal fiction is not a genre with set norms based on European canonical literatures. One could be skeptical regarding the use of the word 'genre'. As Derrida rightly puts it:

> As soon as the word *genre* is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind: 'Do,' 'Do not' says 'genre,' the word *genre*, the figure, the voice, or the law of genre. […] Thus, as soon as genre announces itself, one must respect a norm, one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly or monstrosity. (Emphasis in original)

The question that arises then is whether it is necessary to get rid of the word "genre" as Caroline Levine suggests in her book *Forms*:

> Genre theory, too, could benefit from more attention to the portability of forms. For many critics, the terms form and genre are synonymous or near-synonymous. But this book argues that they can be differentiated precisely by the different ways in which they traverse time and space. Genre involves acts of classifying texts. […] Thus any attempt to recognize a work's genre is a historically specific and interpretive act: one might not be able to tell the difference between a traditional folktale and a story recently composed for children or to recognize a satire from a distant historical moment.
> Forms, defined as patterns, shapes, and arrangements, have a different relation to context: they can organize both social and literary objects, and they can remain stable over time. One has to agree to read for shapes and patterns, of course, and this is itself a conventional approach. [183]

While Levine makes a compelling plea regarding the use of the word 'form' instead 'genre,' I will continue to use the word 'genre' to refer to transglocal fiction as the term 'form' does not evade the conventional approach which my project questions.

[183] Caroline Levine. *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015),13.

Indeed, as demonstrated throughout the dissertation, while the selected authors and their protagonists are wary of labels, it is impossible to avoid categorization. Whereas Forna, as mentioned earlier, considers that: "all this classifying [of literature and identity], it seems to [her], is the very antithesis of literature,"[184] one is inclined to agree with George Lakoff who states that "[t]here is nothing more basic than categorization to our thought, perception, action and speech. […] Without the ability to categorize, we could not function at all, either in the physical world or in our social and intellectual lives."[185] If, arguably, categorization is part of human nature, it is not surprising then that my reading of three post-colonial texts portraying and written by women with an anxious need to untether themselves from imposed pseudo-universal labels couldn't resist re-classifying what has been de-classified.

However, what stems from my analyses is the fact that this process of de-classifying and re-classifying is necessary to understand the discursive strategies at play in my re-categorization of texts such as *Hérémakhonon*, *A Question of Power* and *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* as transglocal fictions since, as Mark Klein rightly puts it, "[t]he question of categorization is always a political one."[186] Therefore, I reiterate that my dissertation is a political and theoretical intervention into the assumptions of genre and diaspora identity formations as it engages with the entangled agencies of the post-colonial critic, the authors, and their writings contingent to their interactive subject positioning in which the notion of power is explicit. In other words, my project challenges the dominant frames of literary analysis that not only have European generic templates at their center but also that do not acknowledge the absence or/and presence of power

[184] Aminatta Forna.
[185] George Lakoff. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 5.
[186] Mark Klein. *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), xv.

at play in imposing specific fixed categories connected with the legacy of Euro-Western imperialisms to post-colonial texts of the global south.

First, it is necessary to go beyond the predetermined generic characteristics of these texts as autobiographical fictions. As it is undeniable that all three texts share common traits with the genre of autobiographical fiction as theorized in Euro-Western literatures, to go beyond these characteristics does not mean to ignore or conceal them. In fact, to de-classify *Hérémakhonon*, *A Question of Power* and *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* is to engage in the process of de-centering the features of autobiographical fiction in the interpretative analyses of these texts. For me, the aforementioned works do not belong to autobiographical fiction due to the traits marking their membership.

Channeling Derrida, I posit that the affiliation between the selected texts and autobiographical fiction is based on participation without belonging- a taking part without being part of, without having membership in a set."[187] My work has therefore addressed the ways in which post-colonial writers have re-determined the terms of their relationship with Eurocentric literary genres. To a large extent, my dissertation has examined how specific women writers have formulated their agency in the process of categorizing their works. While their works participate in the establishment of autobiographical fiction as a genre in itself, they paradoxically "point towards possibilities for new forms of literary creation."[188] In doing so, they engage in a form of poetics of paradox reminiscent of Glissant's concept of opacity as earlier mentioned.

To think about Condé, Head and Felinto's literary practice in relation to Glissantian opacity is not only to read opacity in their texts but also to read their texts opaquely. As rightly

[187] Jacques Derrida. 227-228
[188] Michael Wiedorn. "Saying the Unsayable in Edouard Glissant's Reading of Faulkner" in *American Creoles: The Francophone Caribbean and the American South*. (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2012) 184.

surveyed by Wiedorn, Glissantian opacity as a literary practice is simultaneously an operation of rethinking, renewing and overturning. In that sense, my work highlights how in African, Caribbean and South American literatures, literary practices such as generic hybridization are part of an enterprise of creation akin to Glissant's uses of opacity in his works. It is thus necessary to think about opacity not only as a demand but also as an "impetus for the creation of new literary forms."[189] Wiedorn comes to similar conclusions in his analysis of Glissant's rereading of Faulkner's works. Inspired by his methodological study of Glissant's *Faulkner, Mississipi*, I consider this dissertation as a proposal for an opaque reading in postcolonial literatures.

From a postcolonial perspective, the first impulse in rereading *Hérémakhonon, A Question of Power* and *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* in the twenty-first century is to locate the creation of new literary forms within the colonizer-colonized opposition. For example, in African literary criticism, the trend has often been to go on a quest for African indigenous aesthetics. Scholars such as Kwame Anthony Appiah have called such a take on African literature nativism:

> Both the complaints against defilement by alien traditions in alien tongue and the defenses of them as a practical necessity….seem often reduce to a dispute between a sentimental Herderian conception of Africa's languages and traditions as expressive of the collective essence of a pristine traditional community, on the one hand, and, on the other, a positivistic conception of European languages and disciplines as mere tools; tools that can be cleansed of the accompanying imperialist- more especially, racist- modes of thought.
> The former view is often at the heart of what we can call "nativism": the claim that true African independence requires a literature of one's own. Echoing the debate in nineteenth-century Russia between "Westerners" and "Slavophiles," the debate in Africa presents itself as an opposition between "universalism" and "particularism," the latter defining itself, above all else, by its opposition to the former. But there are only two players in this game: us, inside; them, outside. That is all there is to it.[190]

[189] Ibid.
[190] Kwame Anthony Appiah. "Out of Africa: Topologies of Nativism" in *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory* edited by Olaniyan Tejumola and Ato Quayson. (Malden, MA,:Blackwell Pub., 2010) 56.

This is the adversarial context that underlie conversations on the question of genre and identity in African literature. This debate is easily extended to Caribbean and South American literatures as illustrated through literary movements such as *Negritude* in francophone Caribbean and *Regionalismo* and *Modernismo* in Brazilian literatures. In a quest in making visible the singularities of cultures and identities in Africa, the Caribbean and South America, literary critics have been re-tracing and re-classifying the literary signifiers used in those literary traditions according to their "native-ness".

While the nativist approaches in postcolonial literatures aim at celebrating the "cannibalistic" features of postcolonial writings and determining the creation of "authentic" national literatures, they do not have the potential of opacity in "unsettling categorical system of thoughts that are allied with power."[191] Considering literature as a categorical system of thoughts allied with power, Wiedorn has suggested that the question that arises in proffering an opaque reading is : "Does literature *re*-think?"[192] While Wiedorn is more concerned with the *re*-thinking of literature to draw connections between thought and life, my dissertation concludes that the *re*-thinking of genre through opacity highlights its potential in decolonizing literature as "a categorical system of thoughts that are allied with power."

Therefore, re-reading postcolonial texts such as *Hérémakhonon, A Question of Power* and *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* while generically re-classifying them is to be considered as a part of the decolonial project of literature. Written in specific political

[191] Patrick Crowley. "Edouard Glissant: Resistance and *Opacité*'. *Romance Studies* 24:2, 2006. p.110.
[192] For Wiedorn, this is the Glissantian reformulation of Stathis Gourgouris's 2003 inquiry into the philosophical potential of literature entitled *Does Literature Think*.

contexts of resistance against dictatorship, apartheid and departmentalization, the relevance of these texts in "contemporary" postcolonial literary studies lie in the opaqueness of their literary genre. By coining transglocal fiction as a potential genre under which one can *re*-classify these postcolonial texts, the objective has been to carve a generic space for these texts that would encapsulate the ambivalent paradoxes embodied in the process of generic de-classification and re-classification. To demonstrate that transglocal fiction is an inherently opaque genre in the Glissantian sense inscribes the genre in a tradition of postcolonial literary criticism that goes *beyond*[193] the opposition colonizer-colonized that have plagued postcolonial theory. Transglocal fiction displays "a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction"[194] that demands an opaque reading of postcolonial texts allowing their authors to assert their agency in the classification of their works.

Indeed, this dissertation answers Aminatta Forna's earlier inquiry on the location of her books in public spaces of global markets such as bookstores. Refuting the classification of her writing based on nationality and ethnicity, she demands for the re-classification and thus, re-reading of her work. My work on transglocal fiction permits such de-classification and re-classification. Moreover, it engages with the location of postcolonial literatures in the teaching of literature in US academia. Often located in the margins of syllabi in literature and composition courses, postcolonial literatures of Africa and the diaspora are incorporated in those courses as a way of diversifying concepts and curricula. Courses on Afropean or Afropolitan literatures are presented as special topics

[193] I refer here to Bhabha's denomination of the "beyond" as an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words *au-delà* - here and there, on all sides, *fort/da*, hither and thither, back and forth."
[194] Bhabha, 5.

vying to offer a window into foreign cultures *à la* David Damrosch. While such a take on the teaching of postcolonial literatures in Africa and the diaspora within world literature courses is valuable and to be celebrated, my dissertation shows the urgency to *re*-think the location of those texts in the teaching of literary courses in US academia and therefore, to re-assess their contributions to the discipline of literature.

Ultimately, transglocal fiction is part of the tradition of poetics of resistance displayed in postcolonial literatures. It addresses the demands of postcolonial literatures in creating new literary genres, of postcolonial writers in asserting their agency regarding the location and circulation of their works, and of postcolonial literary scholars in establishing a new reading practice that would epitomize decolonial strategies of resistance. However, it is in the interstices of my study on transglocal fiction, the "unresolved contradictions" of a poetics of paradox present in this dissertation, that we, postcolonial scholars, are able to find hidden within muddy points of entanglements the future of a poetics of resistance in world literature.

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