

Landscape and Caribbean Women's Historical Fiction

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caer...ñeñe TE AMO! and to you Goldo...this
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Abstract

Julia Alvarez's *In the Name of Salome*, Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge*, and Margaret Cézaire Thompson's *The True History of Paradise* engage their imagination for memory retrieval to construct new historical narratives of their countries. Their texts recreate the lives of women and ordinary people in the community-ies while evading the style of "metanarratives" often engaged to tell the male-centered histories of their nations. These authors are among other Caribbean women novelists who have, since the 1980's, distinguished themselves by situating their female characters in the turbulent socioeconomic and cultural histories of their individual island nations; their female protagonists are not placed in historical or environmental vacuums. I examine how female characters in these novels struggle in their interaction with their islands' landscapes and cultural spaces to bridge and reconcile their islands histories with their personal histories. I argue that their struggles are thus narratives witnessing with added women-centered dimensions to their nation's historical discourses. Their narratives provide provisional women's sense of belongingness to their nations. The natural environments of each island provide these women liminal spaces that bridge past, present, and future as they consequently establish relations or links to their histories, homeland, family, and culture; these links follow them whether on the island or in the diaspora where they carry their histories with them. The landscapes, or the contours of their natural environments, of each island enable each of the women to forge both personal and collective stories from and within a broader Caribbean landscape.

Keywords: *Landscape, Caribbean landscape, history, Caribbean women writers, memory, personal history, environment, identity*

Biographical Information

Zenaida Sanjurjo-Rodríguez was born in Manhattan, New York. She grew up in Army bases in Panama, Georgia, Germany and New Jersey. At the age of 13, the family decided to return to Bayamón, Puerto Rico. She completed a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and a Master of Arts in English Education from the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez. Zenaida works at the University of Puerto Rico- Rio Piedras where she teaches writing, women's literature, sexuality and communications, interpersonal communication and group discussion courses. Her research interests include Caribbean history, Caribbean writing, literacy, communications, women studies, queer theories, writing and English education. She currently lives in San Sebastian, Puerto Rico with her husband and son.

Chapter One:

Introduction: Landscape and Caribbean Women's Historical Fiction

. . . we cultivate communal and historical amnesia,
continually repeating cycles that we never see
coming until we are reliving similar horrors.
(Edwidge Danticat 64)

The history of this dissertation begins with a graduate course I enrolled in during the spring semester of 2009: Fieldwork to St. Croix, Virgin Island. The class, although designed for students interested in linguistics, was opening up a space for literature students to learn and explore literature written about St. Croix and by Crucian authors. During that trip, with a colleague and a professor, we interviewed local authors and spoke about the importance of Crucian literature within the broader literary cannon. One of the interviews conducted was with Dr. Patricia Gil Murphy, native of Pleasantville, NY but long-time resident of St. Croix. Her novels: *Buddhoe*, *The Cape of Arrows*, *The Americans Came*, and *American's Paradise* all include elements of fiction and history. In an interview conducted by The St. Thomas Source US Virgin Island in the winter of 2009 Patricia Gill Murphy is quoted to as saying, "A lot more people read historical novels, . . . History is known by making a story and putting a face on it." Her passion for the topic of history in St. Croix is evident, and her first novel, *Buddhoe*, written in 1977, chronicles the life of Moses "Buddhoe" Gottlieb who led the slave rebellion one hundred and seventy years ago on the Island. Gill Murphy brings to life an otherwise one-dimensional historical figure by inserting emotion, thoughts, and narrative elements. Upon reading the

novel I was immediately intrigued with the topic of Caribbean history in the novels written by Caribbean women authors and began questioning the problematic of an outsider writing and giving life to historical figures within the Caribbean-- it was then I decided that the topic of history would be the field for my doctoral thesis. I also realized that if I had to do Caribbean historical fiction, it had to be focused on what Caribbean women are doing more with history, especially contemporary history.

I was also struck by how Caribbean history until recently hardly reflected the life stories of females as actants and movers of that history. Rather, most of the annals focus on European roles during the contact periods between European conquistadores and indigenous Arawak, Carib, and Taino peoples. This then is followed by the narratives of the plantation economies and the role of the trans-Atlantic trade in Africans and their slave and indentured labor on these plantations; the cruelty of the plantation system; slave/maroon rebellions; emancipation; march to independence, and the rise of modern Caribbean societies. In most of these historical narratives, the roles and voices of women, be they European, African or Asia were hardly considered or heard as fitting insertions to give these histories more rounded narratives. Recently, however, Caribbean feminist's historiography has opened the gates for the retrieval of these female roles and offered female gendered interpretations of these roles. Consequently, in her review of Lucille Mathurin Mair's *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica, 1655-1844*, edited by Verene Shepherd and Hilary Beckles, Barbara Bush claims:

When Mair began her Ph.D. thesis, feminist methodology and the concept of gender were in an embryonic stage. It clearly became a massive project and her passion for the subject illuminates the text. As the editors point

out, Caribbean writing and academic historiography rarely mentioned women; Mair's study shattered the "maleness" of the colonial canon that was further challenged as women's history evolved into feminist and then gender history. Her dissertation provides a rich and detailed empirical analysis of a comprehensive range of primary sources enhanced by flashes of original and perceptive insight into the dynamics of Jamaican slave society and culture. (1)

Yet though the role of Nanny of the Maroons is well recorded in the histories of maroon wars during slavery days, very little is known or heard about the role of women in the march to independence in various Caribbean islands in the mid-sixties.

Contemporaneously, Shepherd and Beckles thus claim that, "The history of Caribbean women continues to attract the attention of modern scholars on both sides of the Atlantic and the historiography is not only vast but, on the whole, empirically rich, intellectually gripping and, frequently, conceptually contentious" (xxix). It is hence from this "intellectually gripping and, frequently, conceptually contentious" angle of female centered histories that inspire this dissertation. I am more enthused and challenged Margaret Cézaire-Thompson's *The True History of Paradise*, written as an alternative socio-political history of Jamaica during the mid-1970s political violence engineered by the warring political parties. The history of that period hardly focus on individual struggles and hence, Cézaire-Thompson's *The True History of Paradise* fills that void. In *The True History of Paradise* the personal histories of Jean, Monica, Lana and Rebecca are shaped and played out against the political and social unrest that gripped Jamaica in the mid-1970s.

Margaret Cézaire-Thompson is not alone in creating alternative narrative spaces in which to capture personal histories set within national histories of the Caribbean. She belongs to other contemporary Caribbean female historical novelists Mary Prince, Michell Cliff, Maryse Conde, Jean Rhys, Zee Edgell, Dionne Brand, Edwidge Danticat, Ramabai Espinet, Julia Alvarez, and Margaret Cézaire-Thompson etc. These women novelists engage their imagination for memory retrieval to construct new historical narratives of their countries. Their texts recreate the lives of women and ordinary people in the community-ies while evading the style of “metanarratives” often engaged to tell the male-centered histories of their nations. They focus also on how the events often selected as historically relevant impact the lives of women, and how women respond to these events.

Subsequently, with this desire lingering in my mind, I began my research with a term-paper on Margaret Cezaire-Thomspson’s *The Pirate’s Daughter*. I was fascinated by the life of Ida, the young Jamaican girl who has a daughter, May, with an American actor, Eroll Flynn. The story, set in pre-independence Jamaica, focuses on the lives of mother and daughter as the island transitions into independence from English colonial rule. I was particularly struck by Cezar-Thompson’s statement in an interview that her “intention was not to write about a powerful white man who takes advantage of a vulnerable island girl; that story has been told again and again and typically undermines the voice and identity of the native woman and her nation. I wanted the woman and her country to be center stage” (“Interview”). In the same interview in the *BookBrowse*, Margaret Cézair-Thompson, stressed on the “political undercurrents” and her interest in the “part of history and foreign policy”:

. . . political undercurrents are an important concern for me. Having grown up in Jamaica and having a first-hand view of our postcolonial difficulties, the recent political history of the Caribbean is an integral part of the setting. I came of age so to speak as Jamaica emerged from colony to independent nation. . . (“Interview”).

My interest however, in the work of Cezaire-Thompson, is situated within the contours of the Jamaican landscape and how those contours impact and are impacted by the undercurrents of those histories left untold.

In the final scenes of the novel, May reflects on Jamaica and its landscape from Eroll Flynn’s private island, Navy Island. May, much like other foreigners who have lived on the island, feels a love hate relationship with Jamaica. She loves the island landscape but is weary of its politics and history. She decides to coin the term *landscapism* as a way to describe how she feels with Jamaica:

I feel strange saying it but I’ve always been madly in love with the island of my birth—the land, not the nation or state---it’s not patriotism; it’s *landscapism*, which is both a passion for the land and a kind of escape. I used to wake up earlier than everyone else when I was little just so I could be alone with the view and have no one intruding between me and the morning air. . . . (307)

According to May, she does not need to feel part of Jamaica as a nation in order to be part of its landscape. Though she can’t erase or escape Jamaica’s violent historical past, or avoid its chaotic and violent present, and uncertain future, May is nonetheless enthralled and enamored with Jamaica’s natural landscape and she finds a certain

measure of peace in her island despite the violence that engulf the cityscapes. Although May's definition is clear and justified in her eyes, questions of belonging, identity and the possibilities of separating landscape from a feeling of rootedness arose my interest in seeking for a meaningful understanding, interpretation, and linking of landscape and historical memory in three Caribbean women novelists. History and landscape have been researched and written about by different scholars but to undertake this research, history and landscape, as essential terms and component of this dissertation must be unpacked and defined. Landscape can be one possible tool used to recreate these histories, it's an organic character that brings back memories. Every inch of land represented, rebound memories of what was there, who had lived there, and questions and provides revision of what happened, or may have happened during particular national historical moments. Remembered and narrated landscapes connect narrators with ancestors, develop historical synchronicity that privileges theme over scientific and formal chronicity of in plot. Julia Alvarez, Ramabai Espinet, and Margaret Cézaire Thompson craft narratives that revision and complement the predominant modes of representing their historical imaginations in which landscape is perceived from a dominant male centric position, possessed by, but not possessing the narrative consciousness of novelists and historians them. The landscapes, or the contours of their natural environments, of each island enable each of the women to forge both personal and collective stories from and within a broader Caribbean landscape which to define, I borrow from Jonna Katto's definition as:

a way of relating, both materially and imaginatively, to the physical and social world that we inhabit and experience...is not conceived in a visual sense, that is, as a vista that can be observed from the outside. . . . a

conception of landscape that is experienced through embodiment; . . . The individual, furthermore, is placed within the ‘simultaneous production’ of various landscapes. . . . conceptualized conjointly in both spatial and temporal terms: . . . Landscapes (in the plural) are thus in the process of constant negotiation, . . . among space, time, society and mind. (540-541)

Landscapes, therefore, are defined by how we experience them: how we live it, become part of it, and it becomes part of us. These landscapes can be material and/or imagined and used as sites of memory. Importantly for Caribbean populations, as I show below, landscape is a fluid and flexible concept both metaphorically and materially because of their multiple histories of translocations. Thus, when landscape is debated, it raises several questions of transnationalism, referencing inter-continental migrations, intra-Caribbean migrations, and the constancy of transitional spaces occupied by Caribbean peoples. These multiple and flexible concepts of landscape in the work of these writers also indicate competing identities which is more pronounced among Caribbean women.

Writing in the *Introduction: Caribbean Women Writers and Postcolonial*

Imperialism Helen Scotts’ thus states that, “literature. . . has the potential to crystallize certain elements of human existence, to imagine a world other than this and to communicate at the level of emotion” (21). These elements originate from women’s constant negotiations with competing issues of their Caribbean identities in relation to their multiple socio-cultural locations and worldviews that generate different perceptions and understandings of their national histories. Thus for all intents and purposes, the different elements that these women authors amalgamate and integrate into their “maternal” historical narratives include conceptual and perceptual issues that are related

and derived organically from their Caribbean landscapes. These landscapes are not just passive blank canvasses or stages upon which their vision of history is splashed on or acted out, but they are active participants that inversely influence and record the histories of the islands. My dissertation therefore asserts that Margaret Cezaire-Thomson's, Ramabai Espinet, and Julia Álvarez showcase how Caribbean women writers incorporate Caribbean islands' geophysical landscapes and also their corporeality as active material and symbolic agents and representations of the histories of their islands. In this study, I open up more areas for the study of Caribbean women's literature to augment the general gender, race, class, and diaspora themes.

Many Caribbean literary scholars have examined Caribbean women's literature since its proliferation in mid-twentieth century, most importantly from the 1980's to the present. This boost has drawn attention to and highlighted the importance of Caribbean women's writing thitherto unacknowledged and understudied. Thus, writing in 1993, Evelyn O'Callaghan was able to claim in *Woman Version: Theoretical Approaches to West Indian Fiction by Women*, that Caribbean women's literature was "gain[ing] local and international recognition" (2). Nonetheless, as Allison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh in *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature* cautioned, "there remains a notable dearth of research and academic attention on women's writing in the region which predates the 1970s" (17). Accordingly, when Kenneth Ramchand rereleased his foundational work, *The West Indian Novel and its Background* in 2004, he admitted in the "Introduction" that though his earlier study did not set out to exclude women or "feminist issues" (xxxix), he inadvertently had left out the narrative voices of women. This error Ramchand admits, needed to be redressed, and in the revised study he then included

the works of Jean Rhys, Sylvia Wynter and Phyllis Shand Allfrey. Even the addition of these three novelists I would argue, still lacks a full recognition of the vast number of Caribbean female novelists at the time of the revised edition. His incisive statement that these writers respond “to . . . complicated dependences between male and female and problems with female sexuality; the hint at the possibilities of female friendship; the awakening of female political consciousness and activism; liberated femininity; abuse of the female and warped mother-daughter relationships” (xxxix). In addition, the recent edition includes, in its “Year by Year Bibliography,” a large array of Caribbean women writers that flourished from the late 1970s to the beginning of the twentieth-first century.

Thus, Simon Gikandi, in *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature*, argues that the Caribbean women from the 1980s, “seek to revise the terms by which we read the West Indian experience and to interrogate the idealized narrative of the nation which values synthesis over hybridity in cultural formation and totality over diversity in history” utilizing elements of postmodern writing to rebuild instead of deconstructing “postcolonial history” (232). The key elements to understanding contemporary Caribbean women’s writing, Gikandi asserts, include a recognition of the modernist, postmodernist, and creole historicity:

Caribbean writing and the status of the modernist project in the region: on the one hand, the well-known techniques of postmodernism—temporal fragmentation, parody, intertextuality, and repetition—are being used by these writers [Caribbean women writers] to subvert institutionalized history; but, on the other hand, these writers are striving to establish an authoritative Caribbean narrative of history. (232)

Gikandi concludes that, “it is in the gaps, the silences, and the absences exposed by contending discourses that the underprivileged Caribbean subject will find and affirm its voice” (251). Similarly, Evelyn O’Callaghan believes that narratives created by women are an important “part of the feminist and postcolonial projects of recuperating lost or silenced voices” and serve to “deflect us from categorizing Caribbean women’s writing in a narrowly prescriptive manner” (“The Absence of Early” 9-10). Hence, Caribbean women writers, according to O’Callaghan, are as racially diverse as the experiences that mark them. Likewise, Carol Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido believe that Caribbean women’s writing has to be comprehended within the specificities of “imperialistic discourse,” and then looked at again as a “rewriting of those discourses,” which intersect these political interstices to complicate any reading efforts by scholars (2). Engendering history is hence a necessary prerequisite for the study of women’s historical narratives.

Women writers writing the historical novel intercalate and (re)claim their voices within the cracks of the mostly patriarchal symbolic institutional structures (history in this case), and the phallographic regime of Caribbean literary canon. The voices of Caribbean women writers must be recognized as “different. . . . precisely in the fact that their writing takes shape by their engagement in complex, vehement dialogues with their many audiences, dialogues inevitably structured by power, violence, and resistance (Hoving 3). Caribbean women writers have been studied, analyzed and theorized since its proliferation in mid twentieth century, most importantly the 1980’s. This boost drew attention and highlighted the importance of Caribbean women’s writing that had thitherto failed to gain much recognition. Simon Gikandi, for example, understood that the Caribbean woman writer of the 1980’s sought to “revise the terms by which we read the

West Indian experience and to interrogate the idealized narrative of the nation...” (232). These women writers were revisioning their position in the artistic, intellectual and academic landscape of the Caribbean—they created the path for future Caribbean women writers to revision and challenge versions of patriarchal/ nationalistic discourses imposed on them. Hence, Carol Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido believe that Caribbean women’s writing has to be comprehended within the specificities of “imperialistic discourse,” and then looked at again as a “rewriting of those discourses,” which intersect these political sub-histories to complicate any reading efforts (2).

I am by no means inferring that prior to women’s narrative encounters with Caribbean histories, the Caribbean lacked historical fiction. The Caribbean historical novel, as a genre, can be found in the works of canonical Caribbean authors such as, Namba Roy’s *The Black Albino* (1987), Alejo Carpentier’s *The Kingdom of this World* (1949), George Lamming’s *In the Castle of my Skin* (1953), V.S. Naipaul’s *The Mimic Men* (1967), Wilson Harris’ *The Palace of the Peacock* (1960), and C.L.R. James’ *The Black Jacobins* (1938). Yet it is the female authors who have, according to Gikandi, revived the discussion “on history, representation, and identity” originally commenced by European historical discourses (232). Similarly, Nana Wilson Tagoe highlights that “women’s inner journey and individuation are also at another level processes of subjectification which defy the tendency in male texts to represent woman as dormant and symbolic figures in history . . . [this] can become the site of several contestations crucial to historical understanding” (237). She claims that there had been a general assumption that women writers in the West Indian context have never participated in the debates of “history and identity,” yet, as she argues, close examination of female

Caribbean writers suggests that they have continuously been engaged in writing about history, gender, class and race. She also contends that women's experience and their writing are intrinsically tied to how they relate to their "history, culture, and political conditioning" (223).

Consequently, Caribbean women writers, including Margaret Cezar-Thompson, Ramabai Espinet, and Julia Alvarez, engage with issues of their histories and, much like other women writers, are taking upon themselves to fictionalize history in their works, they "construct new cultural identities, exorcise ghosts of the past and find ways to draw upon the past in an attempt to build a new and better future" (Booker and Juraga 4). Accordingly, Keith M. Booker and Dubravka Juraga's assert, in the introduction of their book *The Caribbean Novel in English*, that Caribbean writers have consistently been conscious about Caribbean historical and social, and these concerns characterize their work and distinguishes them from the works of their "European and North American predecessors and contemporaries" (3). Though, this historical consciousness is not exclusive to Caribbean literary texts, Bill Ashcroft, nonetheless believes that it is here, in literature, where "some of the most disruptive and evocative potentialities of historical interpolation may occur because it is in the literature that the allegorical nature of historical discourses becomes revealed" (103). Correspondingly, in their analysis of V.S. Reid's *New Day*¹ they argue that this novel served to "point the way" to other Caribbean

¹ A novel based on Jamaica's Morant Bay uprising in 1865 and culminating on Constitution Day in November 1944. They claim that "the book ...counters the attempts of colonialists historiography to dismiss the history of Jamaica and other colonial possessions as a simple footnote to British domination", in other words it brings the history of the West Indies to the forefront, AND places it within historical discourses (132).

novelists who wished to write historical fiction based on Reid's realist utilization of "history from an anticolonial perspective and his strong sense of fiction as a potential weapon in the fight for social and economic justice nevertheless represent[ing] an important step forward for the Caribbean novel" (134). Resultantly, Caribbean women's historical fiction also serves as weapon to fight social and economic injustices and serves as a mechanism to contest gender inequalities within Caribbean and global historical, political, social, and economic battlegrounds.

It is within these battlegrounds of historical struggles over different historical epochs in the Caribbean that Caribbean women novelists stake their claims for inclusion and a hearing. For Gikandi therefore, Caribbean women novelists insert their voices and visions in the contradictions and paradoxes of modernity and in the process, rewrite the dilemmas of Caribbean identities which simultaneously challenge, subvert, and appropriate European historiographic and historical linearity to rewrite their own hybridized and creolized histories. Gikandi argues that Caribbean literature confronts European modernity as a resistance to the colonial presence through "forced entry (into history)" that functions "as an attempt to incant an emancipator Caribbean narrative of history" (7). This "narrative of history" is not preoccupied as much with (re)writing and imposing "original" Indigenous, African, or Asian models of history, as Europe had done. It purports to address "the need to inscribe Caribbean selves and voices with an economy of representation whose institutional and symbolic structures have been established since the 'discovery'" (10). Women writers, therefore, disrupt male Caribbean discourses to intercalate and (re)claim their voices within the cracks of the mostly patriarchal symbolic institutional structures, and the phallographic regime of Caribbean literary canon. As I

argue further in the dissertation, their narratives claim spaces to construct (her) stories without denying the place of (his) stories in Caribbean narratives. Both positions are needed to achieve a complex, multilayered, multivocal representation of Caribbean rhizomatic histories in fiction. In fact, as Wilson-Tagoe argues, women writers display uncanny narrative skills that overhaul “conventional imagery” to establish distinctive narrative characteristics through “a complex intersection of gender perspectives and a host of other factors related to a woman’s distinctive historical, cultural, and personal experience” (252).

To show these distinctions between women’s and men’s historical narratives in the Caribbean, I draw on the ideas of Bridget Brereton in *Gender and the Historiography of the English-Speaking Caribbean* in which she provides a useful analysis of the distinctions between “women’s history” and “gender history.” Gender history, on the one hand, she postulates, uncovers women’s lives in past societies, concentrating on certain experiences with history and maintains gender at the heart of the research. Women’s history, on the other hand, not only looks at the chronology of historical events and how men and women experience these, but (what is important for my analysis), it highlights how gender roles and ideologies develop and change with time (130). For the purpose of this dissertation, I find it imperative to engage these distinctions as reading strategies in disputatious and complementary ways. Concomitantly, Brereton’s theory is reflected in the work of Mary Condé and Thorunn Lonsdale in *Caribbean Women Writers: Fiction in English* where they provide their personal reflections on the Caribbean female authors who incorporate history in their writings. Condé and Lonsdale begin their book’s introduction by stating that four classifications can be examined when discussing

Caribbean women writing fiction in English but other features are still missing and are just as important such as: “[t]he area from which writers come, the area which they now live, the settings which they use, their ethnic descent; the generation to which they belong, or their political agenda” (1). Condé and Lonsdale use these categories to prove how some Caribbean women authors manipulate these classifications to highlight how geographic location creates a feeling of “nostalgia” present in their work. Likewise, Velma Pollard states her reasons for writing about the Jamaica she experienced in the forties and fifties: “In my fiction I make these things affect imaginary people. There is an interrelationship between history and literature which when exploited gives a clearer picture of any given time than either discipline would have been able to offer independently” (17). Similarly, Merle Collins, when writing about how historical events eventually led to the United States’ invasion of Grenada in 1983, believes that in “Using broad details rooted in lived experience, . . . dramatizes particular facets of existence, in an effort to understand, dynamically, how events in Grenada during the neo-colonial and post-independence period could have led to the 1980’s and beyond” (25). There is a need to reflect and write about the past to understand the conditions and idiosyncrasies of Caribbean women in present time.

Edwidge Danticat’s essay “Daughters of Memory,” published in a recent collection of essays, *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*, states that the Caribbean female writer is not able to write her own story because “memories have temporarily abandoned us . . . what is left is longing for something we are not even sure we ever had but are certain we will never experience again” (65). Therefore, women writers appoint themselves as the historiographers in charge of recalling, reporting, and

filling the gaps and absences found in Eurocentric or Caribbean male focused histories through incorporating memories and stories passed down from a long matrilineage. Hence, In *What Women Lose: Exile and the Construction of Imaginary Homelands in Novels by Caribbean Writers*, María Cristina Rodríguez laments what women lose in historical, cultural, and Caribbean landscape locational memory in their diaspora locations, and asserts that to ameliorate this gradual descent into amnesia, “The novel, as conceived by these Caribbean women, is a project that aims to gather voices to tell a life-long story at the same time distant and familiar. The novel re-creates women in a Caribbean ambiance that merges the real and the imaginary” (xvi). Memory and history are interwoven. Accordingly, Jana Evans Braziel recognizes the importance of this relationship and writes:

History and memory are indeed entangled ideas...with the first belonging ostensibly to public culture and the second to the individual psyche; however, both are interwoven in the Caribbean imagination as it reflects on nature and remembers subterranean and submarine histories. This interweaving is a genesis of future spaces and times, as well as the creative remembrance of past spaces and times. (122)

Thus, my reading of the three authors also engages the debate on memory as an invaluable tool in women’s historiographical narratives.

A relevant and complementary position is taken by Kathleen J. Renk in relation to the importance of memory as history in the work of women writers and the decolonization project. She writes that the work of these women writers “resists the dominant culture as they seek to control their people’s destiny by magically illuminating

a story of their people as they weave a language and a history founded on the eclipsed past” (14-15); therefore, answering the colonizer and creating “new narrative forms that move the Caribbean closer to a decolonized era” (15). Renk asserts that recent works by women writers reveal “women’s and colonized people’s history, a past that is often ‘madness to remember,’ and a retelling of the words, voices, and discourses of both the dominant and the conquered culture” (17). This further then highlights and emphasizes the historical and socio-political and cultural importance of Caribbean women writers in the study of Caribbean literature.

My reading of these texts therefore argues for a women-centered analysis of history and landscape to unravel the rich and complex interplay between them. Similarly, Isabel Hoving states that a “direct experience of the meaningful landscape is the step towards reentering time” proposing a “counterdefinition of text” linking it “to the novel’s representation of the landscape as a text: alternately, texts can be defined as landscapes” (103). I further posit that the natural landscape as represented in each novel is also a text that records the personal, communal, and national histories of each island, as seen, perceived, and lived by women. Hoving further proposes,

Texts are considered as specific textures, shaped by specific histories, and rooted in, and opening out to, a specific past. The crucial link between landscape and text, between and walking and reading, is that both serve as (the domain of) *practices* to relate to a vivid temporality: a present made significant by the past, a significant past, connected to the present. Both landscape and text can be seen as performance. (103-104)

My premises stipulates therefore that, to fully understand the histories of the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, it is pertinent to read their landscapes through the eyes, the words, the struggles, and scripts of their women, which hitherto, has been lacking in the historical and literary discourses of Caribbean islands. My project seeks to fulfil this idea.

The history and literature of the Caribbean cannot be studied without confronting and addressing the legacy of colonization, from the 1500s to the present. European colonial projects in the Caribbean maintains a lingering influence on Caribbean writers and their work; it reflects “the patriarchal, class and colour dimensions in the society being shaped, was very male-centered and very white-centred” (Collins 7-8). While majority of male Caribbean authors have tended to maintain the struggle against class, and race (and colorism), they have not critically been able to address the issues of the male-centeredness of their programs of literary, cultural and economic decolonization. It has hence been Caribbean women writers who have devoted their work to bringing an awareness of gender issues to literary and cultural discourse praxes. Their experiences as females in Caribbean cultural spaces and histories are unveiled and performed through their writing, both as an expansion of the narrative representations of Caribbean history and of the literary and cultural landscapes (7-8).

Caribbean women authors’ concerns with the histories of their nations is not new. Yet, scant critical attention has been paid to the importance of their contribution to Caribbean literature. Hence, my dissertation seeks to correct this anomaly. I seek to open up a space for rigorous critical engagements with Caribbean women’s historical fiction, and subsequently, generate greater interest in this area of Caribbean literary studies. I do

not seek to engage in any essentialist reading of the chosen texts or set up any spurious claims about universal female experiences. Nonetheless, Caribbean woman writers are beginning to gain some footholds in Caribbean literary studies, these studies tend to exclude issues of history and landscape as worthy of study to benefit from the same advantages as Caribbean male novelists. Yet, because the study of Caribbean female texts are approached from the angle of phallographic historicity, and not from a women's vision of historical re-visioning and revisioning, the readings are often subordinated to abstractions that exclude the reading of history as embodied in the contours of landscape. This point is stated forcefully by Adrienne Rich when she states that there is an urgent "need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (19). Thus, my project examines the three novels of Julia Alvarez, Ramabai Espinet, Margaret Cézair-Thompson to show how each of them engage in re-visionary histories of their islands by offering us alternative narratives that go against the established discourses of Dominican, Jamaican, and Trinidadian histories through their landscapes.

The politicized landscapes and cultural spaces of Caribbean women, the former voicelessness that characterized these spaces, and the constant negotiations of their identities within Caribbean social contexts frame my arguments in this dissertation. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido, have argued that Caribbean women began writing and creating literature as a reaction to this "voicelessness," a term they define as "the absence of a specifically female position on major issues such as slavery, colonialism, decolonization, women's rights and more direct social and cultural issues . . . the inability to express a position in the language of the 'master' as well as the textual

construction of woman as silent” (1). Voicelessness and the personal and community asphyxiation it entails generated the need among women writers to find new and subversive ways in the literary fields to voice their experiences. Thus, finding voice through writing became and still remains part of the female literary agenda to write to right the against women’s silencing in dominant male representation of women and their experiences. I show how these women create historical fiction and how they use islands’ physical landscapes to construct and articulate their positions in these histories, and generate new perceptions, interpretations, and understandings of their islands’ histories. I am not assuming that male Caribbean writers fail to engage their landscapes as readable texts in their work; the works of Patrick Chamoiseau, Derek Walcott, Wilson Harris, George Lamming, etc. undermine any such assumption. My argument is that the work by women reveal to a greater extent, elements of the female experience, which often remain absent or are superficially inserted into male texts, are worth broader discursive analyses.

In the selected texts for study in this dissertation, I demonstrate how Julia Alvarez, Ramabai Espinet, and Margaret C ezaire Thompson rethink/ (re) vision and revision history through their narrative positionings of their female characters in “imagined” historical contexts. In the canonical text *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Hayden White handles “historical work as what it most manifestly is: a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse” (ix). According to White, all historical accounts are narratives that “explain” much of what happened in the past rather than just some dry transcriptions of archival historical facts. Therefore, when wanting to interpret any historical account, the historian must construct a linguistic protocol, complete with lexical, grammatical, syntactical, and

semantic dimensions, by which to characterize the field and its elements *in his own terms* (rather than in the terms in which they come labeled themselves), and thus to prepare them for the explanation and representation he will subsequently offer them in his narrative (30).

This act is important as much as it is powerful since it entrusts the historical narrative performance to the narrator who has the power to tell that specific history opening it up to interpretation. In his examination of Croce, White cites Croce as saying, “Where there is no narrative...there is no historiography. In short, historians did not write in order to “explain”; they wrote in order to “represent,” to tell what had actually happened in the past...” (385). Yet it is important to also note that all history is an imagined narrative interpretation of what is supposed to have really happened, interpreted from a narrow angle chosen by the teller.

Price, in his book *History Made, History Imagined: Contemporary Literature Poiesis, and The Past*, believes that much of what history leaves behind are writings, snapshots, oral histories, sometimes incomplete pieces of information about the past, therefore, present generations can only piece these together through the imagination making history open to multiple and different interpretation. Imagination plays a role in how those facts are narrated towards a particular agenda; historical narratives are not completely neutral from a particular social/ political agenda. According to Price, Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Vico, and Marx—all known for their interpretation on the values of history—are committed to the “reexamination of history as idea and a refusal to accept history as given” reinforcing my belief that historical facts and acts are presented and read through the imagination and always open to (re)interpretation (7).

Hence, history can only be imagined. What we read as history are not merely facts conglomerated together, these are narratives performed making sense to us and, as we place value on those interpretations we believe were somehow forgotten or important to understand present conditions. Hence, these Caribbean women writers writing their revisions of history through the historical novel are “engaging in historical interpretations” which serve as a way of explaining “what occurred in the past.” Following Price’s premises then Espinet, Cézair-Thompson, and Alvarez provide the reader of their historical/fictional narrative an opportunity “To read of these events from the inside, so to speak, gives us a better understanding of what occurred and what we have gained or lost in subsequent historical accounts of these events” (3). Similarly, as Glissant states, “The struggle against a single History for the cross-fertilization of histories means repossessing both a true sense of one’s time and identity: proposing in an unprecedented way a revaluation of power” (93). Versions of historical accounts have been written, taught, passed on, and enforced in a linear patriarchal and European way. Young in *White Mythologies* puts it plainly: “To write about the histories of the tricontinental countries, the three continents of the south, is to write about the lapses of history itself. Of spaces blanked out by that ruthless whiteness” (1). Yet, Caribbean authors—regardless of gender-- are “rethinking” and “revisioning²” these histories filling in those silenced gaps and blanketed spaces with their characters. These narratives are based on historical “facts” but do not always include females, marginalized voices or empowering versions of history.

² Revisioning as defined by Adrienne Rich as “[...] the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival” (18).

Landscape is a tool used to recreate these histories. It is an organic character that instigates and initiates re-memory. As Carol Boyce Davies asserts in her book *Caribbean Spaces: Escapes from Twilight Zones*, “History ensued some distinct markers on land, in and on the bodies of people, in and around the created communities.” (3) Every inch of land represented, whether metonymically or as synecdoche in these novels rebound memories of what was there, who had lived there, and questions and provides revision of what happened, or may have happened during particular national historical moments. Remembered and narrated landscapes connect narrators with ancestors, develop historical synchronicity that privileges theme over scientific and formal chronicity of in plot. Such shifts, discernable in women’s historical fiction, constructs new visions and perceptions of the nation. As I argue below, Julia Alvarez, Ramabai Espinet, and Margaret Cézaire Thompson craft narratives that revision and complement the predominant modes of representing their historical imaginations in which landscape is perceived from a dominant male centric position, possessed by, but not possessing the narrative consciousness of novelists and historians.

Every Caribbean nation has its own historical accounts of colonization, independence, and postcolonial existence. However, the devastating events and consequences of European colonialization of these archipelagos, the lingering legacy of slavery, and the development of a neo-colonial dependency syndrome, bind the region together. Thus, when discussing the possibilities of a shared history among Caribbean island nations Carolyn Boyce Davies writes:

Archipelagization provides one entry point, as it carries the marks of history but also created the possibilities of consistent transformation,

resistance, and recreation. And there are several archipelagoes in the Caribbean, each with relational patterns of repetition and difference. The histories of these archipelagoes are also a seasoning place for enslaved Africans, the launching points of colonial conquest of the Americas and the creation of departments of colonial powers overseas. (3)

These particularities aid my focus and analysis of history written by Caribbean women from three different islands. They provide a way to look at these islands' historical narratives from the angle of landscape as containers of history, rather than from the well-trodden paths that focus on slave rebellions, colonization, and independence, with little reference to the roles of the natural landscape. Thus, even when that history deals with maroonage, post-emancipation rebellions, political movements for independence, the landscape is only presented as a backdrop, and not as active agents in these histories—landscape as an organic entity that speaks to those involved in the narratives examined in this dissertation.

Writing about landscape is an act of recognizing and embracing the land, a form, not as acts of repossession or reclamation, but more as acts of re-entry and revaluation of the language and voice of the landscape in the histories of the people in the land. These narratives legitimize the authors' claim to entitlement in a landscape saturated with their histories. They become counter-narratives that do not just see the Caribbean landscape as a mere place for opportunity and exploitation for the benefits of former and contemporary colonial empires. Landscape as text enables them to contend with the received history constructed by imperial historians. These women writers take back their landscape, reveal the history in that landscape as acts of feminine reclamations to chart new paths to

national consciousness. As Adrienne Rich states, “Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves” (18). The land speaks to them, tells them what was there before them. It was there before the “discovery”, colonization, before the rise of independence political movements, these landscapes were there. It has always been there, enduring and creating with the non-human inhabitants of its forests, rivers, mountains, caves, and humans living in the villages, towns, and municipalities. Hence, the voices of these non-human inhabitants, their histories also “beg” to be heard. My dissertation deals with this issue as part of the national historical discourse.

Discussions of history in Caribbean literature has been engaged by Caribbeanists to justify and explain its use in their writings. Young believes that after World War II and with the “decolonization of the European empires” there has been “the accompanying attempt to decolonize European thought and the forms of its history as well” (158). On the one hand, Derek Walcott believes that the use of history as a muse generates a literature of “recrimination . . . despair, a literature of revenge,” among writers descended from enslaved African ancestors, and subsequently has generated a literature of shame and guilt from the descendants of the masters of the enslaved (37). For Walcott, such approaches and engagement with history in Caribbean literary enterprises, is problematic. It either fossilizes history or undermines what were once important historical “facts.” But what Walcott fails to give is what he means by historical facts and a method to possibly reconcile history with literature. Walcott explains how “amnesia is the true history of the new World” (39) because of the traumas of slavery but when reading such statement, one must keep in mind Walcott’s class in St. Lucia, his divided consciousness that makes him

want to embrace amnesia as a tool of defense against what Fanon unveils in *Black Skin White Masks*: “Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local originality—finds itself face to face. . . with the culture of the mother country. . . . He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle” (18), or what Walcott dramatizes through Corporal Lestrade in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. Walcott’s statement on history and literature cannot be used unproblematically, and his phallocratic position is contested by Edwidge Danticat who sees memory as extremely important to the re-membering of the fractured histories of the Caribbean. In “Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work,” Danticat asserts: “Haitian obsession” to highlight successes and, “gloss over . . . failures,” speaking of the Haitian revolution yet ignoring the history of slavery that gave way to this revolution. She furthers her argument by explaining that:

Our paintings show glorious Edenlike African jungles but never the Middle Passage. In order to shield our shattered collective psyche from a long history of setbacks and disillusionment, our constant roller-coaster ride between saviors and dictators, homespun oppression and foreign tyranny, we cultivate communal and historical amnesia, continually repeating cycles that we never see coming until we are reliving similar horrors. (64)

This amnesia is not exclusive to Haiti as a nation, rather it is just as relevant when examining other Caribbean nations plagued with an amnesia dictated by a European version of history which, to a certain point, fabricated or constructed new Caribbean histories that silence the voices of the dead, or reject the archaeology of bones under the

sea during the trans-Atlantic passage from West Africa and the Americas. Indeed, Walcott himself refers to the sea as history in his poem, “The Sea is History” found in his book: *Selected Poems*; thus, how can one write historical fiction or poetry or drama from the vacuum of amnesia as Walcott’s seems to imply when his own work rejects such an argument? Perhaps, as Danticat implies, Walcott may be seeking to strike a balance between racialized combative and racialized guilt-ridden memories of regrets. Thus, my position is that historical literature comes from an author’s imagination when negotiating what has been handed down as the “official” story of the past, and the unwritten history gathered through the handed down oral tales of the community.

In Dash’s “Introduction” to Edouard Glissant’s *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, he contests that Glissant and Walcott agree with the view “that Caribbean ‘history is Sea,’ with its constantly changing surface and capacity for instant renewal” (xxix). Both Glissant and Walcott, to Dash, are enthralled by the belief that judging the past is an exercise in futility since there is no “right or wrong,” but rather they place emphasis on the importance of a “collective experience[s]” (xxix). It is these collective experiences of history represented by the three authors in this study that form the essence of my arguments. The stories fill in and challenge certain imposed phallogocentric Eurocentric linear and totalizing history of the Caribbean. Concomitantly, I propose that to fully grasp the essence of these female authored texts as histories, Jean Paul Sartre’s debate with dialectical historicism often used to study historical narratives as totalizing accounts in which both the narrator and the narrated are totalized by history. To Sartre therefore, History implies:

the law of totalization which creates *several* collectivities, *several* societies, and *one* history – realities, that is, which impose themselves on individuals; but at the same time it must be woven out of millions of individual actions. We must show that it is possible for it to be both a *resultant*, . . . and a *totalizing force*, . . . how it can continuously bring about the unity of dispersive profusion and integration. (36)

Similarly, Nana Wilson-Tagoë defines the historical imagination as how a particular subject views the past. Western views of the past, or of history, is that it is necessarily linear—holding a rigid chronological order--something that Wilson-Tagoë doesn't particularly agree with. These views of history come from those first historians that were on a mission of conquest and presented an agenda or goal to justify their place in the New World. To view history as something merely continuous proves to be detrimental to the people of the Caribbean. When referencing to the Caribbean, it is not all about development but rather a mess of “dislocations . . . reconstructions and re-creations” (35) that define its complexities and its people. Structuralist, postmodernist, and poststructuralist critiques of history have also aided in a breaking away from the harms of “metanarratives.” As a way of detaching themselves from linear historical views, Caribbean authors, use the historical imagination in their writings by mixing elements of myth, history and ideology therefore interpolating history. In doing so, according to Wilson-Tagoë, a “contrast[s] between history as ‘history’ and history as fiction, drama, or poetry in the works of West Indian writers reflect both this duality and the limits of West Indian historiography itself” and creates agency for the Caribbean author (37). Within this agency lies the possibility of the historical imagination where the

author is able to reinvent his/her past and make sense of their subjectivity and identity within the Caribbean context. Tagoe's position echoes Claude Lévi-Strauss' earlier critique in "History and Dialectic" in *The Savage Mind* in which he reveals the defense of history as factual narrative representations of events in a continuous uniform march as a delusion and an intellectual hoax. He argues:

History is a discontinuous set composed of domains of history, each of which is defined by a characteristic frequency and by a differential coding of *before* and *after*. It is no more possible to pass between dates which compose the different domains that it is to do so between natural and irrational numbers. Or more precisely: the dates appropriate to each class are irrational in relation to all those of other classes. (259-260)

To further this historical project, Julia Alvarez, Margaret Cézaire-Thompson and Ramabai Espinet, utilize their national landscapes to reimagine and consolidate their (her)stories, while crafting new stories of land, homeland, family, and culture.

It is within this political landscape that Ben A. Heller highlights the importance of national and regional identities in the Caribbean, and also because of neo-imperial histories generated by the Spanish-American War and the various U.S. interventions in the region. Writers are hence compelled "to define the particularity of individual nations or of the Caribbean area as a whole, creating a metanarrative of identity which Edouard Glissant has named 'Caribbean discourse'". Within this discourse many writers have negotiated their identities through their relationship with nature and their environment, finding in these elements their sense of self and identity. Heller explains that this Caribbean discourse tends to link landscape and environment with the feminine or, "with

qualities such as fluidity and relationality that have been associated with women, femininity, and the female body in both patriarchal and feminist discourse- and both positive and negative effects have been ascribed to this feminized landscape” (392). Despite writing about travel narratives and the novels that exemplify the genre, Evelyn O’Callaghan asserts that landscape can be “filtered through the lens of romance, drawn from a stereotypical Caribbean ‘history’” (70). She furthers her argument by stating that, “Between models of historical romance, Romantic poetry, and nature as God’s mirror, female travel narrators [and in my specific case, characters within the historical novel] had several templates for producing exotic landscape . . . the choice of template as well as the relationship between narrator and landscape is not innocent” (71).

Landscape as a generic theme and metaphor in Caribbean women’s writing is analyzed by Isabel Hoving’s *In Praise of New Travelers: Reading Caribbean Migrant Women’s Writing*. She argues that Caribbean writers “use the close association between landscape, time, and memory to create their narratives of past and present” (104). She believes that landscape is “filled with (often repressed) collective memories” and because it is tangible it can be experienced therefore “the past is evoked, brought into the present, and revitalized” (104). Hoving places the past in the present and emphasizes that “the experience of the present is dependent on one’s experience of the past; as long as the past is frozen, the present cannot but be dead too” (104). Invariably, a people who are unaware of the landscapes of their past, cannot understand the landscape of their present. Relatedly, she postulates that enslaved Africans, “Deprived of time and history, [the enslaved] have to rely on meaningful space for their identification. Not surprisingly, this

need for landscape and space as an alternative site of memory is felt in Caribbean literature too, where the absence of meaningful history is felt more acutely” (105).

Landscape, I posit, provides a new strategic paradigm to study Caribbean historical novels written by women. Through a theory of landscape, I endeavor to show that these chronicles of communities of women that survive, resist, and endure natural and human-made catastrophes, contribute invaluable to the expansion of Caribbean literary studies. Landscape does advocate a rejection of historical chronicity, but as the perceptual expansion of how events are seen in a natural environment, an ecological space “in which the past has inscribed itself [and] urgently needed in postcolonial writing, as dominant Western historiographies leave the peoples of these landscapes hardly any possibility but to relate their identities to the history of the Western centers of the world” (Hoving 105). Comparatively, Elizabeth DeLoughrey et al., in her introduction to the book *Caribbean Literature and the Environment*, explains that “There are dangers of telling a muted story. Excessive historicity often leads to blaming the victim, in many cases the land itself, when the past is elusive” (3). If the landscape of a place makes history unique, dynamic and mobile—it is not mapping or geography, movement must take place to survey surroundings and reconstruct a past where women can thrive and grow with their nation, then landscape becomes the way of reading history.

All three novels discussed in this dissertation were written by Caribbean women who have taken elements of their nations’ histories and (re)visioned new ways of voicing, recording, and writing their ancestral and personal histories. They use the natural landscapes of their islands as backdrops to their stories and imagine the stories that these landscapes contained in a time that preceded them. These women create and re-create

their landscape within the geographical confines of their island nations and, in some occasions, carry their own representation of island's landscape and history while in the Diaspora as is in the case of Mona Singh in the *Swinging Bridge* and Camila Salomé Henríquez Ureña.

To further explore the concept of bodies as a landscape I use Boysie Davies' *(in)scribing body/ landscape relations* which problematizes the concepts of "bodies and landscapes" as we know it therefore developing a "theory of body/landscape relations in which bodies are understood as taking up their material existence within landscapes, and as landscapes. Landscapes are understood as bodies and as coextensive with bodies" (11). Davies believes that identity is not static since it is in constant contact and coexistent with the environment therefore always part of its landscape and never separate from it (13). Therefore, she acknowledges that, "being embodied in relation to landscape, is something we have little practice in observing or articulating. "The body" is generally understood as natural, and as such is taken for granted" (15). The body is an entity that is not taken into consideration or not even accounted for until is consciously put into question or we are found in a foreign landscape or "until we find some way to trouble the obviousness, the taken-for-grantedness (sic), and the general invisibility of body/ landscape relations" it is only then that we gain consciousness of the landscape and the space our bodies occupies within it. (15) Therefore, Camila and Mona's awareness of their body self stems from their change of landscape.

Davies regards "landscapes to be natural insofar as everything is natural, and I consider them, at the same time to be discursively constituted. All landscapes are

transformable, over time, or through the advent of a different presence in them, or through the conceptual/ linguistic frame through which they are (in)scribed” (23).

Davies recognizes that the first landscape we encounter and inhabit is our mother’s womb since it’s the “mother’s body folded around us” (23). She further contests that “the body is not separate from landscape” making body and landscape interdependent:

landscape should be understood as much more than a mere context in which embodied beings live out their lives. I choose the image of mother as landscape as my beginning point to trouble. ...the assumption that humans are separate from and dominant over landscape. ...I am at the same time troubling the body/ landscape binary, which is central plank in the construction of humanist subjects whose rational controlling “nature” makes them separate from the contexts in which they find themselves.

(23)

Landscapes are not ahistorical or apolitical; they contain the history of those that precedes us and with that history comes the history of the natives, the eventual colonizers and those that are colonized. Davies understands that “belonging in landscape is a deeply emotional experience, but it is also a political experience” (39). The landscape is filled with the history and the politics of those that embodied it in the past and at the same time inscribes the character’s identity following them wherever they go. The spaces these female protagonists navigate away from the Caribbean archipelago hold an importance because they embody and represent their islands’ national-political landscapes as they go back and forth between Canada and Trinidad and Tobago, like Mona Singh or from the United States to Cuba and eventually the Dominican Republic as Camila.

Each of the novels selected hail from different parts of the Caribbean and highlights the role of women as nation builders and storytellers of their families' histories. Margaret Cézair-Thompson's *True History of Paradise*, recounts the life of Jean Landing in 1978 as she is crossing from Kingston to Montego Bay to take a plane for New York City. Margaret Cezaire-Thompson begins at Easter, a symbolic reference to a period in Christian mythology, suffering, death and resurrection. "It's Easter, and Jamaica is in a state of Emergency" foretelling that the island was a long way from peace despite it being such an important and peaceful holiday for Christians (3). The rivalry between the PNP and the JLP, the political parties during the 1976 General Election, had increased violence and tension amongst Jamaicans is turning life on the island unbearable and tense. Assaults, arson, armed robberies and a constant military surveillance is creating insecurities as Jamaicans are relying more and more on security bars on their windows to keep safe. Cezaire-Thompson writes, "Roadblocks and soldiers are the least of it; there's the danger of ambush on every unguarded lane. The city has been divided into war zones marked out by graffiti" (4). Jean Landing loves her island and is conflicted about her decision of leaving to the United States, but she realizes that living in Jamaica could eventually mean that she could be physically harmed—either raped or killed—meeting the fate of her older sister Lana who died in a fire in downtown Kingston. Jean Landing knows that leaving the island on a private plane is illegal, yet she takes her chances with her childhood friend, Paul, who willingly drives her to her destination—the clandestine airport. Their drive to Montego Bay is filled with detailed descriptions of the Jamaican landscape as every landscape she encounters is filled with histories of those ghosts that once inhabited those lands—ghosts that speak to Lana and tell their stories of

the life they led on those landscapes she is experiencing. As she listens closely to those ghosts that are tied to the landscapes, she pieces the history of her island: the Spanish invasion, slave revolts, life under British colonial rule, work in the cane fields, and the Chinese and Indian influx in Jamaica. Jean is filling in the gaps of the Jamaican history taught in schools with the voices of those whose stories never made it into the history books; the accounts that rarely are told and not considered important in conventional history. The landscape serves as a backdrop and nourishes these histories—sometimes the landscapes have shifted and changed due to natural disasters or events that marked the nation histories and the individual that lives through it.

Ramabai Espinet's *Swinging Bridge*, begins with a story of Indian foremothers of Mona Singh crossing the Kala Pani as indentured laborers in 1879 from India to Trinidad to work in the cane fields of Trinidad, with the promise of money, freedom, and prosperity. The novel focuses on the life Mona Singh who grew up in Trinidad but moved to Montreal, Canada, in 1970 at the age of nineteen. Her parents, Dada and Muddie, decided to uproot and relocate the Singh family in Toronto, after Dada squanders the family inheritance through gambling away the family land, his growing frustration with the lack of promotion at his job to which he felt entitled, and the political ethnocentrism on the island. Mona was old enough to have fond memories of the island, unlike her sister Baba who had little or no memories of Trinidad and felt no real connection to the island where she was born. Kello, the eldest son of the Singh family, had left Trinidad before the rest of the family after constantly feuding with Dada. It was now 1995 and Kello is on his death bed when he requests that Mona travel to Trinidad to oversee the purchase: "the whole property...the land on Manhambre Road, with Pappy and Mama's

[Dada's parents] house on the Pierre Street end and our big wooden structure smack in the middle. . . . Kello's unexpected request was that he wanted me to be his proxy for the land business" (53). She was in charge of overseeing the purchase of the land that Dada had lost before leaving Trinidad. Traveling between Trinidad and Canada, Mona pieces together the complicated intricacies of her family life and documents, through her narration, the voices of those ancestors that arrived as indentured slaves in Trinidad. Mona carries her history from the lush landscapes of Trinidad, where her childhood memories of life before Canada invades her soul, back to Canada's cold and barren landscape. Mona's history is not exclusive to Trinidad as a geographical location—her history invades and prevails in the spaces she reclaims as home: Trinidad and Canada.

Much like Mona Singh, Camila Salome Henriquez Ureña from Julia Alvarez's *In the Name of Salomé*, lives between two different landscapes while in charge of weaving together the history of her mother, the renowned poet, Salomé Ureña. Unlike the other two novels chosen for this dissertation, *In the Name of Salomé* focuses on two women narrating their personal and nation's history. Salomé Ureña's life takes place in the Dominican Republic. Her narrations are filled with descriptions of the constant political shifts on the island riddled by Spanish, Haitian and American invasions as well as frustrated attempts of presidents ruling over a fragile nation. In Salomé's first person narration we learn of the lives of the Dominicans, specifically of the intellectuals fighting censorship and oftentimes meeting in secrecy to maintain their poetry and writing alive and relevant under governments that weren't interested in artists that questioned the status quo—all those histories and names we could read about in the history books come to flourish in the narration filled with details of their lives. Much of what we know of

Salomé's poetry and life we learn through Salomé herself yet her daughter, Camila, also narrates some of the details of her mother's life as she learns it through Ramona, her aunt and older sister of Salomé. Camila has decided to collect her Salomé's poetry to document and eventually donate to the Dominican Republic's government. Salomé passed away when Camila was three years-old so her mother's history is as important as her own as they both are an important part of the intellectual landscape of the Dominican Republic. Camila had been taken to Cuba at an early age and it was there where she was raised. After leaving to the United States to study she carries her family's legacy as intellectuals from the Dominican Republic, her work with Castro's revolution and academic/professional life in the United States. Camila's landscape is her body, her physical features and life experiences abroad are testimony to her historical background—her intellectual work and her body reflect her family history. Her history follows her through the landscapes of Minnesota, New York, Mexico, Florida, Cuba and her resting ground in the Dominican Republic.

All three novels use the landscape that are available to them to cement their history. Some of these landscapes are local and familiar as in the case of Jean Landig who uses the familiar to channel those memories and stories to revision Jamaica's history to include a plethora of voices that formed and created the nation. Salomé, like Jean, uses the familiar to document her life as an intellectual in the Dominican Republic's political landscape becoming the first considered feminist on the island. Yes, her character is based on a historical person but her intimate thoughts and emotions are voiced using the author's imagination to revise and rewrite Salomé's history. Salomé's story uses the landscape of her island as muse and backdrop to her own history. Camila and Mona, on

the other hand, revision their history between foreign landscapes while piecing and “performing” their nation’s history. Camila and Mona carry their history to unfamiliar and foreign landscapes to eventually discover and cement themselves as daughters of the Caribbean.

Cezaire-Thompson, Espinet and Alvarez are not the only female authors to use landscapes as backdrops to develop their historical of (re)visions of the Caribbean. Like them, Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones* provides rich detail of life in the Dominican Republic during the years leading up to the 1937 Parsley Massacre when Haitians were persecuted and slaughtered in the Dominican Republic near the northern frontier that divide both countries. Danticat uses the landscape to cement those histories—she describes the bloodied Massacre River, the mountains that divide both countries and the cane fields that hid Haitians as Trujillo’s men sought them out to kill them. Like Danticat, Michelle Cliff’s *Abeng* develops Clare Savage character using Jamaica’s landscape and history as a backdrop. Clare Savage, a mixed-race pre-adolescent girl growing up in the 1950’s learns of her history through her father and her grandmother. Cliff weaves in Jamaican folklore and history throughout the novel—the reader learns about life under British Colonial rule, slavery, and marron revolts as she lives life between her grandmother’s farm and her home in the city. The landscape holds the history of those maroons who were led by Nanny from the Blue Mountains of Jamaica. There is no way Danticat or Cliff could know such details if it not through research, yet they fill in the gaps of history by using their imagination and the landscape familiar to them to narrate what possibly could’ve occurred during that time. The authors chosen for

this dissertation are writing among other female writers who have used landscapism, as defined above, as a narrative point of departure.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. In chapter Two: “Landscape and Ghosted Histories in *The True History of Paradise* by Margaret Cezaire-Thompson”, focuses on Margaret Cézair-Thompson’s *The True History of Paradise*. I center this chapter on Jean Landing’s journey through the Jamaican landscape as she is travelling from Kingston to Montego Bay. The landscapes she encounters holds a new story, a fragment of a complex Jamaican history that is a part of her Jamaican identity as a Spanish, English, Ashanti, Yoruba, and Chinese. In chapter three: “Reclaiming history and embracing identity through transnational landscapes in Ramabai Espinet’s *The Swinging Bridge*,” I explore how Mona Singh uses the landscapes of Toronto and Montreal in Canada and San Fernando in Trinidad to piece together her family’s and nation’s histories. I also examine how Mona comes to understand her Indian heritage by learning of the women that arrive through the Kala Pani to establish their life in this new landscape in Trinidad. Mona’s awareness of her history encourages her to embrace her Indo-Trinidadian and come to terms with her dual landscape. In chapter four: “Historical/Political Landscapes and Beyond in Julia Alvarez’ *In the Name of Salomé*” is narrated by mother and daughter, Salomé Ureña and Camila Salomé Henriquez Ureña—both intellectuals in two different time periods. Unlike the other two novels examined, these two characters are based on historical figures and important participants of the Dominican political/ national/historical landscape. In this chapter I focus on how each woman uses the familiar and unfamiliar landscapes to navigate and discover their histories. I also analyze how Camila, specifically, navigates unfamiliar landscapes to

embrace and cement her and Salomé's legacy—Camila wanders the world carrying her history while negotiating her identity in the landscapes she encounters. In my concluding chapter 5, I conclude by drawing comparisons among the books and suggest possibilities for further research in Caribbean women writing revisionary history using landscape as a backdrop.

Chapter Two:

Landscape and Ghosted Histories in *The True History of Paradise* by Margaret

Cezaire-Thompson

. . . the scent of unearthed history breaks the air in every landmark, and every familiar thing is a landmark for her today, not in the way of an edifice proudly drawing to itself but with the air of a forgotten ruin. (*True History of Paradise* 15)

Margaret Cezaire-Thompson was born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1956 and spent her formative years on the island where she attended the Saint Andrew's High School for Girls. Upon graduation, she left the island to pursue a bachelor's degree in English literature at Barnard College and later attended graduate school at the City University of New York where she obtained her PhD in English; her dissertation focused on the works of V.S. Naipaul. Currently, she is a senior professor at Wellesley College where she teaches British poetry, gender issues in literature and creative writing, among other topics. Although she has not lived in Jamaica for some time, she remains close to all things concerning the island specifically its history and landscape.

She has published articles, short works of fiction and a screenplay, yet she is best known by her two novels *The True History of Paradise* and *The Pirate's Daughter*. Both novels have detailed descriptions of landscapes while taking up the topic of history in Jamaica but in very different ways. Her second novel, *The Pirate's Daughter*, narrates the

lives of mother and daughter in 1940's Jamaica. After an affair with famous American actor, Errol Flynn, Ida becomes pregnant with May and raises her as a single mother—May grows up knowing *about* her father but not *knowing* him. In the backdrop was a Jamaica on its road to independence and the political unstableness that comes with such a process. In an interview with the author found on the website bookbrowse.com, Cezaire Thompson explains why she uses history in this particular novel:

There's the whole colonial history of exploration and conquest that I touched on earlier. And yes, the political undercurrents are an important concern for me. Having grown up in Jamaica and having a first-hand view of our postcolonial difficulties, the recent political history of the Caribbean is an integral part of the setting. I came of age so to speak as Jamaica emerged from colony to independent nation, so part of my deep interest comes from that. I also care deeply for Jamaica and its future. ("Interview")

The Pirate's Daughter reflects the author's experience in Jamaica pre- and post-independence and she clearly uses it to frame the narratives found in this particular novel. When asked about her choice of leaving the island, Margaret Cezaire Thompson parallels her personal decision with that of Jean Landing:

I was in some sense glancing back at what might have been *if* I hadn't left when I did. . . . I think that in as much as I identified with Jean, I was able to answer a lot of my own personal questions, face some troubling things (including my own panic and helplessness), and also show love for things and people I care about. (Random House Readers Circle 340)

Consequently, in her highly praised first novel, *The True History of Paradise*, because of her personal connection with Jean, Jamaica's history and politics are more evident. She confirms that the novel is “about a woman coming to terms with history—her family history and national history—and discovering her own voice and beliefs in the midst of swirling violence and family troubles” (Random House Readers Circle 340).

In *Meet the Author 2007* (2007MTA), Margaret Cezaire-Thompson presents *The True History of Paradise*, on the YouTube channel in these words:

What also unfolds in the *True History of Paradise* is 500 years of Jamaican history, because all of Jean ancestors begin to speak to her and tell her their stories on the course of her journey. . . so you get a family history and an entire history of an island. I call it the *True History of Paradise* because when Columbus first came to the island, he apparently felt that he found the earthly paradise. And so the novel explores this place as a physical paradise but that has had quite a troubled history. (Margaret Cezaire-Thompson-*The True History of Paradise* 0:39-1:36)

Her goal in the novel, she asserts, is to unpack 500 years of history in one novel which is why Jean Landing, the protagonist, hears the voices of her ancestors that tell her of the lives of Jamaicans throughout space and time. The ancestral; voices emerge from the landscape and testify to the history of Jamaica throughout Jean's journey., Undoubtedly therefore, Cezar-Thompson reveals how she consciously works through the element of landscape in her narrative. In an interview conducted by Randall Kenan for the *Bomb*, Cezaire-Thompson explains the rationale behind her representation of violence on the “paradisiacal” Jamaica:

That paradox has always been heartbreaking to me, or has been since I became aware of how troubled Jamaica is. That in this physical paradise, this remarkable place of mountains and rivers that survives hurricanes and earthquakes, how the land and the people seem to. . . . Well, the fact of the violence doesn't make it a denuded landscape. . . . For all the violence and immorality, it's rather a place where the people and land continue to thrive and flourish amid a perpetual cycle of ruin. I think of Jamaica as that. If a country can be said to have a lifetime, I see it as having cycles of ruin and destruction. That's why I have these catastrophic things like earthquake and rebellion in the novel. (56)

Landscape and history go hand in hand—and Cezaire-Thompson deliberately uses both elements to showcase Jean's journey through the island so that she may never forget where she came from and those that came before her.

The True History of Paradise's events span the three days following Easter Sunday in 1978 but the historical events that lead to the historic 1978 elections catapult the events that set this novel in motion. On August 6, 1962 Jamaica gained independence from Britain following the electoral victory of William Alexander Bustamante and Jamaica Labor Party. With independence under Bustamante, Jamaica had a new flag with the colors of green, gold, and black: "Green for the land. Gold for the sunshine. Black for the people" (46). Jamaica was changing fast. But the 1978 election left the island nation divided between the two major political parties and candidates: Michael Manley and Edward Seaga; representing the PNP and the JLP political parties. The political shifts were more and more evident as political uncertainty converted itself into violence

which affected the history of those on the island; everyone was tangled up in this new history, everyone in Jamaica was at the crossroads of changing politics, progress, and crime but one thing was sure to Jean “Jamaica was too young to die” (139). Political strife divided Jamaica and the general population was hostage to the governmental tensions and rivalries. The historical time frame, however, covers the 500 years of post-Columbian Jamaica’s history as experienced and told by its characters. Narrated through Jean Landing’s eyes, Jamaica’s history then becomes Jean’s story and journey to self-discovery.

Caribbean narratives generally focus on connections between race, ethnicity, nation, gender, class, and history as major areas adding to a varying dimension of intersectionality defined as a:

. . . way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. . . . people’s lives . . . are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis . . . but by many axes that work together and influence each other. (2)

Predictably, therefore, in Margaret Cezaire-Thompson’s *True History of Paradise*, there is an unalloyed connection between the genealogical history of Jean Landing, the novel’s main character, expressed through these concerns and intersections. Her genealogical roots are an amalgam of English, Spanish, Chinese, German, Yoruba, and Ashanti. In the first paragraph of the novel we get a vague description of Jean where we understand her

complex genealogical mix: “Her eyes are light brown, and unusual color someone of such dark complexion (“Where dis black pickney come from?” her own mother asked, examining her at birth)” (3)--her physical looks are a testament of Jamaica’s intricate history of conquests, colonial rule, slavery, and indentureship. Yet, her different ancestral histories, which are also the different stories that make up Jamaican history, are often painted against and through the Jamaican landscape throughout the novel. Hence, her genealogical narratives cannot be fully represented and understood outside the Jamaican landscape, in and through, which they are scripted. Each time Jean interacts with Jamaica’s landscape therefore, her individual ancestors, the representations of Jamaica’s diverse genealogy, come through with a tale; a version of Jamaica’s history as experienced by them and not necessarily the “grand narrative” as told in textbooks.

Jean Landing had never considered leaving her beloved Jamaica yet, violence had overtaken the streets of the island and tragedy had touched her life—her sister Lana had lit herself on fire in her apartment in downtown Kingston on Easter Sunday and her childhood friend, Faye, was in the hospital after being viciously attacked. Alan, her American boyfriend living in New York City, has helped her out financially so that she could buy a fake passport and advised her to “take as little possible” conflicting Jean as to what to take between sentimental values and practical items:

She woke up one night from a dream in which she walked part-naked and barefoot through the streets of a new city. Kind strangers kept approaching her with things of hers that they had stumbled upon—among them, a favorite hand painted perfume bottle. Waking she realized that she would

not be able to take any of the objects returned to her in the dream; they were all already lost or broken. (10)

Jean understands that to survive and thrive through/within the foreign landscape of the United States of America she must move through it with little traces or evidence of who she is; material possessions are not important nor relevant; it's not the material values that matter it's the history and Jamaica's landscape that she must carry and keep as she navigates this new city.

Leaving Jamaica is impossible and can only be done by coming up with false documentations: "The Kingston airport is too risky. . . . immigration officers have become monsters. . . . It's impossible for Jamaicans to leave, and nearly impossible for people with foreign passports" (10). Travelling through the landscape to reach a "small private airfield" is dangerous and even more so since she is a governmental employee; the military police are monitoring citizens' whereabouts and roadblocks are established throughout the island—she can be easily recognized (10-11). Despite it being a risk, her mind is made up, she is to leave Jamaica via Montego Bay and her childhood friend and neighbor, Paul, was to take her. Paul knew she wanted to escape but was surprised that Jean had made the hurried decision to leave the day of Lana's funeral wearing a "black funeral dress"—appropriate attire to leave the landscape she has known all her life (10).

She had travelled these roads with Paul before but under very different circumstances: "They will take the usual roads today, roads they've taken together many times, and that's why it feels so odd: Jean and Paul driving to the country—too familiar to be called a tradition, too enjoyable to be thought of as routine. From Kingston to Trelawny and back again, how many times, over how many years?" (13). Paul had taken

Jean to the boarding school she attended in Trelawny (roughly a three-hour drive); the roads and landscape had similar but the circumstances for Jean, Paul and Jamaica had be completely different. This trip, however, will forever be in her memory as she mindfully takes a final and panoramic view of the landscape of Jamaica before departing for New York City to meet up with Alan. Jean is days away from leaving family and friends-- everything that signifies home and the familiarity of Bonnieview Terrace—behind; “There are people here, souls, whom she never thought to be without” (13). The only thing Jean will carry is the history of her ancestors and her love of the Jamaica in which she grew up: “she has no interest in politics, no ideology, no allegiances” (11). It pains her that, “. . . she is leaving her country. There are people here, souls, whom she never thought to be without (13). As she leaves Kingston, “she looks at her city, pressing its image to her mind to last a lifetime, and as she does so it becomes a ghost city” (13). The representation of the cityscape, of Kingston as a ghost city, is indicative of the impossibility of remembering the faces of people in the city, its ever-changing human made landmarks in the form of structures. Contrastively, the only indelible memory of Jamaica she can carry with her is the organic natural landscapes, the mountains, rivers, forests, etc.: “She looks out the window at the mountains as if something out there will convince her to stay or encourage her to go” (16). The emotional appeal of this natural landscape is an important element in my reading this novel through the landscape as script. While Kingston may not full encapsulate and reflect Jamaica’s totality of history from 1612 to 1978, because it is an ever-changing artificial environment, the natural landscape retains the historical accounts of Jamaica through the years both as an incrementally changing yet permanent non-linear catalogues of events. The landscape

tells the story of Jamaica, it speaks back to history to tell a much bigger story. Every movement, including the journey to the private airport is part of the history she is leaving behind. Jean is uprooting herself from Jamaica from the start of the novel:

She's on her knees pulling up the red ginger, the sun scorching the back of her neck, when her own voice jolts her: "Why are you doing this? Why are you bothering with this now?" . . .

She goes on digging, uprooting several plants at a time. The effort of her hands and the smell of the soil steady her. Upstairs in her bedroom drawer is a U.S. passport with her photograph and someone else's name. She's leaving. She's made up her mind. There's nothing more to think about, she tells herself and brushes the crawling ants from her arm. (6)

Her destiny is in her own hands. Much like the work she is doing in the garden she's leaving, despite feeling conflicted; her heart will forever be in Jamaica despite willingly being transplanted to the United States.

Lana's funeral brings back painful memories of the death and funeral of their great-grandfather's, Mr. Ho Sing. Jean was young when her great-grandfather was on his deathbed, but she recalls how for an instant he focused just on her: "It might have been because she was the youngest, or it might have been that, among the varying shades of white, yellow, and brown faces—the mixed-up progeny of the old man's oceanic urges—Jean's was the only one that could unquestionably be called black" (9). Jean's was a product and evidence of a mixed heritage where her "blackness" dominated and made her stick out from the rest of those family members present at the Sings' house. The Chinese arrived in Jamaica via Trinidad and British Guiana to work as indentured workers in

sugar plantations beginning in 1854 (Shibata 53). According to Patrick Bryan, “The migration of Chinese was encouraged from the Chinese end by land hunger, high taxes, civil war, warlordism, international war and intervention - and particular southern and south eastern China, whence came the Hakka, the primary ethnic group that entered Jamaica” (15). Shibata states that “inter-racial marriage was unavoidable, especially with Black women...creolization took place not only without much consciousness but also out of necessity, as a strategy to survive as the most visible minority” (54). Ho Sing, showcases the Chinese ancestry of Jean, and by inference, the contribution of Chinese who were brought to Jamaica as indentured workers in the 1840s, to compensate for the shortfall in labor occasioned by the freeing of enslaved, who now refused to continue working in the plantations for next to nothing. No one knew Ho Sing’s age but according to the indenture-servants’ papers, he was 20 years old when he arrived to Jamaica from on the last shipment from China in 1884 on the “Prinz Alexander”(7).

This presence of Chinese in Jamaica history and racial and ethnic mix is narrated in Kerry Young’s serial novels: *Pao*, *Gloria*, and *Show Me A Mountain*; and by Patricia Powell’s *The Pagoda*. Of course, other Jamaican authors have also revealed the effects of Chinese presence in the genetic pool and cultural landscape of Jamaica. The inclusion and recognition of the Chinese ancestry in Jamaican literatures open up a conversation and an invitation to further examine the horrors of this Chinese indentured workers; Mr. Ho-Sing’s narration in this novel stand in corresponding contrasts and complementary relations with Jean’s Yoruba, Ashanti ancestry. This inclusion provides a contrast between Jean’s European ancestries on the one hand, as the rulers, and her African and Asian ancestries as the traumatized. These contradictory histories represented, which

complicate Jean's life, further undermine any narrative linear chronicity that suggest Jamaican history is basically the history of struggle between enslaved Africans and enslaving Europeans and that there are only two ethnicities and/or races in Jamaica. Shibata believes that the invisibility of Chinese ancestry in academic research stems from the fact that 90% of Jamaica identify as 'Black' identifying with African ancestry. Hence, "Since Independence in 1962, especially with the increasing awareness and upsurge of the Black Power movement, Afro-Creole perspectives, if not always Afrocentric, have dominated both popular and academic scenes" (57). Authors, such as Cezaire- Thompson are not ignoring this dominant Afrocentric sentiment. In her interview with she affirms "Jamaica and in most of the West Indies the blacks are a majority: We're the majority. The predominant hue and chord and note is Africa. And all these other races are falling into this big sea of Africa" (Cezaire-Thompson and Kenan 57). The presence of the Chinese, Spanish, German, African, Scottish, and English ancestry in her novel is an important element that adds a complex historical dimension not always recognized in literature thus challenging politics of assimilation in Jamaica (Yun 28).

Jean's imagination, the picturesque but now fleeting landscape, and family and national historical memories intertwine as Paul drives her to the countryside where she will catch her plane. Everything she sees now triggers a journey back in time: "A sign says, "Spanish Town." The old capital. It occurs to her that she is taking the same route the descendants of Spanish settlers taken three hundred years ago when they fled from the English invaders" (14). As the road unwinds before her eyes, she observes the cane fields but sees no one working the plantations yet the landscape serves as muse as she imagines "slave ghosts, cutlasses in hand, working pitifully in a realm deaf to change" (15). This

vision of the slaves working the cane fields and personal revision of history are possible because of her affinity with the Jamaican landscape. This cane field within the slave plantation holds a history she can only narrate and describe from her imagination, yet we soon find out that Jean is a medium, able to communicate with the dead and listen to untold versions of Jamaica's history:

Ghosts stand on the foothills of this journey. She smells their woody ancestral breath in the land's familiar crests and undulations. She has heard them all her life, these obstinate spirits, desperate to speak, to revise the broken grammar of their exits. They speak to her, Jean Landing, born in the audient hour before daylight broke on the nation, born into the knowledge of nation and prenation, the old noises of barracks, slave quarters, and steerage mingling in the ears with the newest sounds of self-rule. On verandas, in kitchens, in the old talk, in her waking reveries and anxious dreams, she has heard their stories. (17)

She also has the uncanny gift of communicating speak with the dead or undead. Cezaire-Thompson explains her use of voices or spirits and Jean's ability to listen and understand them:

For me, they're so much more voices than spirits. You don't really see the ancestors, Jean doesn't see them. She really is "clairaudiant," if that's a word, rather than clairvoyant. And for me, that's where the emphasis is, on voices that have been lost or drowned through the events of history again, and are coming alive for her through the landscape, through situations, through memory. I read a description of my novel someplace that said

she's "attuned to the spirit world." In a way that's true, in that Yoruba sense of having all the Egun in her. That Yoruba word "Egun" can mean manifold or multiple spirits. But the novel is really more about a multiplicity of voices. (Cezaire Thompson and Kenan 59)

On the night of her sixth birthday the voices talk to Jean. Her grandfather, Mr. Ho Sing, came to say farewell to Jean. The next morning, she learns that he had passed away. She also tells Irene, her caretaker, that "dead people sometimes spoke to her" (49). Therefore, throughout the novel, Jean is able to see and commune with her ancestors, and they give her details about their lives and times in Jamaica. These ghostly apparitions in the novels of Caribbean women writers, according to Renk:

subverts colonial texts in which indigenous peoples appeared as shadows, . . . the writer 'catches' her people's shadow and thereby takes control of her people's destiny. . . . Anglophone Caribbean women's writing reunites the 'shadow,' or spirit, of the Caribbean people "stolen" through slavery and colonization with the Caribbean 'body' by 'recreating' through the fossil spaces of time and consciousness the stories of Caribbean people eclipsed by official histories and received narratives of family, garden, and shrine. (152)

Thus, Jean acts as narrative witness to the voices of these ancestors, whose narratives fill in the silences of carefully sanitized and scripted histories. These ghostly voices roam in the landscape away from the noisy cities.

As their journey advances, Paul and Jean drive past the Arawak museum. This landmark makes Jean recall a family outing where her father, Roy Landing, spoke to her

of the origin of Jamaica, a Jamaica populated by Arawakan peoples who gave the island its name, and whose historical presence predate the histories of Europeans, Africans, and Asian presences in Jamaica:

As a child, Jean found it hard to believe that the Arawaks, who gave the island its name, Xamayca, Land of Many Rivers, had been wiped out by the Spaniards. She thought there had to be a few surviving Arawaks in remote caves and mountains, men and women who were centuries old in their ways. For years she played with an imaginary Arawak boy she called Kawara. He spoke the sleeping language of volcanoes, and pound cassava as his people had done before the Spanish discovery. She smiles to herself, grateful for the memory. She hasn't thought about Kawara in years. (15)

This childhood memory triggered another memory of an "expedition" (one of many) she took with her father, Roy. She recalls fondly how her father's expeditions taught her another aspect of her family history; for example, about the Crawfords, the English side of her ancestry. Roy was an avid historian and prided himself on the fact that he could trace his Crawford lineage so far back. He prided himself in declaring, "This was true story" to those stories he would tell Jean as they went on these expeditions (16). The Crawfords had been plantation and probably owners of enslaved Africans on Dove Hill. The Crawfords were one of the first English families to settle in Jamaica after fighting off the Spaniards. On this trip to Dove Hill Jean finds the grave of Susannah Crawford. The history of Susannah, and the undeniable presence of her bones in the grave, and perhaps her ghost in the landscape, "captivated her, finding that buried daughter and sister among the green interstices of history" (16). The presences of ancestral ghosts in the landscape

is undeniable at Dove Hill. Here, the ghost of Rebecca Landing (1682-1751) takes over the narrative. Recalling the plantation as a slice of paradise, of course for the Spanish settlers who had decimated the indigenous population of Arawaks, she laments how everything had changed on June 7, 1692, Rebecca's birthday and the day a horrible earthquake had destroyed Jamaica and everything Rebecca had known. The earthquake, a natural history of the earth's movements, not only changed the landscape right before her eyes, it also reshaped the histories of the people with each other and with the landscape:

Strangest of all, the river, our river, was nowhere to be found. . . . Rocks and trees had tumbled from the hills, changing its course and nature forever. [. . .]

I had thought till then that rivers outlived men. But here I saw dry land where they had been water, rocks where there had been forest, and valleys where there had been hills. (21)

The cataclysmic earthquake reveals how nature shifts history. It makes the known the unknown as it changes natural landmarks and places. It undermines human narrative chronology, and inserts uncertainties in historical plots. Margaret Cezaire-Thompson, in an interview that accompanies and serves as an appendix in the novel, states that

The earthquake divides and breaks up the land, separating rivers and sinking and obliterating the entire town of Port Royal. It is from this point on that Rebecca too is divided, exiled in an emotional and physical sense, foreshadowing the main character's dilemma. Jean Landing experiences a similar type of anguish centuries later. (Random House Readers Circle 340)

Rebecca, feeling doubly traumatized, by the earthquake and by her equally traumatized parents, felt abandoned emotionally by her parents and her environment. She was subsequently sent off to England with her aunt and uncle. In England, her imagined identity as an English girl is questioned and rejected. Here she is seen and perceived merely as an exotic Creole girl from the Caribbean, even as she tries to assimilate, she would always be thought of as a “Jamaican lady” (23) similar to Antoinette in Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Hence, as Tolia-Kelly states: “Landscape and a visualization of a landscape of belonging is at the heart of feeling ‘inset’. Understanding our place in the world is processed through the geographical coordinates of past lived landscapes, current ones and the visualization of an ideal, enfranchising landscape of belonging. (19)

Once more the trope of the Creole Caribbean woman transplanted to Europe comes into Caribbean women’s narratives—the problem of whiteness creates identity crisis for white Creoles coming from the Caribbean. Rebecca feels out of place in England and although she feels abandoned by the Jamaican landscape after the earthquake she held Jamaica close to her heart: “I received letters regularly from my Nana till the day she died, and she alone kept the island alive in me” (23). Logically and predictably therefore, even when she eventually inherited land in Jamaica and became wealthy, her wealthy status in England still could not secure for her any real change in her socio-racial status--her pale face was not enough to mask her Jamaican origins.

In England in 1772, she meets Mr. Southerne, her uncle’s friend, who had written a play based on Aphra Behn’s “*Oroonoko*”. Rebecca is skeptical about white women writing any history, and worse still the history of enslaved Africans in foreign places, in this case Suriname. She states, “It is supposed to be a True History based upon some time

she spent in the colony. I am certain every word is a lie” (24). Although while in England Rebecca enjoys reading, especially about the West Indies, she nonetheless is aware of the fake stories circulating as true histories of the islands. “I search for facts equal to my memories, and I search in vain. I read in one of these books, which are called Histories, that Creole women are cruel and that they indulge themselves in licentious amours. These books hurt me. They are cracked mirrors which break the paradise in my mind” (24). Her experience and those experiences written by people who have not lived on the island, who have not experienced what she has do not add up and are not equal. When she would recall her memories about her experiences in Jamaica to her aunt and uncle, they would say that she has a “morbid imagination” (25). Their version of the history of the Caribbean was an exotic tale told by people who never shared her any of experiences of Jamaica. She writes:

The history of our island is a history of hell. It is also a history of grace terrestrial. I lived in a brightness beyond description, and did not know true darkness until I came here. [. . .]

When I came here, no one cared to hear my story. It was uncomely. So was I. I learned my own way of seeing, like one who is blind. . . . I had all the manners and necessities of other women of my society, yet I was without society. (25)

Rebecca’s history in England is a personal history of isolation, an experience shared by other white Caribbean Creole women of English descent whose cultures are now rooted and routed in the Jamaican landscape. To these Creole women, the landscape of England

has no historical bearing or relationship with their personal histories. Rebecca's ghost then gives a warning to Jean as the latter prepares to embark on a similar journey of exile:

Know what I know: Time has shaped you from a hundred histories which will never be told; our voices are not welcome among the living. Stay and die there, unaccounted for. Or escape, live, and be silent among the migratory whose lives are like a discontinued letter. What do you expect? What consolation do you seek from the eternally disconsolate? (26)

Jean can either remain in Jamaica and become a victim of political violence and social unrest, or like Rebecca, migrate to a foreign land and live in isolation in a land whose history she does not share. Though Rebecca's ghost presents no concrete answers to Jean's dilemma, she nonetheless gains some agency...at least Jean know what could happen if she stays or if she decides to leave—she has the power of choice.

A distant choice available to Jean is mooted earlier by Roy. Earlier in his life, he had embraced Garveyism, and had dreamt of answering the appeal made by Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president in the late 1950s after Ghana gained her independence from Britain in 1957, to African diaspora peoples to go to Ghana and help build the new nation. Roy had wanted to go to Ghana then with his daughter Jean. When questioned why he would want to go to Ghana he stated, "Ghana is moving the entire [African] continent forward" (43), and he wanted to be part of that history. Roy was friends with the Rastafari community which was growing and often asked for Roy's help with their "repatriation" (43) debates and efforts. The Rastafari and Roy would use the occasions they gathered at the family's home to speak about their love for Africa. Roy went as far as to expedite a passport for him and Jean but was confronted by Monica,

Jean's mother until he finally gave up on the idea. The possibilities for Jean to fulfill her father's dream was present but unlikely since, at this time, Ghana itself was engulfed by economic woes, and political uncertainties as the nation was run by military juntas from 1966-1969; 1972-1979; 1981-1992.

Though Roy is Jean's greatest history teacher, it is Paul, older than Jean and who always looked out for Jean and her sister Lana, who points out the links between history and the landscape as they frequently traversed through Jamaica's landscapes on their trips to and from Trelawny to the boarding school she attended. Jean recounts:

And so it began: the journeys with Paul became a knowledge of the road that etched deeper with each journey. Paul knew and marked the events of the landscape: the hurricane that uprooted a great tree and left it growing miraculously on its side, the old bus perched on the hillside where that crazy, rich American woman lived with so many adopted children, the breadfruit's voyage from the South Pacific to Jamaica on Captain Bligh's ship, terrestrial tales of the lost and found. (66)

Paul was an important man in Jean's life and was her guide into this last trip through the island. He was part of her history, part of what she was leaving behind in this landscape.

Jean's boarding school, Sisters of Mercy School, is deep in the lush landscape of Trelawny and stands in stark contrast to anything that surrounds it—it stands as a landmark to British colonial education that fails to fit Jamaican history and culture into the curriculum. The landscape and structures of the boarding school Jean attended in Jamaica is constructed to imitate English school buildings and landscape. It is a landscape of artificial perfection, and although mapped and marked on Jamaican soil, it does not

synchronize with Jamaica's landscape. "It wasn't as wild and teeming as the rest of Jamaica; it was lush, but orderly" (Cezaire-Thompson 67). It is a transplantation of imagined austere English landscape, control, and order unto a tropical Jamaican space that resists such artificial impositions. It symbolized the illusion of dominance of humans over nature, while proclaiming the rule of England over Jamaica and its people. As Tolia-Kelly so articulately asserts, it is a "non-native" structure being "naturalized" to fit a Jamaican landscape (Tolia-Kelly 3), and in the process alienates the pupils from their cultural and ecological environments.

Paul and Roy are not the only ones that influenced Jean's historical knowledge or consciousness, Faye, schoolmate and best friend, was also very active in Jamaican politics; in fact, Faye had more political awareness and involvement than Jean.

She and Jean were both daughters of the nation, born in the morning twilight of Independence, but whereas Faye seemed to be growing at the same pace as the nation. Jean felt that she, herself, was lagging behind. . . . she felt like a sleepwalker moving in two worlds at once: here and not here. She looked and listened always from the outside. When it came to the discussions of the island's politics she felt the way she did around sexually experienced people: self-consciously virginal, inarticulate, incomplete. (127-128)

Faye coaxes Jean, after they graduate high school, to research her personal family history. Jean subsequently begins her research by digging through her father's things and discovering a "leather-bound ledger" she hadn't seen before. This to Jean is another historical trove. It is the journal of Roy's first ancestor, Don Alejandro D'Costa, a

Spanish Jew who had arrived in Jamaica in 1638. The journal is filled with Don Alejandro's descriptions of Jamaica. Though Jean feels attached to Jamaica and is fascinated with her findings of history, she is not unproblematically in love with the island's socio-political and economic systems, but despite feeling this: "She couldn't picture herself anywhere else. It was not love of country that she felt, so much as simple inseparableness. Wha' fe you, fe you; wha' belong a sea don't fly, Mary Darling once said to her" (139). Mary Darling, her maternal grandmother is on to something: you cannot belong to something you do not fit into—if she belongs to the sea she has to swim like the fish and not pretend to fly like a bird in the sea—she belongs to Jamaica and would not fit anywhere else.

Additionally, Jean's problematic emotional attachment to Jamaica is further complicated by two issues—the trauma of losing her sister, Lana and the absence of her lover, Alan, who migrated earlier to New York and has sent for her. The death of Lana and the political chaos and uncertainties of 1978 distance her from Jamaica. She transfers her hopes and emotional commitments to the United States of America which now promises her some emotional and social security that Jamaica now seems incapable of offering. But as indicated above, the trip to the airport generates in Jean some mixed feeling regarding her choice to emigrate. For though she recognizes that she no longer loves her island because of the way things are happening, she feels a certain level of patriotism and some abstract attachment to it. This feeling of attachment is increased the more inland she travels with Paul; her ancestors pop-out intermittently to tell her about the Jamaica they had known, loved, and lived in the more inland she travels. Her commitment derives partially also from a feeling that by leaving, she may be abandoning

the African aspect of her Jamaican heritage. That Jamaica, with its history of enslaved Africans, its present African dominated culture and ethnic composition, calls to her. Thus, it is the historical legacy of her African ancestry that she finds hard abandoning as she enters into the interior recesses of the island. The journey into the interior of the island is a journey into her consciousness, buried deep but now surfacing unfettered to remind her never to forget Jamaica. The ghosts of the enslaved Africans she sees and hears tells her of Africa which is how she creates the idea that Jamaica is an outpost of Africa: “The women’s head ties, the abundance of skirt fabric, the baskets and tins of produce on their heads, and most of all the faces themselves, remind Jean that Africa came here not once, but repeatedly” (143). It’s as if culture and history has been fossilized at this point. She feels the presence of her Yoruba grandmother Mary Darling in this part of Jamaica: “Yetunde was me grandmother’s name. It means “Our mother has come back.” Yetunde died before I was bawn. But me great-grandmother, Mary, tell me ‘bout her—Mary the Yoruba, a pure African; me name after her. She live to be ole-ole, an’ she ‘member the ole language” (143).

In the Jamaican heartland she makes a stop at Miss Vera’s poultry farm where Paul talks business about buying chicken and eggs. Paul has a farm close by and buys from Miss Vera and her husband regularly. Jean wanders off as they talk business and finds herself free amongst the landscape. Everything comes alive to her and she imagines: “[. . .] her childhood games, the undiscovered paradise where Kawara the Arawak boy lived. The air is promising and sweet. The tree trunks smell of centuries old medicine. This is the perfection of the world she was born into. No one will trouble me here? She begs to be able to love this place free of fear” (146). She finds, at least for an instant,

freedom in this landscape and a moment of tranquility before she feels a presence around her. She sees “traces” of men carrying bloodied machetes surrounding her; they are ghosts. Violence had visited that area in 1976 when three members of the Redfield family were slaughtered by a gang from Kingston. Her ability to communicate with the dead haunts her tranquility in a place she wished to seek refuge and peace. She is so frightened by this vision that she runs back to where Paul and Miss Vera were, breathless and afraid.

The memory of that . . . lingers with the latent horror of the day: . . . the imitations of brutality on the road and in the forest. If only she could find some peaceful place to lie down for a while. She closes her eyes, but this offers no respite; the mask of daylight dissolves, revealing the nightmare. There are no more trees. The trees are gone, all the trees; the rivers have dried up, everyone. There’s only dry bush and dry rock. In the skeletal forest, lizards and birds wait listlessly for the killing blow. There’s not even panic left in Xaymaca, “Land of Many Rivers”. (147)

There is a sudden death in the landscape for Jean . . . the nation for her is dead. As she leaves this place with Paul “past the Redfield place, past the old water wheel, and back again through the arch of the aqueduct, rethreading the eye of history” (148); she gets back to the present.

In the journal Jean uncovers, Roy’s Spanish ancestor, Don Alejandro D’Costa, a Spanish Jew who had come to Jamaica in 1638 as a settler, assumed the role of a new Adam. He provides intricate detail when describing “his new country.” To him, Jamaica is a blissful place to be, and seeing himself as the new Adam in a new Eden he begins giving names to plants and places:

Like other Adams he made myths of intractable forests, epics of rivers. She noticed that he used the phrase “mi pais,” my country, not “this country” as a new settler would say. And yet, within a few years the country would no longer be his. In 1655 most of the Spanish settlers fled to the mountains and then to Cuba. The Spanish tongue, like the flag, furlled, and the names of places were changed by the new conquerors. [. . .] She would take this to Señor Rodríguez and see if together they could make something of the frail, interrupted *historia*. (197)

The possibility of publishing this research in aunt Daphne’s magazine keeps her focused. With the knowledge and understanding that this manuscript holds a version of history as written from a colonizers point of view, she carefully read the manuscript. Jean uncovers lots of narrative and representational gaps and silences which she fills as a way of correcting the deliberate “errors” made in official “historical records.” She expects to be happier with what she finds in the journal, but she feels great disappointment when all Don Alejandro enters in his journal are about his property: horses and enslaved Africans:

But it was always like this: The voices of the ancestors did not always agree with each other or with her own embryonic voice. Still Don Alejandro’s journal enthralled her; its pages held the dust of that blundered paradise, Xamayca, whose promise rose before her like the star of a second nativity. And it was her father who had led her to it. (198)

Paul and Jean make a stop in St. Ann. She states: “If a country has a heart, she thinks, the Jamaica’s is here—verdure in excelsis. That’s enough green—rivers, waterfalls, trees, rainfall—for the entire country” (235). Here she listens to Daniel Sterns’

story as he appears like another ghost to tell his life in Jamaica. He has no love for Jamaica and sees it as “an Anansi country—a monstrous spider skilled in trickery of every kind” (238). He had married a mad white creole woman whom he accuses, destroyed him and his family. She had been an embarrassment and had lied about being Irish. As a white Jamaican, her lies and madness made his family distance themselves. As if helping Jean with her decision on whether to leave or remain in Jamaica he touts a subtle warning:

It is not right to speak against a place, an entire people, . . . Jamaica is a small, malevolent place. If you have promise of any kind in you, leave before that - promise is corrupted. Find the strength to hate what is hateful. The poison of that place, like its beauty, is uncontainable. [. . .] Betrayal is death. Do not hesitate. Run through the burning gates. (240-41)

Within Jamaica’s landscape lies a history of violence that Daniel warns Jean that she must run away from. Similarly, Roy Landing’s apparition, at end of the novel, contains the warning: “Leave this place” (285). They arrive at the Northern Coast, the island’s first defense against invaders from the North:

Here, she thinks, are the deltas of discovery and escape. This is where Spain began and ended its reign on the island. They pass Discovery Bay where Columbus first set foot, and other pristine bays where the Spanish settlers, having fled downriver from the British, met the salty current that would bear them to Cuba” (272).

This place reminds Jean of the histories of the early white settlers who equally committed acts of violence and genocide against the Tainoes and Arawaks. At a

stop around Trelawny rain forest at the town of Falmouth, “in the Cockpit country, the mountainous country where African runaways hid and built towns,” they visit Kofe and Adina, a Maroon couple that Paul knows and buys bananas from time to time. Adina hands Jean a “set of handkerchiefs” made of “white cotton” from the ceiba tree on their property (295-296). Kofe explains:

Some people call it cotton, some call it ceiba, some call it duppy tree. You not ‘fraid a duppy? . . . Spirit-dem ina dis tree ‘bout two hundred years. Is dis tree dem used to tek fe mek boat an’ coffin, na true, ‘Dina?’” Paul makes it clear to Jean that “Is no ordinary hankie Adina mek give you, . . . is a piece of history. . . .”

And, according to Kofe, it’s a piece of “Maroon history. (297)

With this last stop, Jean grounds herself in Jamaican history and establishes her roots before departing to the United States of America. Her roots in Jamaica and historical ancestry need not hold her back from migrating. But her white ancestry is not the only denominator of Jean’s Jamaican ancestral rootedness. Her West African ancestry rises up to confront and instruct her through Mary Iya ilu.

Mary “Iya ilu” (Mother of Drums in Yoruba, which metonymically translates into grand narrator or mother of language or speech or narrative as Yoruba drums do speak their own coded languages) is an ancestress through her matriline. After telling her about the history of slavery and how her ancestors arrived to Jamaica, she urges Jean to pay attention to her counsel:

[. . .]

Listen, Jean-eleye, no matter wha’ you do,

survive-o. Go back a Ife, go tell me muma

Hush now. Tell dem we did mek it cross de water.

Mek dem know. Mek dem know wes here. (300)

Mary's poetic appeal to Jean to make a spiritual journey to Ife, the mythical place of origin of the Yoruba people, and to inform the motherland that the children kidnapped and put in boats are alive in a new place is important to the way we read Jean's narrative attention to detail. Mary's reference to crossing the water links her story to the theories of the sea is history. She insists Jean must never despair or lose hope. Survival means a continuation of memory as the textbook of women's history. Memory is the archival records, in combination with the use of mnemonic devices in non-literate cultures, where scribal histories are very selective, retrieved and narrated. Thus, the novel itself is a testimonial to the relevance of memory. Even the uprising ghostly voices are the memories, collective and individual, that are transmitted generationally through orature.

The water Mary refers to is merged with the river Martha Brae which Jean and Paul subsequently cross before reaching Paul's farm. Crossing the Martha Brae inundates Jean with nostalgia—she can't help but think about her sister Lana. There is a legend about that river that provokes fear amongst those who visit it; they fear swimming in its waters. It is said that the spirit of Mather, "known as River Muma" drowns those that swim in it, that she will drag them and take them to the Arawak gold that lies beneath the river; the same gold the Spanish conquerors demanded to be taken to after killing her people. The legend says that she took then to the river that parted as she walked in the river and the river later swallowed her whole. She is said to appear sitting on the rocks combing her hair.

The question rises in her again about her and Lana. They are daughters of the same rank tropical growth, daughters of the same history, backed up against the same walls. Will the waters close around her, too?

Tell dem we did mek it. [. . .]

She knows now why she is taking this journey. (301)

The decision to leave Jamaica is one of life or death. She must choose to survive and decide whether she will make it back to her roots or live in permanent exile like many other that had left their lands to create new lives.

The closer she gets to her destination the more conflicted and angrier she becomes:

She would not leave. This was her country. Rage had replaced fear. Don't forget that you have the key, not them on the outside. Jamaica was at war with itself. But there were many people like Jean who wanted no part of this war, who wanted life her. The history of our island is a history of hell; it is also a history of Grace terrestrial. (316)

In contrast to Paul who, as a farmer, is one connected directly to land and to the history of Jamaica, Jean knows that the island, under the present conditions, is no place for her survival. Undoubtedly, Jean's relationship with Paul defines her connection with the land: "His was not a healing love but a consoling one, and theirs was not a hopeful bond with each other and the land they loved, but a fey paradise" (321). She is conflicted during her last night in Jamaica. She wanders off on Paul's farm to see the stars but is only surrounded by darkness:

To leave one's country. It is not a complete sentence, a complete anything. Its infinite possibilities leap from loss to promise and back again from promise to loss. She will have to try to reconcile the two. *Escape, live, and be silent among the migratory*. She has stood close to the fires. Will they burn this hot in her memory? Will she forgive herself for leaving? *Mek dem know we is here*. (328)

She is not alone under the stars, those duppies that have followed her throughout the journey are by her side and will follow her wherever she decides to go. On her last night the landscape and history visit her:

The river heaves; pebbles turn and turn again in the swirl and flow, and she looks through the transparent shallows for what the river bottom might reveal. *Kaíma ágayu namúlalua*. She hears the first language of this place, and feels him there beside her. Kawara? The spears of light dazzle him too. *Namúlalua*. Have we been discovered? (329)

Jean's childhood imaginary friend visits her on her last night showing her the primitive, purest form of Jamaica and its history—the version of history which she should also remember and take with.

The last to narrate in the novel is Jean Landing. Her voice comes through as she is finally on the last leg of her trip. Cezaire-Thompson deliberately shifts Jean's narration from third person to first:

. . . the fact that Jean doesn't speak in her own voice, that she doesn't become a first-person narrator until the very end is very deliberate. She really has to carry and hear all these voices through her first. And that's

also part of what it means to be a writer: That you come to your own voice, often through listening and setting all those other voices in order.

(Cezaire-Thompson and Kenan 59)

She describes everything she sees as leaves off in the taxi cab. She can only see landscape as she writes: "I look among them as I pass, like someone wanting and artifact, something to link the land's memory to my own" (330). On the road she sees a half-naked-mad woman throwing herself onto the cars on the street in panic. The taxi cab she is on swerves to avoid hitting her; as she looks back to see soldiers moving towards the woman "the blinding sun, the speed of the car" impede her from seeing what has happened. Her last memory of Jamaica is "panic and history are mine." She takes her history and the landscape with her before she leaves; madness is now the new history of Jamaica, that is all that is left to Jean. And so, the memory of the landscape becomes a compass to guide her journey.

Chapter Three:

Reclaiming history and embracing identity through transnational landscapes in

Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge*

If you happen to be born into an Indian family, an Indian family from the Caribbean, migratory, never certain of the terrain, that's how life falls down around you. It's close and thick and sheltering, its ugly and violent secrets locked inside the family walls. The outside encroaches, but the ramparts are strong, and once you leave it you have no shelter and no ready skills for finding a different one. I found that out after years of trying. (*The Swinging Bridge* 15)

Indo-Caribbean-Canadian author, Ramabai Espinet was born in San Fernando, Trinidad in 1948. She grew up on the island before being moving, along with her family, to Canada and since then moves between two landscapes, much like Mona, main protagonist in her first novel, *The Swinging Bridge*. Her move to Canada and her constant traveling between both Canada and Trinidad was “influential in highlighting the hyphenated identities Espinet develops in her writing” (Csencsitz 9). Hence, it is between these two locations that she finishes her bachelor's degree from York University in Toronto, Canada and eventually culminated her PhD at the University of the West Indies at St. Augustine, Trinidad focusing on the situation of Euro-creole writers, with emphasis on the works of Jean Rhys and Phyllis Shand Allfrey. She currently teaches at York

University and Seneca College in Toronto, Ontario, Canada where she continues to write and is engaged in the academic field.

She debuted as a poet, launching her collection of poetry *Nuclear Seasons* in 1991, where she writes about the difficulties of being in the diaspora as she attempts to “grapple with the truth and extent of the loss. . . . They are the stories of people who are excommunicated forcibly from their mother land. They are the of a land and also of a culture” (Hong 1). Consequently, her poetry reflects the trauma of displacement and exile of indentured workers, while generations later she is grounding herself on the landscapes of Trinidad, she claims that the island is her “home.” As Kuwabong points out, in his analysis of *Nuclear Seasons*, “Espinet recaptures the landscape of her childhood and teenage years that provide her a sense of place, a home, which is not India, . . .” (42). Although she hasn’t returned to make Trinidad her permanent home, she has stayed for long periods of time and considers her official place of “home” as: “Wherever I am, I recognize that “belongingness” instantly. Place does not matter to me because I know that things change constantly. For me, “home” is a movable shack on a beach, a movable feast” (Savory 4); not much different that Mona, who considers herself a “nowarian,” explained as a:

. . . consciousness [deriving] from the nomadic loves of Caribbean peoples as conceptualized in Edouard Glissant’s *Poetic of Relations*, but it is not an absence of a consciousness of place or home, or memories of lands and landscapes that shape the diasporic life. Rather, it is akin to a type of circular nomadism that Glissant posits as a trademark of Antilleans.
(Kuwabong 36)

There are three major components that make up Espinet as a Caribbean women writer according to Hong,

socially, she is rooted in Canada, because this is the country where she stays at present and enjoys the social status accorded to her.

Geographically, she belongs to West Indies for that's the place where her ancestors moved as indentured labourers. And her historical and cultural roots are spread in India, as it is the land, which has shaped her received notions of life and life after. (3)

Her own definitions of where she belongs, her identity, her sense of being and belonging is reflected in *Nuclear Seasons* and *The Swinging Bridge*—any reading of her works, therefore must be done through her “Indo-Trinidadian Canadian consciousness” (Kuwabong 36).

Scholarship surrounding Ramabai Espinet literary works abound. Her literary contribution touches upon themes that are of great interest in the academic fields: Indo-Caribbeanness, “Indianness”, identity, immigration, exile, family relationships, diaspora, land and history are some of the elements present in her poetry and novel. Omme-Salma Rahemtullah in the article, “‘Indianness’: Identity and Diasporic Consciousness Among Twice Migrants,” focuses on the issues of diaspora and the Indo-Caribbean communities in Caribbean. Rahemtulla’ analysis of *The Swinging Bridge* “seeks to demonstrate how twice migrants of “South Asian” ancestry disrupt narrow definitions of Diaspora, specifically in its construction, memory, relationship, and desire for the ‘homeland’” (2). By using the novel as focus for the analysis, the author questions the term “home/land” as a basis for defining South Asian identity in Canada (9).

Similarly, Rodolphe Solbiac, in his essay “From Landscape to Territory in Caribbean Canadian Literature: Repairing Caribbeanness and Denied Canadianness,” uses the novel *Swinging Bridge* to analyze the “Caribbean-Canadian relation to place” (2). To accomplish this, he uses Caribbean and Canadian landscapes as a tool that incites memory and how “Caribbean-Canadian novelists have imagined a new relation to place, considering that place is as much Canada as the Caribbean, and that development of this new relation implies a metaphorical remapping” (2). He concludes that the use of landscape in the novels he examines, creates a sense of home that can be anywhere in the Caribbean as well as in Canada. Yet, it is Kuwabong’s exploration of land and revisionary history of Espinet’s *The Swinging Bridge* that is closest to the research and analysis that I do in this dissertation. He recognizes that, “Canadian writers who emigrated from the Caribbean, Africa and Asia expand the Canadian literary landscape because their literary output draw on memories of other cultural, historical, and physical landscapes that are not traditionally or historically Canadian” (35). Kuwabong engages Espinet’s “nowarian” consciousness” (36) to understand how she, an Indo-Caribbean writer, can navigate between the Canadian and Caribbean landscape and history to “reclaim their ancestral landscape without abandoning their Canadian one” (49).

Published in 2003, *The Swinging Bridge* debuted as Ramabai Espinet’s first novel and it was awarded “Best First Book” by the Commonwealth Book Prize in 2004. Since its publication, the novel has been used to examine, analyze and critique the topics of indentureship, migration, diaspora, Indo-Caribbean populations, family history, history and land. Her novels delve into these topics and while doing so, Espinet reaffirms her position within the “important feminist poetics of literary and cultural representation in

Caribbean literature” (Mehta 19). In an interview found on the website literaturealiveonline.ca, Ramabai Espinet speaks about one of the topics central to her works--the importance of land and how she is connected to it:

I like to say I know Trinidad. . . I've explored this place. I have mapped the geography of this place. Almost with my feet. . . . That is very important to me. [. . .] It's very very important to me to know what the land feels like and how it changes and how the geography shapes people and all of that. . . . I suppose I like the mystery of it. (1:34-2:27)

Her narrative representations of land, landscapes and family history as delineated and utilized much more clearly and forcefully in, *The Swinging Bridge*.

The novel opens up with what she states is an “untold story” of the women that cross the Kala Pani. The first landscape within which these women are portrayed is the socioeconomic, ecological, spiritual, political and cultural landscapes of India with: — “rands, widows who have escaped the funeral pyre”--line up seeking refuge at the shrine of Shiva (3). These displaced women are soon to cross the waters from India to the Caribbean to become indentured workers, with the promise of a new life, land, and money to support themselves in a new landscape. They know that they will “arrive in Trinidad—Chinidad, land of sugar. They will make plenty of money and the work will be easy because they chinny chalay, sift sugar, all say long” (3-4). With this introduction to her novel, Espinet traces her genealogical roots to a land that marks the beginning to her Indo-Caribbeanness: “My foremothers, my own great-grandmother Gainer, crossing the unknown of the kala pani, the black waters that lie between India and the Caribbean” (4).

This narration sets up the mood to the themes of women, history, displacement and landscapes found in the novel.

Mona Singh's begins her family's and island's histories by invoking the image of hurricane, a natural phenomenon that afflicts Caribbean islands on annual basis, bringing cataclysmic changes to societies and landscapes. The hurricane as a narrative metonym enables her to frame the story of her family within the interstices of Caribbean natural events, events that constantly challenge and confuse any linear chronology of history and human-social ontogenesis. A history birthed in the eye of a storm is not a history that can be told from one perspective or through a unidirectional plot line. She begins her narrative with an assertion of living "in the eyes of the storm," of historical intersections (5). She proceeds to describe how everything around her is like a hurricane: "My whole life arches backwards and forwards according to the speed of the gust around me. In the centre, near the eye, in the place where I live, it is still. A small mercy" (5). Her surroundings are associated with events and cycles in nature perceived and interpreted by humans as chaotic. This idea of chaos, Mona articulates, is exacerbated by the desire of Indo-Trinidadians to deny and erase their *Indianness* and put on the garments of Euro-Canadian identities. For instance, Mona reflects how during the 1940's, the period when Myrtle and Mackie (her parents) were beginning their relationship, was ". . . a time when newly educated people would throw out almost everything Indian at first, and would slowly gather back into their lives those relics that were essential for survival. . . . all seeping gradually back into Indian life in the towns and all well-hidden except at home" (29).

Reflecting on how her family responded to her brother, Kello's "cancer," she again employs the image of the hurricane as her metonymic representation of her family dynamics. Kello's sickness and impending death was never spoken of as a family crisis, but they were all devastated by the issue. She writes how Kello's sickness haunts them all and like bad memories,

. . . hover(s) at the back of our minds like one of those near-hurricane clouds that was black and blue at the time, threatening to break into fury but always passing over the island of Trinidad and waiting until we were out of the way before lashing at smaller, rockier islands and inlets. (15)

None of the members of the family can erase the effect of Trinidad environmental and landscape influences on their lives. Though they are each "born into an Indian family, [it is in an] Indian family form the Caribbean, migratory, never certain of the terrain . . ." these landscapes are part of the place they once called home (15). This umbilical connection to the landscape and nature of Trinidad is ingrained in their memories. This relations to land and history is also questionable because of the multiple negotiations toward defining their identities because of their multiple migratory patterns: from India, across the Kala pani, Trinidad, and now Canada. The use of hurricane metaphors also reflects the complicated nature of their history, not as a linear, narrative rooted in one landscape, but as mobile and changing, hence, emotionally and socially tumultuous.

Their lives are continuous journeys in search of place and identity. As Glissant says, their history and relationship with their landscape is one of a circular nomadism. Their history as I will show, is etched and reflected on every landscape they settle. Thus, although Mona and her family all emigrate to Canada in 1970, they are still very much

connected to the Trinidad of her immediate ancestry. She is made aware of this by her brother, Kello who has bought back the land on Manahambre Road in Princes Town, Trinidad in 1994. The same land his father sold to pay for his profligate addiction to gambling and to debauchery is reclaimed by Kello just before he dies. Mona's train ride from Montreal to Toronto to visit her family and Kello, is a ride across a landscape that rejects them, but which they are determined to embrace as part of their history. The ride also gives Mona plenty of time to reflect on her family's dynamics, and their claimed relationships to Trinidad as home. This train ride enables Mona to observe the unwelcoming landscape of both Quebec and Ontario and she begins to question how this Canadian landscape could never be the paradise it had been presented to them to their migration there. The Canadian landscape is just "bare trees standing in uneven patches of snow" (26). This Canadian landscape of a cold winter stands in sharp contrast to the landscape she remembers of Trinidad. Most of her narrative from her childhood in Trinidad mentions the earthy smells of the soil, the lush fruit trees, cane and cocoa fields, and the flowers that lined her mother's garden: "We grew up in an enchanted forest between two houses, surrounded by mango and plum and mammy-sepote trees. There was even a small patch of sugar cane behind the pigpen; Pappy would painstakingly peel the cane for us and cut it into little strips" (18). But Da-Da's profligacy bankrupted the family, the land was pawned to pay debts, and this generated the big row that led to Kello's migration, first to Britain and later to Canada in search of ways and means to redeem the family land in Trinidad. "The big row" in 1958 changed the Singh family forever. Mama, Mona's paternal grandmother, bequeathed the land on Manahambre Road-- the house hill perched on pillars to protect it from landslides-- to Da-Da (Mackie).

Mona recalls fruit trees and flowers, and she describes the location as “an enchanted forest” where she had the freedom to roam between her own house and that of her grandparents worry free (18). Her freedom was ensured by the land, but all would change before “the big row” shortly after Mama’s death, and a few days before Christmas.

Da-Da had not grieved over Mama’s death. He holds his loss inside and transforms it into a blame game. This generates unnecessary tensions with his family. Subsequently, after Da-Da returns home from some heavy drinking, he flies into a violent rage without provocation. He blames his family for “holding him back” and not allowing him to pursue his dreams. He feels that his wife, Muddie (Myrtle), and his children, Kello, Mona, Johnnie and Babs, place him in a “trap” (21). This habit of blaming everyone for his irresponsibility is Da-Da’s everyday doing. Da-Da’s anger towards Kello and Mona stems from his inability to understand his mother’s, Mama, death and his inability to keep the land. Da-Da wants to sell the property and move to San Fernando in Trinidad, a “rapidly growing commercial centre on the southwestern coast, soon to be dubbed the industrial capital of the country (21). He wants his children to live a modern life; selling the land he has grown up in and leaving Princes Town, where electricity has not yet reached, would mean progress for him and his family. He loses everything because of his gambling, he is irresponsible and finds himself in a vicious circle, and gambles to see if he could have a streak of luck (204-205). Muddie objected to this plan because she believes that selling the property would yield no financial benefits as they still owe mortgage on the house. Muddie’s objection to Da-Da’s plan is also related to her reluctance to leave a familiar landscape, and environment where they had started their

family. A move to the budding San Fernando would signify a loss of the familiar or a loss of historical roots. According to Muddie, they would leave Princes Town with hardly any money to the thriving city of San Fernando.

Mona, at her young age, does not understand the word “mortgage” so she refers to it as *moggage*. For her the word *moggage* is “enticing and [she] imagined it wrapping the house tightly with strong threads that would keep it safe even through earthquake and hurricane. Our house was a safe place, wrapped like a cocoon with moggage threads, built securely on “pillow trees” that cushioned as we slept” (24). The *moggage*, Da-Da’s “frustrated” progress and an invisible tie to the land, fuels the big row and disrupted Mona’s enchanted forest. Her relationship to her nation, the enchanted forest she grew up in, Trinidad had changed in her eyes forever. She writes, “I knew nothing would be the same again” (25). Despite the consequences of the big row, and Muddie’s worries about the mortgage, the land, as well as everything they own, which are sold and the family eventually moves to a newly purchased land in La Plata, a suburb of San Fernando (34). This decision marks their new nomadicity, and un-location as a family.

Later when Da-Da’s decides to relocate to Canada, Mona understands. For Da-Da to live in Trinidad after he squanders everything the family owns, and exacerbated by his anger against the predominantly Afro-Trinidadian political regime, his lack of progress in social and economic standing, which would make it almost impossible for him to perform his ideal of masculinity as husband, father, and provider to wife and four children would be suicidal. Consequently, he discards any notion of clinging on, like his father had done before, to the land bequeathed to the family in Trinidad:

To keep the land. Everything for the land. Old-fashioned thinking, completely out of step with progress and modernization. . . .The land had been everything to Mama and Pappy. . . .But Da-Da was a modern man, sure that he could not have been easily fooled, and that his decision to sell and move to the city was a sound one. (27)

Mona felt sympathy for her father's failed dreams. Da-Da wanted to study in England to become a lawyer but his mother's, Mama, sickness and his brother's, Junior, death abruptly changed the course of his plans. The eventual selling of the land marked the beginning of their "pitching about from pillar to post"; Mona's existence as a nowarian is propelled despite the warnings: ". . . Mama came from the other side to warn Da-Da about the perils in store for him. Pappy was asleep in the hammock one day when the voice came to him clear and strong, saying, "Dear, don't let Mackie sell the house." But two years after Mama died the house was sold . . . (34). Although they bought land near the flourishing city of San Fernando, the Singh family still had to wait to move in to their new home, so they had to stay with Muddie's sister, Aunt Vannie and her husband Baddall, at Grandma Lil's house out in Iere Village.

But if part of Da-Da's reason to leave Trinidad for Canada is also fueled by what he considers racism and cronyism, his relocation Canada, the new land of promise, does not save him from similar experiences.

We had reproduced our very early life here [Canada] in many ways; being in my parents' house again brought this truth home to me. We, and other like us, were living in our insular world, oblivious of how we appeared to the rest of the society around us. . . .All it took then in Trinidad was

looking Indian; all it took now in Canada was skin color. We had not oved one inch. (81)

Indeed, in Canada, his experience is felt much kore, for he realizes he believed in an illusion sold to him by his Canadian missionary education and success tales by people that had visited Canada. He expresses regret when asked by Mona on their decision to move to Canada (95).

Mona's escape from "rape or murder" at the age of 11 determines her resolve to leave Trinidad. On her way to buy some food for Muddie in downtown La Plata, the naïve 11 years old Mona is tricked by Sonny, shifty looking man into going with him, ostensibly to collect money Sonny says he owes Muddie. Sonny tells Mona he owes some money to Muddie and wants to pay her back. Her ignorance leads her to believe Sonny's story, totally forgetting her mother's warning about strange men, and the many stories of rapes in the San Fernando. Dropped off nearby a cocoa farm, Sonny tries to rape Mona. Suddenly, Mona understands the danger she is in. She realizes that they are surrounded by the "line of cocoa trees...short and stubby. Their curving branches bent themselves near the road into a sheltered arbour" (43), and hence hidden from the public. If she fails to resist and put up a fight, the landscape would swallow her. She would then be transported to a place where not only would she lose her virginity, but also her life. Mona recalls the Cedar Trace road sign near the cocoa farm. In some cultures, such as the Lebanese, the cedar tree symbolizes eternity and peace and according to the bible they represent immortality and protection. Though Mona escapes physically unscathed from Sonny, yet the incident, traumatizing as it is, leaves emotional scars in Mona that linger for the rest of her life. It might be argued that she had been protected by the landscape—

the cedar tree provided protection. When she arrived back to Muddie an hour late her mother's fear that Mona had been in harm's way had been confirmed. No one was to know of what happened, especially Da-Da. Mona recalls, "Muddie muttering, almost to herself, 'I can't tell him anything. If I tell him anything, Mona will never escape. Mona will never escape. . .'" (46).

Mona experiences racism in Canada on her train ride from Montreal to visit Kello in Toronto. Expressing his discomfort at the loud music played by a rude white man, an Asian Canadian man is told in ". . . a piercing whisper hissed" (47) that if non-white people do not like the rudeness and racist insinuations by white Canadians they should leave and return to their countries of origin as if Canada belonged to only white people. "If you don't like it, why don't you go back to where you came from?" Nothing in his manner had prepared me for this assault. . . . I was shaken, suddenly close to tears at the unkindness of life, of the racism of this place that was always ready to crack you across your back when you least expected it" (47). This makes Mona realize that no matter how long she and her family and other non-European immigrants stay in Canada and try to integrate into Euro-Canadian cultural spaces, they will forever be phenotypically marked as outsiders and not accepted nor allowed full integration; as Mona once said of Da-Da" ". . . against the Canadian landscape I saw only a brown Indian man" (79). Canada will never really be home for her people and the landscape also seems to refuse to register their presence.

To compensate for this rejection of cultural, ethnic, and racial reception into Euro-Canadian society and landscape defined by Europeanness, Muddie recreates a Trinidadian type landscape in the suburbs of North Toronto as she gardens the way she

would garden back in Trinidad. To think that this gardening is temporary because the fall/winter season would wilt away what she had done in summer. Nothing about this landscape in Canada is permanent. As Kuwabong points out in his article, “Canada’s landscape lacks similar and emotional warmth” and stands in stark contrast to her Trinidadian paradise (44). Divya Tolia-Kelly creates a metaphor out of the “naturalization” of non-native plants into foreign lands to elucidate the process of naturalizing citizenships. She explains:

The general belief is that non-native species are a threat and that native species are under threat from aggressive, organic ‘miscegenation’ and thus the ecosystem of our native land needs to be preserved from the threat of ‘foreign’ invasion. However within these narratives are notions of plants that were non-native being naturalized. (3)

That need or desire to bring to the Canadian landscape elements of home is and is rejected, not only by the Canadian landscape but by Torontonians and other European-Canadians who view the Singh family as different. It’s like a natural “rejection” that impedes the garden to grow and flourish. Nothing brought into the Canadian landscape can assimilate and flourish in the same way it could in Trinidad. As Mona points out, “We drove throughout the city, heading north through a mess of construction debris and ugly high-rise buildings erupting without warning out of the sidewalk. Not a pretty place...” (49). Mona is still critical of the Canadian landscape although that had been her “home” more than half of her life.

When Mona finally gets to see Kello at the hospital he tells her about his plans to repurchase the family land Da-Da had so carelessly pawned. Unlike Da-Da’s defeatists

and limited perception of the land and its significance to economic and social mobility, liberation, prosperity and rootedness, Kello's forward looking vision of the land enables him to do for the family something that Da-Da was never capable of doing. The land is in a sense a representation, a symbol of belonging to a place, a metonymic imaginary of permanence, rooting places of origin, and not social stacticity. Kello's desire to purchase back and develop the family land was to teach his father the meaning of being a real man, and for being so inconsiderate to the desires of his family, Kello wants

...the whole property, he said, the land on Manahambre Road, with Pappy and Mama's house on the Pierre Street end and our big wooden structure smack in the middle. My memories on the train about this early childhood home of ours came back sharply, . . . he wanted me to be his proxy for the land business. (53).

Kello makes a passionate request of Mona:

I want you to go and act on my behalf. Go to Trinidad, inspect the land, and confirm that the transaction takes place. Be my right arm. Bess says that the whole Southland is booming because of oil revenues. She is suggesting a development—terraced townhouses, something like that. I'm asking you go look at the property, get a feel for things on that end. Even if I wasn't sick, I've been away for so long that I wouldn't know how to read the scene. You can do it better than I can, you always researching Trini ting, you're the best one to go. Do this for me, Mon. I want this land, Pappy's land. (53)

This passage indicates various things: Kello is first to leave Trinidad; Mona is much more attached to Trinidad than any other of her siblings; Kello feels strongly for his lost family land because it had been bequeathed to the family by Pappy; and Trinidad is undergoing changes and is economically growing. Thus, when Kello decides to repurchase the land, and despite Mona's protests he knows that she will fare fine with the business of purchasing the land on his behalf. Interestingly, though Mona feels she had settled in Canada and land in Trinidad held no relevance to her, she is persuaded by Kello to embark of the trip back to Trinidad to initiate the repurchase:

He was bent on buying, but I couldn't help trying to tell him how ownership meant nothing to me. I wondered to myself about the men of the family and their very different responses to land. Pappy had felt all along that our land should never had been sold, while Da-Da, always reaching for the big kill, had seen the country property as an impediment to his mobility upwards and townwards. Of course, the land was no longer in the countryside, so Kello was showing good business sense. But beyond that, I thought, he was manifesting a powerful masculine drive to possess, to control, even in the face of a terminal illness. (55-56)

It is Kello's show of what real masculinity is; something his father fails at. Kello in providing the financial backing and also directing what the money is to be used for through surrogates such as Mona and Bess, demonstrates to his father what he should have done. Kello is though the son, becomes the "man" of the family, the real patriarch, for even in death, his wishes are carried out for the sake of his family and his children. Kello wants the land because of the family history behind the land, the vision of his

paternal grandparents struggling to buy back the land they had live on for so many years. Pappy had to walk from Princes Town to Petitbourg to see a lawyer to fend off a moneylender threatening to take away their property. Kello knew the story from Pappy himself. He felt the value of the family land: “But his (Kello) mind was fixed on the land, its history, its future” (57). He knew Pappy had taken out a mortgage on the property with the great sacrifice, he has four small children at the time and had just been laid off from the sugar factory after cursing the white overseer. Kello is sympathetic to Pappy’s desire to keep the land and understands the disappointment his grandfather must have felt when his own son didn’t respect his wishes to not sell: “And that land will be ours again, Mona. All is not lost” (59). This act, nonetheless, redeems the family name and represents according to Kuwabong, “the reunification with Trinidad as a place of rebirth and returns, without foreclosing their spaces/places within the Canadian landscape” (44-45). Mona, being Kello’s proxy, had to face something she had avoided all of her life, responsibility. It was up to her to grant Kello’s dying wish and to give Pappy, posthumously, back the land they had lost—she was in charge of the family history and their legacy. Mona was now in charge of re-visiting and redefining land for her family.

This new responsibility excites her once she accepts the role. Now that Mona knows she is going back to Trinidad as a Proxy, she wants to know about her history, her family’s history. This sudden desire arises from her recognition that in Trinidad, the Indian has finally found a voice and political power. Their culture is no longer submerged within either the African or the European cultural remnants but have become a third major force that shapes Trinidadian political, natural, and cultural landscapes. Her Indo-Trinidadian identity and history can now be celebrated with pride: “I had been

determined to reject the role of family custodian, family caretaker. But something had changed now, and I found myself approaching the job with interest, wanting to handle the evidence of our passage—the mementos, the letters and prizes from a past time” (62). There was a yearning to understand her history through links with the belongings in her parents’ attic. It was there she learned of Pappy’s bamboo-wife, Etwaria.

Pappy had had a Hindu wedding under tents and bamboo, ceremony traditional to the Indian villages but was not deemed legitimate nor legal in Trinidad. He had abandoned Etwaria to marry legally, in other words, had a Christian wedding with Mama. “These Church people from Canada interfered so much with our own lives; ...allowing a few white men to rule their lives and tell them who to marry and who to leave” (64). Etwaria had not remarried and reached out to Pappy as soon as she learned about Mama’s passing. If Pappy had not left Etwaria all his descendants would be must as illegitimate as the Hindu wedding, it was Christianity that made them legitimate and able to own and reclaim their land now. “Pappy’s land could never have been ours” (64).

It is in her parent’s attic in Canada where Mona recalls “De Doctah,” Dr. Eric Williams, Trinidad’s prime minister after their independence. Mona describes him as a “highly educated son of the soil, a black man walking proudly through the land...” (67). The presence of England was beginning to wash away and a feeling of coming together as a Nation was the talk. Cultures were to be celebrated—not only African but Indian as well. Mona writes, “It was real, this culture of ours, a Creole bacchanal, multiracial, multicultural, cosmopolitan” (67). Under “the promise of [a] new nation” the De Doctah coordinated the visit of the famous and well-known choreographer and dancer La Rosette to visit Mona’s school, La Pastora. La Rosette, in real life, was “historically” known for

her love of Trinidadian culture. Despite “making it” big in Broadway, La Rosette or Dr. Beryl Eugenia Mc Burnie, was “committed to birthing a nation” (caribbeanmemoryproject.com). She was in charge of educating students on the island’s culture, “as part of the Ministry of Culture’s new program,” so her visit to La Pastora to teach this new generation a traditional dance was no easy feat; these girls were “stiff and unresponsive and all her appeals to ancestral pride met with nothing. Obviously we at La Pastora were done with cane cutting” (68). La Rosette reworked her famous “Canboulay” piece to suit better the girls at La Pastora, mostly Indian girls. As she prepares them Mona cites La Rosette as saying:

Imagine, my darlings, caneland burning, men with Canboulay sticks held high above their heads, bright skirts swishing, saris shimmering, Indian bells tinkling at first, then clashing, clanking, crashing, and the resolve, the resolve of the people! People in the Canboulay riots, the Hosay riots, people, our people, all our different races coming together, imagine the beauty, my darlings...” (69)

The girls at La Pastora dance for the prime minister, Dr. Hector James (fictional name Espinet gives to the prime minister), and La Rosette. The coming together of the African, Asian, and European is beginning to form the new Trinidad post-independence and Mona is part of this new formation.

Da-Da is a considerable influence in the political formation of Mona. In the same Canadian attic she finds Etwaria’s letter to her Pappy, and the words to the song La Rosette would choreograph for La Pastora, she encounters the letters to the editor her father would send to the local newspaper under the pseudonym of Nizam Maharaj where

he spoke “for all Indians” because according to Da-Da, ‘For all we, Hindu and Muslim, Indian is Indian’” (69). Mona yet believes that her father was “full of Indian pride too when it suited him. Yet he was a Creole to his heart...” (69). Trinidad was changing, it was the time before independence and Dr. Hector James was searching for candidates to form his new political cabinet and asked Da-Da to join in this new political venture.

Divided by the ideal and the practice of his beliefs, Da-Da declines the political invitation and begins to dissent with the new prime minister via letters to the newspapers: “Da-Da refused to believe in racial divisions, even when they were all around him. He held to the romantic idea of a body politic that would accept people of every creed, every race. He saw himself as an Indian man and a Trinidadian, neither cancelling out the other, a natural inheritor of the Creole culture he loved” (71). Mona writes that to her “father and many others the prime minister’s partisan display of power for the benefit of the black population had destroyed any vision of oneness and equality. ...In Da-Da’s letters I read the map of our departure from that early island home into a Canadian migrant existence” (72).

Da-Da’s political views paves the way to Mona’s transnational new landscape of Canada. Although he has an ideal and feels he speaks for all Indo-Trinidadians, Da-Da himself reveals himself as a virulent racist, separatist, and a firm believer in keeping all the races in Trinidad separate. To prove his opposition to racial integration, he prohibits Mona from dating Brew, her first true love, a mulatto soccer player she met while attending La Pastora. Da-Da cannot conceive of his daughter marrying a non-Indian, though he boasts of how he has had sex with African-Trinidadian girls whom he probably sees only as sex-objects for his pleasure. He was not content with Mona mixing with an

Afro-Trinidadian by douglarizing³ his family—shaming the family and undermining his belief of breeding and mixing with other races (75).

In the same Canadian attic at her parent's home Mona learns of her father's decision to migrate to Canada. It was a time after the racial tensions and violence in Guyana that Indo-Trinidadians, fearing this could be replicated in Trinidad, decided to migrate to Canada, Britain and the United States of America in droves. Yet, there was a marked divide between those that decided to stay and those who believed that leaving was the best option. "Da-Da did not like the idea of migrating and starting all over, but in the end he decided to leave, even though it meant that his separation from the earth that had made him, the earth where his navel string was buried, was now complete. . . . All our navel strings are buried in that Manahambre land" (77). Leaving is hence not just an uprooting of that which is symbolically buried in Trinidad but a fear of not coming back to what is home. The tradition of burying navel strings in the home's backyard reflects a sense of belonging, a place to come back to—the buried navel would somehow connect the child of that home to that specific place. There are no navel strings buried in Canada therefore, there are no real ties to that landscape.

Despite living in Canada therefore, their sense of un-belongingness follows them, the feeling of displacement follows them from Trinidad to Canada. Their brownness, their Indianness makes them different in Trinidad and the change of landscape had not changed the feeling of displacement and not belonging. The Singh's home in Toronto

³ Defined by Lomarsh Roopnarine as "the mixing of African and Indians. . . . was regarded with a sense of shame that was born out of the tensions between the Africans and Indians and was perpetrated mainly by the ruling European class to ensure security" (Chapter 7).

would never be like that tropical garden Sonia, Mona's cousin, lives where the trees and plants from "famous gardens and conservatories in Europe" could flourish in foreign soil and be transplanted back to Europe. The Singh's are transplanted to Canada but that did not necessarily mean progress or that they prosper, they are just another Indian family that migrated to a different landscape. Mona asked:

Do you think coming to Canada was worthwhile? Giving up everything in Trinidad, I mean? On balance, you would do it again? Da-Da answered with a great deal more than heat than I had anticipated. Never! It wasn't worth it at all, at all. I shoulda never leave! Look at us here, not one single bit more advanced then when we left, and every damn thing you have to fight so hard to get. Every blasted little thing. (95)

His regret of leaving Trinidad is evident, and, in the end, the illusion of progress that seduced him into relocating in Canada vaporizes, leaving him more despondent than when he left Trinidad. Not all is a loss. His children receive the best schooling money could not even buy in Trinidad, and all are successful, but nothing comes to them any easier than if they would have stayed in Trinidad.

Mona spends some of her school vacations at her cousin Sonia's house where she goes to play on the swinging bridge on the property with all the local children. She is dared to cross the bridge by Kenny. As she crosses the bridge, Kenny and his friends swing the delicate bridge back and forth making the crossing very tricky and dangerous. She fears she will fall into the river, but she braves it out and manages to cross over. She dares Kenny who, was able to successfully cross. "It wasn't just his swinging of the bridge that enraged me; it was his little mannish attitude, as if he was sure he was better

than I was and would always be” (87). Who crosses and why? Who gets from one place to another easier and why? This swinging bridge could signify the transition from one landscape to another. Much like the swinging bridge, crossing the Kala Pani for her ancestors and the Singh’s move to Canada, was an unstable one; not everyone’s crossing is stable or even possible.

In Canada, before leaving for Trinidad, Mona dreams that she is briefly staying in Ramgoolie Trace, the house their family rented before moving to San Fernando. This scene is a dream mixed with a childhood memory; it’s as if she is sleep walking. It is a small wooden house and she recalls the rain and hearing her parents argue about Baboonie, a local beggar woman Da-Da does not want near his house. Muddie refuses to agree with Da-Da and wants Baboonie to help around the home. It is rumored that Baboonie is routinely raped nightly by villagers. She is a very skinny ragged looking woman who lived in a shack behind Toolsie’s home. Mona recalls hearing Baboonie singing Ramayan. She recalls:

I listened to music and a story, till then unknown to me, coming through the wailing voice of an old beggar woman, crying through the rain, breaking up the classical words of the Ramayan with her own tale of exile and banishment, and in broken chords and unexpected riffs telling the story of a race. Of racial and tribal grief, of banishment, of the test of purity. (113)

Manahambre Road in Trinidad is resurrected as part of Mona’s landscape upon her return to Trinidad after 22 years away. The imaginary landscape has become the reclaimed physical landscape. From hazy or erased memories and flights of fancy before

she arrives back in Trinidad, the landscape has now become part of her reality of landscape experience, both now and recalled. It all familiar despite the time lapse of 22 years. She stops and asks if she is on Pierre street and a local quickly questions, “Where you from? You from away?” She is a stranger to Trinidad and feels “chastised” (121). The land is still there, though its contours “. . . had changed and I recognized nothing. . . the land had changed form, slipping and sloughing off posts and trees and memories to end up as this wilderness” (121). The landscape had changed, because the land has reclaimed its original contours before humans settled there during Pappy’s time, but it still is the same for beneath the so-called wilderness look, it contained the umbilical cords, the memories, the histories of the families that lived there before. Mona grieves what was once her home on Manahambre Road and brought to tears with nostalgia of a landscape that no longer exists as the tamed landscape she had known as a child.

Mona stays with Bess, a dougla cousin, in Iere Village. Bess always interested in her lineage, is also in charge of the transaction that will secure the purchase of the land. To Bess, “[f]amily was not just breeding and reproducing-it was a work of art in itself, as carved and sculpted as any other legacy that one could leave behind” (123). Bess has inherited Grandma Lil’s house something Mona says is “no easy task in Trinidad, where legislation about inheriting property was still colonial to its core, ignoring illegitimacy and the straying habits of ordinary people” (123).

Mona’s first day in Trinidad is an intense one. She is torn between her childhood memories of her first home and the reality that now stands in that landscape that she no longer recognizes: “I fell asleep that evening thinking of the wilderness that the land had become, this place where I had first breathed life, where all that was to shape me took

root within my first seven years, opening inside me with perfect timing, and only threatening to disintegrate now that so much time had passed and so much had been left to chance” (126). She dreams of the old home on Manahambre Road and she sees most of what she remembers of the land in this dream sequence. In her dream, Kello waits for her at the top of the stairs of her old home. The house she dreams about is a mix of her childhood home with the place at Ramagoolie Trace. Now the home, in her memory is big, but in wakefulness, seems to be small and “impoverished”. In her state of wakefulness and sleep she hears what she identifies as Da-Da’s cries and Muddies comforting voice, but the cries begin mixing in with screams that lead her to pray for her family in her sleep.

Kello’s repurchasing of the land is the talk when Mona goes back to Toronto with deed in hand. She narrates, “He examined and re-examined the deed, the photographs, asking endless questions about the property. I suspected that he had never believed he would regain possession of the land” (148). Muddie, Mona’s mother, knows that “even the repurchase of the land was direct comment on him and his own inability to hold on to it” (148). That is Kello’s redemption and Da-Da’s condemnation--- Kello is able to do something his father is no able to dot, regain the family heirloom. Da-Da’s excitement is hence evident:

Now, overcome by the general babble of excitement, Da-Da got up and embraced Kello, dissolving into sobs, mumbling about how proud he was that his son had reclaimed the family property and how this could be a new start for everybody. Our father, the optimist, still most innocent, the most idealistic of all of us, always ready for a new start. Kello held him

easily but his eyes remained dry. Da-Da went on and on, as if unconscious of the absurdity of his words, until with unexpected directness Kello called him to account, “What made you sell the property even after you were told not to?” (149)

That reconciliatory move between father and son marks a turn for the good for the family. We finally get to hear the “truth” behind Da-Da’s decision to sell the land. He feels that he is not “catching a break” and knew that selling the land is not the correct thing to do. It is an act of defiance against the will of his own mother and father. He understands the importance of the land to family history, but his personal desire to move up in the world and his feeling of personal “stagnation” moves him to sell, “For generations the members of our family had all come to consciousness in the same place, rooted to the same spot on the island, seeing the same trees and streams and beaches, bound by the same laws. Then in my generation, everything had changed” (151). Thus, although the land is an important part of who the Singh family is, unlike Mona and Kello, Babsie has no recollection of the landscape she is born into. To her therefore, Trinidad is not a landscape of home; “Babsie remembered nothing of her old house, but she was moved to tears at the sight of the place where she was born, the landscape that had no presence in her memories” (149)—Trinidad is just some distant historical and romantic place that has no relevance for her.

Mona recalls a game, “the nowarian game” she played with her cousin Sonia where she would pretend to be a homeless person seeking shelter and Sonia would be the owner of the place Mona is seeking to stay in. This state of displacement stays with Mona through her life. The game is always at the back of her mind: “. . . I sometimes found

myself entertaining the fancy of walking away. ...A homeless person would be walking into an ordered shelter while I would be walking away and becoming a nowarian" (152). Back in Toronto with her family, Mona feels at peace. "Now we were all back in the same house, the ancestral lands reclaimed. I was sure a deeper meaning would unravel in time, but for now I felt as if our history was like a spider's web in which we were all caught fast" (161). With Kello on his death bed they discuss the land and how the development is going. He only hopes that his children would learn the value of land on Manahambre Road; that would be their inheritance, the love for the land (165). Da-Da asks for Mona's forgiveness for the way he prevented her from dating Bree. He tries to rationalize his violent response to Mona and Bree as a potential couple on what is often interpreted as family honor, though beneath it all, Da-Da's response is racially motivated. As she walks from the hospital room to the car with her father she reminisces about the Trinidadian landscape. It's a calming scene between father and daughter. He wants to make her understand why she always worried about her, but racial politics can't be erased from the whole situation. Muddie tells Mona: "I didn't grow up like you, you know, pitching around here, there, and everywhere. I came from somewhere.' I knew these were dry words of rebuke about Da-Da, but as usual she did not continue in this line" (253).

Mona finds Gainder's story recorded in Grandma Lil's journal. There she also found the Hindi songs her great grandmother had been prohibited to sing; songs that spoke of Gainder's forbidden love, Jeevan, whom she met crossing the Kala Pani:

All of it was there. Everything about us, where we came from, our connection to despised women like Gainder Beharry, like Baboonie, the journey on those ships of indenture in the nineteenth century. I put the

books down and sat there in the dusty storeroom, my brain filled up with images of ships, ocean waves, an island called The Rock, veiled women, bold and frightened at the same time, fearless men whose powerful arms could kill a sailor with a single blow. . . . A runaway woman from a village, a journey by night, a decision to leave India. A woman alone. A story waiting to be told—my own story. (274-275)

Mona not only learns about her family history but also about her personal history. Most importantly she realizes how ignorant she is about the etymology of the word *rand*, history of indentureship, the Kala Pani, emancipation of slavery.

Mona's trip to Trinidad takes her to the North, away from what she is comfortable with in Manahambre Road, to visit Bess' Indo-Rastafarian boyfriend up North. Her visits takes her to an in-ward journey to rediscover who she is and where her sense of self belongs, but also to the diverse landscapes of Trinidad. "I had never been to Mt. Hololo before and marveled at the wild tawniness of the vegetation, the mountain's rugged contours, its sense of impermeability. The land here in the North differed completely from that in the south" (291). Rajesh, Bess' boyfriend was a painter and specialized in paintings of the Trinidadian landscapes. Mona is amazed by his talent, but she is especially impressed by a work he has done with grains of rice: "The tiny scenes were intricate, marked by a sense of collision, fruit and vegetables, landscape and people of all races clashing in miniscule spaces" (291). Being caught in the liminal and difficult position as a dougla, Bess tells Mona:

You see Mona, the grand picture is still what everybody wants. The righteous Indian family, intact, coming across the kala pani together. Like

the way the migration is presented today. Not this story. Not a journey of young widows looking for a new life. Wife-murder? Beatings? You must be mad, they would say. (297)

It is the personal history that enriches and forms a national history of Trinidad.

Mona asks Bess to include the history of Gainder as part of the exhibition she is creating for a fund raiser. But like Carene who, in making the documentary history of Haitian women elided the role of Cecile, Bess, also decides that the Indian community is not ready to receive Gainder's personal history of crossing the *kala pani*:

She seemed to understand the long-term political consequences. Her decision not to tell the story of Gainder's life at the bazaar had shown her awareness clearly. Not now, she had said, maybe later. It would be impolitic for anybody now to suggest that most Indians had not migrated as families, or that once they had arrived, they had not set up families post-haste. To Indian men and other too, the idea of unattached women, especially in those early days, would conjure up one image—that of the whore. I remembered Da-Da's fear for me when I began to show my willful ways. "What on de ground is dog own" was still true, I thought.

(301)

Now that Mona is aware of the importance of her history and landscape, she questions what life would have been like if she had stayed in Trinidad but quickly interjects that: "I would still have left and become a wanderer, a nowarian" (303). She is now more aware of the Eurocentric histories imposed on her in school in Trinidad, and recognizes the cultural damage this had caused her, especially in regard to her Indo-Trinidadian identity

and personal history. That history had made her believe that Indo-Trinidadians had contributed nothing to the history of the world. Now she counters that by asserting: “. . . we built our lives not out of nothing, but out of the back-breaking work of reinvention” (303). Thus, when Mona leaves Trinidad the second time she is moved, “In a strange way, [feeling] as if I was leaving home for the first time” (304). When arrives back in Canada, she declares:

I am part of this city I live in, and right now I want no other place. Like any other migrant navigating new terrain, I bring my own beat to the land around me... part of it at war with itself until the separate parts recognize the pint of fusion and merge seamlessly. When the rhythm is becomes right, everyone forgets the time when cacophony threatened or drown the whole enterprise. (305)

Mona’s history is not exclusive to Trinidad as a geographical location—her history invades and prevails in the spaces she reclaims as home: Trinidad and Canada. Mona Singh’s journey from Canada to Trinidad and back again she rediscovers and embraces her Indo-Trinidadian identity.

Chapter Four:

Historical/Political Landscapes and Beyond in Julia Alvarez' *In the Name of*

Salomé

Just introducing these ghosts by name has recalled them so vividly, they rise up before her, then shimmer and fade in the shaft of sunlight in which she is sitting. Maybe it is a good thing to finally face each on squarely. Maybe that is the only way to exorcise ghosts. To become them. (*In the Name of Salome* 42)

Julia Álvarez was born in New York City to Dominican parents on March 27, 1950. Her parents decided to move back to the Dominican Republic when she was three months old “preferring the dictatorship of Trujillo to the U.S.A of the early 50’s” (juliaalvarez.com). They moved back to the United States in 1960 after fearing persecution from Trujillo’s dictatorship. She completed schooling in New York City where she recalls being made fun of because of her “incorrect” usage of English and her Hispanic features. She attended Middlebury College where she completed her Bachelor of Arts and the obtained her Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Creative Writing from Syracuse University. After teaching at Middlebury College for ten years she decided that she wanted to concentrate on writing and resigned to her tenured position. Currently she teaches part-time at Middlebury as her love for teaching is part of how she defines herself.

Her list of literary works is extensive; she writes everything from children's books, young adult literature, short stories, poetry, and novels. Her most read novels are *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, *In the Time of the Butterflies*, *¡Yo!*, and *In the Name of Salomé*. Her appeal to the public in general is evident. A plethora of reviews, articles, essays, and research have been written about her novels. Topics such as feminism, history, alienation, sexuality, language and landscape are constantly visited and explored in her works.

Her most noted work is *In the Time of the Butterflies* which was later adapted to the big screen. Her treatment of history in this novel, which narrates the lives of the Mirabal sisters who were brutally murdered during Trujillo's regime, has been praised and critically acclaimed. Her other highly historical novel is *In the Name of Salomé* which did not receive as much praise as her previous novel about the Mirabal sisters.

Jennifer Acker, in her review of *In the Name of Salome*, highlights the various "love stories" found in the novel: "love for one's country and one's family (the fatherland and the paterfamilias); love for poetry and the flesh that inhabits it; love of beauty and idealism. With each love, of course, comes a unique betrayal" (168). Despite all the research Acker praises Julia Alvarez's for doing to write the novel, Acker believes that the novel's shortcoming falls into its predictability: "...there is little forward momentum, little for us to imagine; most of the story unfolds exactly as we expect" (168). Consequently, she realizes that the reader will be left for a desire to research more about the lives of Salomé and Camila delving into the poetry of *la musa de la patria* (169).

Similarly, Dixia Ramirez's "Salomé Ureña's Blurred Edges: Race, Gender, and Commemoration in the Dominican Republic," explores "the paradox of a country whose

first “national poet” was a mixed raced woman, but whose official celebrations of this poet evince its Eurocentric, patriarchal ideals” (45). One of the ways she accomplishes this is by examining the “diasporic Dominican revisions” of the poet’s legacy in Chiqui Vicioso and Julia Alvarez’s revisionist histories and their “feminist perspectives” (53-54). She applauds them for “salvaging Ureña’s legacy from traditional Eurocentric, patriarchal nationalism” to bring to light Ureña’s “full humanity that earlier literary and visual portrayals had denied her” (54). Julia Alvarez, according to Ramírez, successfully “affirmed” Salomé Ureña’s blackness in a nation bent on white-washing historical figures in Santo Domingo (54).

On the other hand, Julee Tate’s analysis in “My Mother, My Text: Writing and Remembering in Julia Álvarez's *In the Name of Salomé*,” focuses on how Alvarez’s uses the novel *In the Name of Salomé* to negotiate her identity “through works that superficially appear to be biographical or fictional rather than autobiographical in nature” (54). She examines how Alvarez explores her own identity through the lives of Salomé and Camila “in relation to her mother and her motherland” (54). Through her research on Salomé and Camila, Julia Alvarez, according to Tate, “attempts to establish a “home” or a specific cultural space by textually negotiating between two distinct cultural sites: the Caribbean (represented by the mother) and her adopted homeland (the United States)” (54). Julia Alvarez, in an interview conducted by The John Adams Institute, confesses that

. . .these two women [Salomé and Camila] are bookends for me. From 1850 to 1973. It’s the history, it’s the century, that turbulent century when Latin America was really in the throes of defining and finding itself. And

so, in a sense, through these women, I was able to muse and meditate on what it was to be a Latin American. And, in a sense I say, that this is the novel in which I found my Latin American self again. Even though it's written in English. (18:38-19:52)

Alvarez rediscovers herself through the massive research she carried out to write this book. That self-discovery is rendered through the persona of Camila. *In the Name of Salomé* has thus been recognized as her “most ambitious work to date” (Ruta “Daughters of Revolution”).

Julia Alvarez' *In the Name of Salomé* is a fictional exposé of the lives of Salomé Ureña and Camila Henríquez, based on two important historical figures from the Dominican Republic. Salomé Ureña was the first poet recognized and exalted as the first feminist while her daughter, Camila Henríquez, is considered an important intellectual/essayist who worked in the United States as well as in Cuba and in Mexico. Much of what is narrated in the novel resonates and concurs with factual historical records. The novel is divided into two sections. Each section is sub-divided into four different chapters, with each chapter further re-divided in two sections with titles alternating between Spanish and English and named after selected poems by Salomé. The interlacing of mother-daughter narrative focalizations function like a discursive practice through which Alvarez seeks to construct a dialogue between a home-based mother and diasporic daughter.

Each character's narrative then can be read as a filler of the narrative gaps and silences in the other character's story. While Camila's sections are titled in English and written in third person (for the most part), Salomé's are titled in Spanish and spoken in

first person. This could be a conscious choice by Alvarez to demonstrate a distance between mother and daughter—using Spanish and language as well narrative techniques of first- and third-person language to establish a detachment between the culture, homeland, biological and cultural environment. Salomé’s use of Spanish denotes the idea of the mother tongue as the originator of the story to which the daughter comes to from and at distances while Camila’s use of English, a language foreign to Salomé, demonstrates her ability to navigate a different world, unattached from the Dominican Republic and her mother. Hence, despite using different narrative techniques, both timelines are narrating their lives: Salomé’s parting from when she is a little girl growing up in a tumultuous Dominican Republic set against the background of the invasion by Haiti and constant changes in regimes; Camila’s story begins from her physically and psychoemotionally leaving Vassar College, where she has been a professor at for 18 years. She mentally journeys down memory lane back to the Dominican Republic to the first four years of her childhood. Here she is confronted by these childhood memories of her mother before the mother passes away.

Camila has lived and worked as a professor at Vassar College for eighteen years in Poughkeepsie, New York in the USA. While in Poughkeepsie, she lives in an attic of a building she shares with other professors. Living in the attic suggest the sociocultural and psychoemotional landscapes of Camila: “She has always loved attics, their secretiveness, their niches and nooks, where those never quite at home in the house can hide” (1). This love for a secretive space reflects her fear of intimacy⁴ reflected throughout the novel;

⁴ Fear of intimacy as understood in the online article “Understanding a Fear of Intimacy: Signs, Causes, and Coping” which defines this as “the fear of sharing a

Camila could never fit in because she was an intellectual, a woman, bisexual and a foreigner in the United States—breaking all conventions expected from a woman in the first half of the twentieth century. Alvarez describes her as “bead unstrung from the necklace of the generations” (2)—her legacy stopped with her. Camila is a nomad, never feeling at home in one place and she was single and motherless. The peculiar trait of fearing intimacy that Camila exhibits leads to a different analysis of landscape and history in this particular novel.

Camila Henriquez is on her way to Cuba right after the Cuban revolution led by Fidel Castro. The journey to Cuba may be her way of seeking a connection with an ideal that promises a utopian existence without social hierarchies. It is her way of looking for an illusion to “completely [immerse herself] to something—yes, like her mother” (7). On this new adventure, treasured luggage that defines who she is, and her history is in “her suitcase and the trunk of her mother’s papers and poems” (2). She has frequently consulted these poems as a way to connect with her mother, hoping these would bring “signs” and tell her where she should be and how she should be living her life. She wishes that she could return to the Dominican Republic, but Trujillo’s dictatorship has made her return “an impossible choice” so for now she reflects on life “hither and yon, hither and yon” (3).

Salomé Ureña dies when Camila is three years old. Hence, Camila’s connection with mother and sense of self comes from her aunt Ramona, Salomé’s older sister who taught Camila everything she needed to know about her mother. Ramona, or Mon, as

close emotional or physical relationship” <https://www.verywellmind.com/fear-of-intimacy-2671818>

Camila calls her, taught her at an early age to request a blessing from her dead mother through a subversion of the Catholic style of starting prayer through the invocation of the trinity on oneself. Thus, instead of saying In the name of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit, Amen, matched by the performative ritual of blessing the self with the sign of a cross by touching the forehead, the chest/navel, and then crossing the chest from left to right or right to left depending on which catholic rites you perform, Camila is instructed to say: “*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of my mother, Salomé*” (4). “When her mother died, Mon thought up this way for her to ask for Salomé’s blessing. To summon strength from a fading memory that every year became less and less real until all that was left of her mother was the story of her mother” (5). This is Mon’s way of ensuring Camila never forget who her mother was, nor her name, nor the connection between mother and daughter in a spiritual sense. It evokes a sense of power transferrable from mother to daughter.

It is curious that Camila’s planned journey to Cuba begins with a road trip from Poughkeepsie to Florida. Rather than go alone, she is persuaded by her ex-lesbian-lover, Marion, whom she has known and dated since Graduate School in Minnesota. A native from South Dakota, Marion seems at this point to have always been in Camila’s life. She claims an obsessive fascination with Camila’s life story, and hence is unwilling to let Camila go. She follows her all the way to Cuba in her attempt to stay in Camila’s life. Marion may be suffering from a type of somatic colonization complex, is a control freak, or suffers from fear of abandonment disorder. She refuses to understand who Camila really is as she shuts her ears to any narrative of Camila that references to Dominican national, cultural, sociopolitical and environmental histories. “Americans don’t interest

themselves in the heroes and heroines of minor countries until someone makes a movie about them” (7). This is a critique of American cultural imperialism, often represented through cultivated ignorance of other people’s histories, unless reduced and packaged for American consumption. This is resoundingly manifested when on their road trip to Florida, Marion asks Camila to entertain her with her personal “story” as long as it is decontextualized and dehistoricized from her Dominican roots:

‘As I said, I’ll have to start with my mother, which means at the birth of la patria, since they were both born about the same time.’ . . . (Camila) indulged this habit of erasing herself, of turning herself into the third person, a minor character, the best friend (or daughter!) of the dying first-person hero or heroine. Her mission in life—after the curtain falls—to tell the story of the great ones who have passed on. (8)

But, since Camila begins the story with the history of the wars in her Caribbean nation and the creation of “la patria,” Marion insists that she wanted to know about Camila and not this story Camila was eager to share. Camila has not gotten past the first few years of Salomé’s life and the wars of independence when her friend interrupts: “I thought you were finally going to talk about yourself, Camila.” “I am talking about myself,” she says . . . (8). There was a refusal of Marion to accept that one’s national history, including its sociocultural, political, and environmental narratives play pivotal roles in the formation of the individual, and hence the individual’s story cannot be told as decontextualized private reverie. Marion was controlling the narrative by deciding what is being told-- following the ways history has been universally told by those that dominate the historical-political landscapes.

In *El ave y el nido*, we meet Salomé Ureña, at the age of 6, six years after the country had gained its independence from Haiti. Salomé Ureña's life thus is inextricably tied to the history of the Dominican Republic as a new nation. Consequently, the chaotic nature of the Dominican Republic's process to independence and in the early post-independence years, it is by implication that Salomé's life was far from peaceful. For most of Salomé's life therefore the country was involved in political uprisings and civil wars; each government promising citizens that they had the best to offer the people. Salomé's life story cannot therefore be understood as an isolated narrative outside the sociopolitical and cultural changes that gripped the island nation in its early years as an independent country:

By the time I was six, I was in better health than my country, for la patria had already suffered eleven changes of government. . . . I had no real understanding of the danger I was in. What I feared was not the revolutions themselves, but the dark hole underneath the house that we had to hide in whenever a war broke out. One side was red and the other side was blue—color being the only way we could tell one side from the other, though both sides said that they were only doing, they were doing for la patria. (13)

I was born Spanish
by the afternoon I was French
at night I was African.

What will become of me? (14)

The Dominican Republic had gained its independence after the Battle of Sabana Larga in 1856. Yet political liberation from Haiti did not mean internal harmony among warring factions. Political instability dictated that peace depended mostly on the geophysical location where one lived and the type of domicile. The most “at risk” locations were the upper-class Spanish sections of town where colonial plantation Spanish style homes were abundant. These areas were regular targets of uprisings no matter the party that was in rebellion. These landscapes were emblematic of past regimes dating back to the days of Spanish plantation and colonial rule, which in the rhetoric of revolutions had to be physically erased from both the landscape and from history. Their presence in the landscape were a constant reminder of the past brutality of slavery, indenture, aristocratic arrogance, etc. To remove them from the landscape then would signal a new beginning for the people who suffered under the yoke of the past. Yet, those who seized power, no matter how temporary it was, moved into these areas as a sign of legitimacy of their power, only to be targets of the next group. These incessant power struggles and wars bewildered and unsettled Salomé.

While hiding in the hole behind their house during one of the bombardments, she asks her mother, Mamá, what the purpose of the constant fighting is all about. Her mother wearily and cynically responds in these pithy words: “La Patria” (15). This response concise as it is, encapsulates a political message that is foreign and incomprehensible to a six-year-old. Recalling this conversation several years later, Salomé now understands the words: “Today the world catches my attention, the way a word will, suddenly stare back at you and refuse to tell you what it means. ‘Mamá,’ I say, ‘what is la patria?’ and my mother doesn’t answer but looks ready to weep...” (15). When they finally climb out of

the hole behind the home the government has changed again from blue to red. Now that the red party is in power, it signals that her father, Papá Nicolas, could finally come back from exile to the Dominican Republic. The return of Papá is of vital importance; it is he who encourages Salomé's poetic beginnings. He has a great passion for poetry. Hence, with her father around, Salomé and her sister Ramona (Mon) are able to visit their father where he reinforces their natural desire to read and write; a luxury not accorded to most Dominican Republic women at the time. After reading "Tasso and Simon de Nantua and Florian's *Numa Pompilius*" Salomé decides that if she ever were to have a little girl, her name would be Camila, like the girl in the novel who 'runs through the field of grain and does not bend a single stalk, walks across the sea without wetting her feet. . .'" (23).

Gaining independence from Haiti did not indicate mental and cultural independence from foreign powers. The constant struggles for power among the blues and reds created a form of mental, political and cultural nepantilism. Thus, unsurprisingly, 1859 saw the Dominican Republic returning to Spanish rulership under the new "blue party" president, Pedro Santana. This change of government so distressed Papá Nicolas that he is deciding to go into another voluntary exile to the US. Virgin Islands. His imminent departure brings profound sadness and tears to Salomé. He tries to console her in these words of reassurance: "Remember, don't waste them. Tears are the ink of a poet" promising to "be back as soon as our country is free patria again" (24). Salomé's childhood shifts, up to this point, develops in a flux much like the political history of her country. Under the circumstances, when on March 18, 1861 her father returns, and proclaims that Spanish rule has created a freer space for him to write, he nonetheless still maintains that he doesn't support this colonial government.

The exact date is not hard to remember. Every time I think of it, which is often, I bring my hand to my heart as if the date were carved there and I could feel the numbers and letters with my fingers. I think of Cuba and Puerto Rico about to fight for their independence, and of the United States just beginning to fight for the independence of its black people, and then I think of my own patria willingly giving up its independence to become a colony again, and I ask myself again, “What is la patria?” What is this notion of a country that will make so many people die for its freedom only to have a whole set of its people put it back in a ball and chain again? (25)

Tía Ana, Mamá’s sister, plays an important role in the life of Salomé; she uses their home as a school to train girls on Victorian female etiquette. She tells the girls, Mon and Salomé, about the history of the Dominican Republic. It is through Tía Ana that Salomé learns about the role of women throughout the history of the island. Through Ana, they learn about the humble seamstress that created the national flag but was later executed for some trumped-up case.

Tía Ana has told me the story of our flag: how during the war of independence from Haiti one of the patriots tore up the Haitian flag and asked his aunt to sew up the scraps in a whole different pattern as he had no money to buy more fabric. This seamstress, a brave patriot herself, was later shot down for disagreeing with the new president over what it means to be a patria, and just before she was executed, she asked the firing squad if they would kindly tie down her skirts as she did not want her underwear to show when she fell down dead in front of them. I am thinking of the

story of this brave woman and asking myself again, What is patria in whose name people can do such things, murder the woman who sewed up your national flag? Make your father disappear? Take one man's leg and another man's arm? (27)

The battles of independence from Haiti bring in a new Spanish government and a new faith in Salomé who hopes that, “girls will be allowed to write letters and own houses without having to explain themselves” (30). A new feminist sentiment is growing in Salomé's mind, a sign that she will help revolutionize her country in times of war and instability. Her political consciousness is blooming—she not only wants to define patria but also become a vital part in its construction.

At this point, the narrative gaze transitions to focus on Camila's sudden move to leave Vassar College, dramatically announced in the title as *One: Light* denoting an epiphanic state, a revelation that comes to Camila that shows her the path to selfhood⁵ (31). The light dawns on her shortly before she officially announces her retirement from Vassar College. Camila's landscape stands in stark contrast with her mother, Salomé, in hers. Poughkeepsie's landscape is cold and foreign to her despite the fact that she has lived in upstate New York and taught at Vassar for so many years—and many other landscapes has been foreign to her throughout her lifetime. She is preparing to move back

⁵ It is useful to notice that Camila tells her story in a non-linear fashion, unlike patriarchal Eurocentric historical narratives. Her use of alternating voices and fractured memories in which orality and scripts play roles also contest the univocally structured dominant histories. Her history is not just about conquest and is not nurtured by a warrior mentality but celebrates the contradictions and subversive maneuvers engaged by Caribbean women to tell their stories. Camila's history, moreover, is saturated by both the domestic, public, homeland and foreign experiences heaving with contradictions and convergences in the life of her family and her nation.

to Cuba after her revolution's one-year anniversary. She feels she will be more useful there, as a teacher in a place close to her native homeland. This feeling is initiated by her understanding of the historical, cultural, geographical, and linguistic links between the Dominican Republic of her birth and Cuba. Camila, much like Cuba, is undergoing her own revolution. She thinks and accepts what has been told her about life in New York State, as one that is unfettered and free. In addition, she believes she is free because she constructs and guards her emotional, cultural, and psychological personal spaces of dissociation with the USA; "she was not committed enough to living in this country" (35). In the United States she is free from the constrictions of family life, and to strive toward becoming what she believed she was and wanted to be: carrier of her mother's legacy as a poet, a scholar, a teacher, and also to live out her bisexuality without the constraints of Dominican cultural and religious rules governing female sexuality. Prior to this point in her life, she finds the Caribbean cultural landscape too confining: "It is a mystery how the heart gets free. ...*I think it is time now to go back and be a part of what my mother started*" (35). Much like Mona Singh, in *The Swinging Bridge*, Camila is herself also "nowarian," explained as a:

[. . .]consciousness [deriving] from the nomadic loves of Caribbean peoples as conceptualized in Edouard Glissant's *Poetic of Relations*, but it is not an absence of a consciousness of place or home, or memories of lands and landscapes that shape the diasporic life. Rather, it is akin to a type of circular nomadism that Glissant posits as a trademark of Antilleans. (Kuwabong 36)

Being the youngest of four children, Camila was always overprotected and watched over by her oldest siblings. Rodolfo, her half-brother who was the now patriarch of the Henriquez family, did not want her to go to Cuba. He tries to discourage her by telling her all the negative things with Castro's Cuba: "The family had fled to Cuba years ago, only to find a dictatorship there as well. But they stayed on. Someone else's dictator was never as difficult their own" (36). Max is in the Dominican Republic hoping that Rodolfo's discouragement would lead Camila back to where she was born. He previously worked under Trujillo's dictatorship and guarantees his baby sister a job within the government, yet she yearns for her own defined space, solitude and freedom to compile her mother's history. Though she regards herself as "nobody among them," and hence "the anonymous one, the one who has done nothing remarkable" (69), she will [still] be the one editing the story of her famous family" (38). She will be the woman filling in the gaps of the patriarchal historical narrative that otherwise would be the only one presented to the world about her family.

Before leaving Vassar therefore, she organizes the papers and historical archives her brothers have sent her. She, like Mon, is in charge of keeping her mother's memory alive. She recruits a student, Nancy, to help her organize her mother's papers and establish a timeline of events. As she is retelling the family's stories, the event and characters come alive in ghostly form: "Just introducing these ghosts by name has recalled them so vividly, they rise up before her, then shimmer and fade in the shaft of sunlight. ... Maybe it is a good thing to finally face each one squarely. Maybe that is the only way to exorcise ghosts. To become them" (42). And ghosts, much like Camila's

history, can be found anywhere they are summoned. Thus, they function as secret agents of memory retrieval.

Nancy is eager to help Camila out and asks her about the Ureña-Henriquez family to better do her job. Camila confesses to Nancy that Mon “took charge of keeping . . . mother’s memory alive in me. My mother died when I was quite young, I hardly remember her” and now she is doing the same (43), picking up the pieces with whatever information she can find. She is piecing and interpreting history with those memories sent to her in boxes by her brothers—retelling and redefining landscapes of memory.

Every night she pores over her mother’s box: notes to her children; a sachet with dried purplish flowers; a catechism book, *Catón Cristiano*, with a little girl’s handwriting on the back cover; silly poems from someone named Nísidas; a lock of hair; a baby tooth tied up in a handkerchief; a small Dominican flag her mother must have sewn herself, its stick snapped off, no doubt from the weight of the other packets upon it. What these things mean, only the dead can tell. But they are details of Salomé’s story that increasingly connect her mother’s life to her own. As for the future, who knows what that will be. All she knows is that she wants to become Salomé Camila, living it. (45)

The process of leaving Vassar helps clear her head; she is confident as to what the future holds. “She knows exactly where she wants to go. She wants to try saying it aloud, to see the ghostly breath the words leave in the air. ‘I’m going to join the revolution’ (47).

Home is not necessarily Cuba but a site and symbol of revolution as well as her chance to make a difference in a nation that she calls home. She is not in the Dominican Republic

but is as close to home as she can get to her mother and her roots on the island. Cuba shares with the Dominican Republic elements of culture, language, history, landscape and political ideals of revolution--familiar elements to Camila. Camila's recall of her mother's story to Nancy, and the ghosts of memories that flit across her mindscape transports the narrative into the landscape of her mother's history and by narrative twist, takes us to Salomé's voice back to when she is fifteen years old.

Dos: Contestación focuses on the 15-year-old Salomé concerned with the assassination of Abraham Lincoln in 1865. She is saddened by this foreign act of criminal brutality against an otherwise good man, who was the champion of "people our color" (49). The words "people our color" is an unambiguous claim to the universal history of the suffering of people of African descent enslaved both in the Dominican Republic and in the United States of America. This for Salomé is a setback for the African diaspora, Salomé suggest, in recognition of the type of racism that is so rampant in her own native land. The Dominican Republic was still under Spanish rule and according to Salomé, "it was my country that had gone back to being a baby, having to obey a mother country," a country that can never be an adult nor free. She is convinced that if she could write for freedom, she "would free la patria with [her] sharp quill and bottle of ink" (50). But writing is an almost impossibility for women of her time for formal education was not available to many women growing up in the country in the nineteenth century. The Bobadilla Sisters were the only women in charge of educating women in the town Salomé was born and raised, and Spanish rule meant colonialist Eurocentric education with its attendant fetishization of the female body and female sexuality. As women weren't meant to be schooled to any high degree, Mamá decided to not send Mon or

Salomé to the Bobadilla's school. Instead they were tutored privately at home. This enabled them to have the freedom to visit Papá and have ample time to read and write in the evenings. Papá is allowed back into the country under the proviso that he not get involved in politics. This ban on political action made Papá lose the inspiration to write as his use seemed to dissipate him. He could no longer write about la patria as he laments, "I was born poeta. The other things were chance. But if you don't do what you were born to do, it destroys you" (52).

His political involvement curtailed, Papá invests in the lives and education of his daughter: "It was Papá who was all eyes. It seemed he had transferred all his worry and attention from la patria to Ramona and me. We began to see, at least I did, how crucial it was that he have a nation with which to occupy himself or we would not have a moment's peace" (51). The intellectual growth of his daughters, Mon and Salomé, became symbols of the fatherland, the patria for Papá. Under the circumstances, Papá encourages their writing of poetry, seeing this as his way to protest the current state of affairs in the nation. Through his daughters' poetry, Papá could at least participate in the formation of the new and future Dominican Republic culturally. The Spanish colonial regime did not censor creative writing, so "There were dozens of poems about liberty. It was the time for poetry, even if it was not the time for liberty. Sometimes I wondered if this didn't make sense after all. The spirit needed to soar when the body was in chains" (55). Writing and publishing poetry in the local newspaper hence became a way of pushing the struggle through romanticizing it.

But to be on the safe side, as women poets were still frowned upon, Salomé, like several female writers of the nineteenth century Europe, adopted a penname, Herminia.

Salomé's new penname gave her the freedom to become the new voice for those that wanted political freedom for the Dominican Republic. In this role she will eventually become a precursor of the feminist movement in her island nation. This is not to say that other literary foremothers did not exist before and during the period. There is for example, Josefa Perdomo, the first woman to publish in the Dominican Republic, but as pro-Spanish rule poet—a staunch defender of the status quo which promoted Spanish-colonial rule. Yet the use of Herminia as a penname was “the practice [and] . . . purpose and outcome in a caudillo state” (70). According to Salomé, Josefa Perdomo was a talented poet but her verses “were binding us to a country that had turned us into a colony... [like] shaking mangoes off the wrong tree” (56). It was by reading Perdomo's verses that Salomé committed to “never write verses out of politeness. Rather than write something pretty and useless, I would not write at all” (57).

When the Spanish left after the Restoration War of 1863-1865 and the Dominican Republic began forming a new republic with new governments. Herminia's (Salomé) writing became more political and rebellious in tone and message. Salomé's voice took on a bolder, more revolutionary position. Her voice was the voice of the people, and her poetry set her up as the conscience of the people. According to her mother, Herminia was “saying what we all feel and don't have the courage to speak” while her father was aware that her writing was “sowing seeds of sedition” (61). If Herminia were to be discovered she could be forced into exile, because people interpreted her voice and words as subversive, bent on bringing “down the regime with pen and paper” (62). Herminia understands that her poetry is “waking up the body politic” and most importantly that “with every link she cracked open for la patria, she was also setting [herself] free. ...”

Salomé is finally flourishing as a writer/intellectual, mistaken for a male. Her aunt is one of those who believed that Herminia is a male: “La patria has discovered her muse” (63).

Hemina’s boldness leads her into assuming that she can write and publish about other things outside the strident political romanticism of her poetry. She dares to publish a poem about winter, a weather and landscape condition totally alien to the Dominican Republic, and also a reminder of their colonial past with Spain and the USA invasions. Her fans accuse her of losing her touch and of letting them down. Don Eliseo, a family friend, is upset because the published poem about the winter landscape is a foreign concept and doesn’t understand why she would write about a topic she wouldn’t understand. There was even talk about that poem not being of Herminia’s authorship. The Bobadilla sisters even praised Herminia for her writing was an indicator that the poet was becoming “more feminine” (65). Realizing that she didn’t want to be under the guise of Herminia, this winter poem storm enabled Salomé to decide to publish her first poem, “A la patria” under her real name, Salomé Ureña. She is finally free and able to meet her fate as the first woman/intellectual/ poet of the Dominican Republic writing about what is familiar to her: her patria . . . her home.

Alvarez brilliantly transitions the reference to the controversy over the poem on winter by Camila’s mother under the penname, and which poem backfired, but gave her the courage to come out and be free to write and publish under her own name, and not write and publish from the shadows, to focus on Camila’s location in the USA, a landscape that has winters. By this transition Alvarez cleverly shows the link between Salomé’s poem and Camila’s present location. If the poem about winter enables her mother to come out and be herself, Camila’s diasporic location in a wintry landscape, so

alien to her nation's tropical landscape, sets her also free from the constricting political culture and landscape of the Dominican Republic. Here, in this foreign land, she feels freer than in the overwhelming warmth of the tropics. She is to embrace her mother's poem with greater understanding and interprets her mother's move as a devious trick to get out from under the yoke of being frozen thematically a public not interested in any other type of poetry. Thus, in *The Arrival of Winter* Camila embraces her mother's poem about Winter, *La llegada del Invierno* in Vermont visiting Marion. The landscape described in the poem is foreign to Salomé, yet her imagination gives credence to what she says. Camila who is familiar with the harshness of winter in the landscape of Vermont, gives the poem added power, she describes "snow in tantrum, snow angry at being used for too many pretty winter scenes in postcards and poems, snow proving it can mean and deadly serious" (68). Winter is Camila's familiar landscape while in the USA. On her visit to Marion at Middlebury College and to visit a class to give a talk about Salomé Ureña to College students, she reflects: "Other scholars can talk about Salomé's poetry and her pedagogy, but she, Camila, the only daughter, is supposed to shed light on the woman" (69). It was the first time she was going to speak of her mother's legacy in public.

After her talk to the class she meets the son of Manuel Calderón, who had been killed in the Luperón invasion, Manuelito Calderon, a student at Middlebury requests a personal visit with Camila with the intention of giving Camila his poetry. He believes that if Camila read his poetry about their homeland, she might be influenced somehow to judge him more favorably in the Salomé Ureña Poetry Contest, which he has entered. Manuelito is in exile and skeptical of Camila because her brother, Max, works with

Trujillo, under whom over 25, 000 Haitian are murdered, and the other atrocities still committed against Haitians. He is distrustful about Camila because Camila's talk and her mother's poetry seem to be oblivious of these atrocities in the land. He sees her as a privileged woman who can return to her country, to be part of a celebration of her mother hosted by a brutal dictator. Manuelito's location both as an exile, whose father's blood now soaks the landscape of his motherland, must seek to redefine his relationship with his homeland and this new and strange place, where the people don't seem aware of the atrocities committed by the regime in his homeland. The political landscape of the Dominican Republic is inimical to his wellbeing, and the landscape of America is alien and uninterested in his pain. Nonetheless, the foreign landscape gives him a new lease of life to write and study. Insensitively, Camila refuses to take his poems back to the Dominican Republic, for fear that she will get into trouble. She cares more for her personal safety than her commitment to freer more democratic patria, unlike her mother who was bold enough to break free and make her voice be heard. Her act is almost a betrayal of her mother's role, and her act is in undeclared accord with her brother's role in the Trujillo regime. The accusatory lamentation of Manuelito is hence in place: "You come here, you get ahead, you forget your country" (80). Camila is shaken but understands why he feels the way he does: "She could defend herself. She could say that she came here just as he did, because there was no place to go. *La patria still in chains...The tears I've shed for her have never dried.* [. . .] He is the voice of her own heart if she were prepared to obey it" (80). She feels conflicted but knows the feeling all too well and is aware that there is nothing she can say that will console this feeling of unrootedness that Manuelito is feeling.

She turns to Marion to tell her about the meeting of Manuelito, hoping that her friend can understand this sentiment of frustration and helplessness. But upon reflection, she asks, how can a white American woman understand this deep feeling of displacement that she AND Manuelito are dealing with. Camila reasons with Marion, “Remember he is heartbroken. He has lost his father. He has lost his father. He has lost his country” (81). Manuelito has lost everything that represents who he is and where he is from. . . the definition of what patria is to him. Marion, hoping to console her friend reminds Camila, “And you lost your mother; you lost your country. But are you taking it out in somebody?” (81) a reminder that Camila had also lost something important: everything that represents who she is and where she is from . . . the definition of what patria could mean to her yet she still cover ups her cowardice with intellectual sophistry. Camila may have lost her mother, but Salomé is still being restored for Camila by the Dominican Republic. Camila’s efforts are opening up venues: international talks and celebrations for which she gains popularity and citizenship around the globe. With Camila’s efforts, the memory of Salomé is far from lost but, who can speak up about Manuelito’s loss? Can the silences of those, like Manuelito’s family, be also heard and recaptured? There was something that Marion was not aware of, Camila always felt that nothing was never enough, that she was missing something important, something bigger that she should be part of—she felt that a lack of a maternal figure distanced her from her nation. Camila was in search of her mother without realizing that there was a matrilineal inheritance: her mother’s work and the ability to connect and piece her mother’s personal and intellectual landscape was being transferred to her. This feeling is beyond Marion’s understanding. She is only a woman in love that insists in staying in Camila’s life regardless of what she,

Camila, wants and who she is—the foreign woman whose history Marion ignores. “Marion already played the best part, the glorious first love forever preserved in her memory. But Marion has outlived her role and become an endearing, bossy, and slightly tedious friend” (83). Marion is important to Camila, but she was not interested in being in an intimate relationship for that matter. Her search for her mother is a much bigger act than being in a lesbian sexual relationship with someone whose history and culture she does not share, and who does not show interest in her culture or history. Consequently, Camila refuses to be tied down in a dead-end relationship. She therefore resists Marion’s attempts to colonize and control her life for her personal sexual needs. Reflecting on her relationship with Marion during her trip to Middlebury College, Camila finally understands that she must carry on her mother’s legacy through the mother’s poetry. In exposing her mother’s poetic relationship with the Dominican Republic through talk tours, Camila allows her mother to live, and begins to develop an understanding relationship with the mother and hence, her motherland:

All her life she had to think first of her words’ effect on the important roles her father and her brothers and uncles and cousins were playing in the world. Her own opinions were reserved for texts, for roundtables on women’s contribution to the colonies, for curriculum committees implementing one theory of language learning over another (85).

Carrying on with her mother’s history is an important mission. It bonds daughter and mother in metaphysical, creative, political, and cultural ways. Her knowledge of her mother is spread beyond the confines of boxes, and academic safe environments.

Camila’s action from now on are an extension of her mother’s revolutionary spirit, and

she also is now part of the revolution. She asserts “. . . if I remain quiet, then I lose my mother completely, for the only way I really know her is through the things she stood for” (85). Camila now understands that she is not apart from her mother, she has become her mother, as Lorna Goodison writes in her poem, “I am becoming my Mother” (*I am becoming my Mother*). This recognition of merger with her mother takes us back in the next chapter, *Tres: La fe en el porvenir*, to the life of Salomé between the ages of 24 to 27.

Tres: La fe en el porvenir takes place from 1874-1877. Salomé is now a known poet, thanks to her father’s assistance to promote her work. Known for not speaking up or sharing much of who she, Salomé keeps much to herself. She confines herself to her home, her safe haven to write and be the female intellectual poet she is well known for: “he (Papá) was leaving me the trumpet and he was going to play the flute from now on, and if I had something to say and there was enough silence for me to say it, I would speak up. But not enough, I suppose to impress anyone. [. . .] Salomé Ureña was a woman who hardly talks” (90). The political landscape of the Dominican Republic was fertile for creative work between 1873 and 1874 and intellectuals were free to write and publish without censorship. It was a time of intellectual and creative prosperity under President Ignacio María González; “The Green Party he had started was supposed to unite all parties under the color of growth and resurrection. At last, we were becoming a nation of citizens in service to one another” (90) and the President himself understood the necessity and importance of Salomé to the intellectual creators of the island as he encouraged her to not stop writing: “Don’t rest in your labors, Salomé . . . The fight continues!” (91). Salomé had become the muse for la patria, a woman was inching her way into the

historical/ political/ national landscape—she was part of forging a nation and the education of the younger generations.

Salomé's talent comes with the price of loneliness. Also, her shyness complicates and frustrates her yearning for companionship and love. Though everyone is enthused and fascinated with the poet and her poetry, they cruelly ignore the human Salomé hiding behind patriotic verses. She is lonely and suffers writers block. She is penalized for love and heavily criticized for not sounding like herself through her verses. Similar then to how the population responded negatively to the poem about winter, when she uses a penname, she is penalized for writing romantic love poems. The love theme, similar to the winter theme, are despised because the society thinks these are false themes and also unpatriotic and selfish. Most crushing to her is her father's critique of her love poems. It angers as well as frustrates her muse. Depressed, she goes out to the streets to seek solace in her town's landscape finding. She finds refuge "in an inner yard of rock ruins and a few shade trees" (97), where she encounters a homeless woman who is as startled as Salomé by each other's presence. Though Salomé realizes how different they are in class, her fright immobilizes her, and she is frozen on the spot and forced to confront her fears of the unknown as this encounter shows:

Perhaps because she was unencumbered by petticoat or buttoned bodice or long overskirt tied back at the sides or buckle shoes with light cotton stockings, in short because she was not dressed as I was, even in my unpreparedness for the street, she was at my side in a few jerky moves before I was even five steps closer to the door. She grabbed me at the shoulders, and though I tried pulling away, she was strong—my height,

but stouter—and I could not get loose. She reeked of urine and sweat. But she was looking at me in a way no one had looked at me in a while. She was seeing *me*, with a wild, probing desire to know who I was. I tried looking away but her eyes held me. We stared at each other, and I only tore myself aware when she opened her rotted mouth to scream. (97)

In the homeless woman, Salomé comes face to face with her inner-self, the mad, rootless, homeless, and lonely woman. The homeless woman in the city's concrete jungle, reminds Salomé of who she is internally is, but which ironically generates a feeling of relief and comfort. Her encounter with the mad woman is one of two things: first, a figment of her confused imagination that is projected onto the cityscape; two, a reflected image of herself whose actions and fears are akin to a form of psychosis generated by her borderline personality disorder that is characterized by a fear of intimacy that I have referred to above. Her fear of intimacy, caused by the fear of abandonment by her father, is a form of madness, and turns her into the mad and lonely woman she meets on the street. It could very well be that Salomé feels vulnerable and exposed because someone socially lower than her sees through her façade of confidence and belongingness (97). Her search for solace in the landscape of the city is fruitless because she encounters her hidden self: a mad and vulnerable exile roaming the peripheries of the Dominican landscape.

Salomé becomes a part of the bigger landscape when she is finally published in Jose Castellano's anthology, but the happiness soon fades away when Papá dies from cancer (99). The time of peace and intellectual prosperity ends in 1876. The United States is celebrating its "hundredth birthday," In the Dominican Republic President Ulises

Espaillet is in office and revolutions are breaking out all over the island again; it's as if the world is mourning Papá, and history and life is arrested for Salomé. Salomé is confined to her home by her mother and not allowed to receive visitors. She gradually gets so used to this liminality of existence that even when her mother lifts the ban on socializing after the traditional days of mourning passes, Salomé prefers to hide:

But the truth is, I didn't care to go out of my black dress, or be a famous poet, or look into the faces of young men, wondering of this might be the one who would see past the lauds and laurels and the broad nose and unadorned character to the grieving daughter who had once brought delight to the dotting heart of her father. I lay there, numb, as if my body had already died, but hearing myself breathe the way I had listened for my father's breathing by his bedside. (102)

Salomé suffers from prolonged grief disorder which manifests in her refusal to accept that her Papá's, from whom her intellectual and creative world drew sustenance is dead. She sees him everywhere and in everything she did, even in the young man who shows interest in this young national poet. She cannot exorcise her father's ghost from her world. In contrast, her sister, Mon is able to transcend the death of their father and does not suffer the paternal absence as much as Salomé. Without her father's reassuring presence, Salomé feels that her "voice sounded small and distant as if it were coming from the bottom of the old revolutionary hole in the crawl space under the house" (103).

Shortly after Salomé receives a visit from the young suitor Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal, who invites the sisters to a "soirée in honor of poetry to be hosted by Friends of the Country He reminds Salomé of Papá: "I tried looking away, but his eyes were like

Papá's eyes and like the madwoman's eyes, probing" (105). At 27 and in the absence of an overshadowing father, Salomé realizes she is finally getting amorous attention as a woman and not just as an asexual poet promoting the ideals of an elusive patria. This man's attention gives Salomé a new outlook on life, and what it could be for her. She has found something new in the Dominican Republic and in herself after her father's death. It is a new time of calm that replaced the dark days of her grief. Her landscape was non-existent as she mourned and came to life thanks to Pancho. For the first time Salomé begins to see the landscape of human love rather than just political ideals—despite the political uproars, beauty still exists, and love is still a possibility; the wounded and brutalized land yet produces love well pursuing that is not political. This new founded happiness stands in contrast to Camila's narration of ruins and new directions.

Three: Ruins. Camila, now 46-years-old is on a train travelling to see her brother Pedro who is a Norton Scholar in Harvard at Cambridge, Massachusetts. Camila is described as one who enjoys riding on trains, "she feels like a heroine, suspended between lives, suspended between destinations" (107); always caught between landscapes and now Camila was feeling like a heroine who has escaped. The change of landscape sceneries always brings with it a feeling of relief and release from the confining memories of her deceased father and aunt, Papancho and Mon; her breakup with Domingo; and from Marion, who teaches in faraway Vermont: "She is free of that little graveyard of the past she has been tending, which has been filling up with her personal dead, her failed loves" (108). She celebrates this change and is happy to be free. In this sense, Camila resembles her mother, Salomé. Camila is also a "loner"—much like her mother Salomé when the latter was younger. Camila even hopes that she can be just as

successful as her mother as a poet. But as a writer Camila is cursed with the anxieties and pain of great writers in her family such as her father, Papancho; her mother, Salomé; her older brother, Pedro; and even her grandfather, Papá Nicolas : she is constantly “creating the world rather than inhabiting it” (113). She feels trapped in the shadows of these great writers in her family, and wishes to break free from their stifling hold hoping that she will “someday create something of value that allows her a place in thus illustrious company, and not just as Pedro’s sister or Salomé’s daughter either” (114).

In a gathering to celebrate Pedro’s final lecture as a Norton Scholar, Camila meets the Spanish poet Jorge Guillen, author of *Cánticos*. She confesses to Jorge Guillen that she has escaped Cuba but is not really headed anywhere. Cuba is under the dictator Juan Batista’s regime. Turmoil in the Caribbean, Latin American and Europe (specifically Spain) forces the nations’ intellectuals to flee and blossom elsewhere. Jorge Guillen states, “We are the new Israelites. What will become of us? We die if we forget. We die if we remember” (113). Memory is forever present and cannot be escaped—damned if you remember, damned if you don’t. “... Camila has questioned herself, as to whether she could possibly have remembered all this. The truth is: she remembers spots. And the rest is the story she has made up to connect those few dim memories so she does not lose her mother completely” (119). Camila desires to cause the same impact her mother had to be counted among the intellectuals from the Dominican Republic that defined a whole movement and revolutionized a Nation (121). What nation, Camila reflexively interrogates herself? She was born in Dominican Republic but “raised” in Cuba after her mother’s death. She is a Cuban citizen but lived majority of her present life shuttling between Minnesota, California, New York, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. Nation

as a physical landscape, or cultural imaginary to define her identity is a fragmented illusion. Nevertheless, she carries whatever landscape she has encountered in her self-definition. She is Salomé Camila in some instances of her life and simply Camila in others, but always a poet from the Caribbean. Her body is her landscape. Impliedly therefore her corporeality defines her nationhood and histor(y)ies.

During Camila's short stay with Pedro they discuss her craft as a writer. Pedro is very critical of the poem "La raíz" Camila recited at the function to honor Pedro. Pedro believes that she has to stay out of trouble and just teach at Vassar. She resents the criticism and questions Pedro's call to "fight" in his final lecture at Harvard. How is the "fight" possible from exile. He proceeds to list the number of people who are in exile but who are "fighting" outside of the country as he and Camila are: "Marti fought Cuba from New York, Máximo Gómez fought Lili's from Cuba, Hostos came to us from Puerto Rico" (125). Camila feels that Pedro has become a sell-out abandoning all that he, Camila and the Henriquez-Ureña family have long fought for and dreamed of; she feels disillusioned with the man-the big brother she has always looked up to. Pedro is quick to defend himself:

I am continuing the fight. I am defending the last outpost [...] Poetry. I am defending it with my pen. It is a small thing, I know, but those were the arms I was given. Defending it because it encodes our purest soul, the blueprint for the new man, the new woman. Defending it against the bought pens, the dictators, the impersonators, the well-meaning but lacking in talent. (125)

Camila is hurt by Pedro's criticism of both her craft and politics of engagement, especially as he seems to be trying to control her freedom and to dictate to her what she can and cannot do. She believes and she is right, that Pedro's ideas are governed by hegemonic masculinist ideals about women's place in political struggle and also sexual choices. But to Pedro, he sees his role as a patriarch whose role is to protect his sister and to keep her safe. Not only is he trying to keep her safe but his also suggestion that she continue the fight with her pen from Vassar is to situate her among other revolutionary writers of their time living in exile. Ironically, she feels a sense of relief. If she was looking for a reason not to engage in the trip back home, Pedro has given her one. Pedro is the guardian her mother Salomé had personally assigned Camila. "She does not want his pity. That would be awful. There are other women she can be besides the heroine of a story" (126). Camila sees in Pedro "*the terrible moral disinheritance of exile* which he is now urging her to partake of" (126), he is now urging her to continue her struggle from a foreign political/natural landscape.

Cuatro: Amor y Anheló. Pancho invited Salomé to "the first poetry soirée . . . hosted by Friends of the Country" at his father's, Don Noël Henríquez, home despite women's attending the soirée were refrained from participating. Ramona tells Salomé: "I've been told we keep our mouths shut, . . . unless the master of memories should turn to us . . ." (129). She hints that the history of the nation and the intellectual landscape belongs to the elite males in the Dominican Republic (129). Nevertheless, Pancho requests that Salomé read her poem, "The Glory of Progress." The insecure and extremely private, Salomé, declines the invitation. So, he proceeds to read the poem himself. Before the night is over, Pancho opens up the floor for discussion to guests and

the women present; Trinidad Villeta, congratulates all the speakers and reciters. He praises Salomé's poetry but gives a special recognition to a fellow poet, Josefa Perdomo. This leaves Salomé feeling cheated and foolish. She assumes that she has been played a dirty trick and "shown off as a prize at the expense of others" (131). Both Josefa and Salomé represent women's voices. But to Salomé, as I have indicated above, Josefa does not write the type of revolutionary poetry that envision and define a Dominican nation, its politics, landscape, and cultural freedom. She sees Josefa's poetry as lacking any intellectual, political, cultural rigor set against a Dominican landscape.

It is painful to those that admired Salomé to see her as a woman who is more than just her poet. She is beginning to develop sexual attraction and feelings for Pancho, but her sister is quick to warn her: "Pancho is in love with your poetry, not with you. Even if he mistakes the two, you should not" (132). The possibility of someone loving Salomé for who she is and not for what she does, crafting poetry is an impossibility according to Mon and even to Salomé herself. She believes that she is only good to write poetry while in the confines of her home:

I thought of how I had been squandering my time and talent by letting my heart distract me from my true calling of writing. Sadly, I remembered what Doña Bernardita had written in her *Manual*: "Pequeñuelas," she advised young girls, "fill yourselves with the beauty of the world before you are met by love. For after that, you will see nothing but love in the world." Back then, I had thought this would be a wonderful thing, but now I saw what a waste it was, to turn the world into a book of signs, to pluck a

flower and only think, *He loves me, he loves me not*, instead of noticing the radiant sun and white petals of the margarita. (132-133)

She continues to do what she does best, write poetry fueled with patriotism and love for all those that admire her craft—she is a woman but a woman with a voice that all admire and listen to.

The intellectual landscape of the Dominican Republic at the time serves as fertile ground for great thinkers such as Eugenio Maria de Hostos, Puerto Rican positivist exiled in the Dominican Republic and close friend of Pancho, president of Friends of the Country. Positivists like Hostos held that “mankind was evolving towards a higher, perfect state” (134). Despite Positivists being peaceful and of the belief that mankind’s ignorance could be fought with reason and progress came from science, many believed they were just atheists and these were exiled from their countries for their beliefs—such was the case of Hostos who had expressed to Pancho his desire to meet Salomé whom he believed was a “natural positivist” (135). Salomé begins to fall in love with Pancho, his letters and desire to tutor and formally educate the poet in the sciences lighten Salomé’s heart; she even speaks with her mother of the fears of having her heart broken, but Mamá knows that her daughter has to take that risk. Pancho, ten years younger than Salomé, is permitted to be Salomé’s tutor and his visits warm her heart with time. She yearns to be close to him and even touches him. However, in her cultural time, a “decent” woman would not do such thing: “. . . I had been raised in a country where national heroines tied their skirts down as they were about to be executed. I did not know that it was possible for a woman to reach over and touch a man’s arm of her accord” (139). He is interested in Salomé also and requests she wait for him and not accept another tutor while he travels

through the island with Hostos “studying schools, seeing what can be done” (139).

Salomé’s suitor requests for more than just to wait but to reserve her heart just for him.

On December 22, 1878 Salomé receives the national medal for poetry on behalf of an unknown organization called the “Semper Vigilans.” Pancho is beside her at the event, introduces her to important government officials and ex-presidents. The event alters her life. Following her brief acceptance thank you speech, Pancho reads Salomé’s most recent poem and the crowd receives it with much applause. Salomé’s success as a poet opens the way to women on the island to dream of greater achievements. However, this new dream is undermined by a comment that indicates a refusal by the society to accept women as equal to men in creative, intellectual, and political public arenas: “What a man that women is!” To the men, writing and education are masculine prerogatives. Impliedly therefore, there is still a lot of work left to be done by women, especially those like Salomé Ureña if women were ever to be accorded the same place in Dominican society as men. Yet, undeterred, Salomé Ureña’s feminist vision remains focused, resisting the temptation to despair, and thereby “add one more example to the theory that women were not very intelligent and education should not be wasted on us” (141). She finds courage in her verse and writes the love poem, “Quejas,” for Pancho while he is away with Hostos. Ramona is scandalized although Salomé asserts that the poem is “not about any one person. It’s about what we women feel when we fall in love” (143). Ramona cannot understand how the “patria’s muse” could write such sappy poems and Ramona concludes by pointing out that “Nobody thinks you have a real body” (144). Salomé grows restless because she has not received any news from Pancho. In her agitated state, and against Ramona’s advice, Salomé decides to publish “Quejas” based

on following reasoning: “Why was it all right for a man to satisfy his passion, but for a woman to do so was as good as signing her death warrant? There was another revolution to be fought if our patria was to be truly free” (145). The poem generates and circulates rumors in the town about the identity of the person to whom the poem is dedicated. When Pancho return she is informed about the scandal. Pancho’s jealousy leads him to Salomé’s doorsteps to demand an explanation, but is met by a new and assertive Salomé, unafraid to publicly declare her heterosexual passion and love for a man. This begins her fight for a new feminist thought that would create a space for a feminist sexual revolution and give voice to women’s desires and feelings. She confesses to Pancho that “Quejas” is for him and boldly kisses his hands while declaring, “I had discovered that I had a body” (146).

Camila now 41, is living in a Cuba ruled by Batista. She engages energies to organize women to fight for the right to vote. They carry banners with the slogans that read: “GIVE US THE VOTE! FREE CUBA! MARTI’S AMERICA NOW!” However loud the chants by these women, Camila believes that their method of fighting the current regime is like, “fighting the monster with toy swords, bright banners” (147). To Camila, the best weapon to engage against Batista’s regime and the regulation of women’s participation in the public political and social spaces lies in adapting the strategy of her mother and other women like her: through the power of the pen. She believes the pen is mightier than the gun (147).

Also, in Cuba, Camila meets Domingo, a local sculptor commissioned by the Dominican government to sculpt Papancho, who had died earlier that same year, 1935. Domingo requests Camila pose for him to help him capture Papancho as Camila strongly

resemblances her father. Despite Cuba's volatile political atmosphere in 1935, Camila is still compelled to pose for Domingo because her brother Max, requests it. She is pulled in all directions, takes on the yoke of her family, Marion, her Cuban women's protest group, and Santo Domingo's wishes. As Marion recognizes how much Camila has taken on, she asks her, "How strong do you have to be?" which makes Camila reflect on the essence of her multiple roles: "At least as strong as Mamá. ... But unlike her mother's broad shoulders, which carried the future of her nation, Camila's are mostly used to give piggyback rides" (151). She casts doubts on her own abilities as she gets pushed by others to do their biddings, in comparison to her mother's strength, Camila finds herself somehow superficial and without the inner conviction that carried her mother:

"Sometimes she had to smile at herself. Here she was---enslaved to her family's smallest demands and fighting for these larger freedoms. But it sort of made sense. Hadn't it always been easier for her to live abstractly rather than in the flesh" (151). Her search for her mother included the nagging thought that she will be as important or as relevant as her mother Salomé. The day her father Papancho passed away she was teaching geography and was interrupted with the news by Regina, her childhood caretaker (nanny). The news was urgent enough that she left the class "carrying the globe in her hands" (155).

While posing for Domingo, and during several conversational interludes, Camila tells him about Salomé. Their conversation is described in these words: "back and forth they go, conversing and weaving the imagined fabric of Salomé's life from what Camila already knows and what she is discovering by talking openly with him about her mother" (160). With Domingo she finds herself free to talk about things that she could never have

been to talk about with Marion. Her ease with Domingo stems from the fact that he is more like Camila and could understand the nuances of race politics, history, and culture in the Caribbean, issues Marion could never have understood or would not have been willing to understand. Camila always “wants to be apprehended fully, rather than be seen only through the narrow lens of a few adjectives the other person finds acceptable. And having been fully apprehended, she wants to be love” (160). But Marion, Camila concludes, was never able to see Camila as a whole, which made Camila feel incomplete in her relationship with Marion, and by extension, with America and in the American cultural and social environments.

Max, who is nine-years-older than Camila, makes a quick stop in Cuba from the Dominican Republic while on his way to London as Trujillo’s ambassador to Britain. Max’s brief stop-over unnerves Camila. She feels somehow that Max’s presence is another testimony to her belief that family is monitoring her every turn in life. Undoubtedly, Camila is also aware that her brother is not happy with the Trujillo regime: “Max is thinking of quitting the regime. There are too many things over which he cannot see eye to eye with Trujillo: the lack of civil liberties, the trouble brewing with Haiti, the return of rote learning to the public schools” (163). He is dissatisfied with the regime, yet he wants Camila to leave Cuba and move in with all the family back to the Dominican Republic. To make matters worse, he discusses this with everyone except Camila who has established herself now securely in Cuba. Max declares exasperatingly: “This isn’t even your country, Camila” (164). What he refuses to accept is that Camila wants to be part of Cuba and has applied for Cuban citizenship. She believes that if “she is to struggle for freedom here, she might as well join her fate to this country. And as Martí once said

to their uncle Federico, why speak of Cuba and Santo Domingo, when even the underwater cordillera that runs from island to island knows they belong together” (164). Max’s desire to uproot Camila from Cuba and transplant her to the Dominican Republic, to a country whose president and government he is unhappy with, is against Camila’s dream of fighting for a better Cuba. Camila sees greater possibilities for a revolution in Cuba than in the Dominican Republic and would hence stay and fight for those possibilities. At least in Cuba, there is more vocal female voice, unlike in the Dominican Republic. This is what Max cannot see or refuses to consider.

The production of patriotic poems became abundant during another period of peace in 1880. Salomé and Pancho are newlyweds and living with Mamá, Tía Ana and Ramona at Salomé’s family home. Pancho works side by side with Eugenio María de Hostos, who he affectionately nickname’s “the Apostle.” Hostos’ positivist theory rubs off on Pancho and Salomé, and they become “. . . positivists. We believe God created us with reason, and education is our way to develop it” (171). The more Salomé familiarizes herself with Hostos’ theories and teachings of educational reform, and learns from him, the more she develops an intellectual attraction to Hostos. She defines this blossoming attraction as “moral love [. . .] that took over my senses and lightly touched my whole body with an exquisite excitement whenever the apostle was in the room!” (173). Though Pancho is also an intellectual, yet she feels a stronger attraction to Hostos’s ideas and personality, even though Hostos is also a newlywed, believing that “(h)ere was a true companion for my soul!” (173). Thus, when President Meriño requests Pancho to be his “personal secretary” and serve as his “eyes” around the country (174), he further elevated in the eyes of Salomé. At this moment Pancho is busy studying law, doubles as a teacher

to boys at the school he had set up in their home, is president of Friends of the Country, runs his own newspaper *El Maestro*, and acts as editor of Salomé's poems. Pancho wants Salomé to teach the boys enrolled at the school which gives her the opportunity to play another important role in the nation's political and artistic landscape, but this time as an educator of the nation's children from the same private landscape that gave birth to her revolutionary and creative mindset: her family home.

In Pancho's absence, Hostos drops in on her periodically while she is teaching. He is impressed with how well she is doing her job: ". . . he decided I was a natural teacher, and I should open the first secondary school for girls that would train them as teacher" (175). Both Salomé and Hostos are firm believers that education should not be exclusively for boys, but formal education was a great benefit for girls also and become pioneers to make this come true. Subsequently, Hostos declares his support for this position, to Salomé as follows: "We are forging the new man but not the new woman. In fact, without one we can't possibly accomplish the other. . . . It must be difficult for you, Salomé to feel the lack of true companions among your own sex (176). Salomé was excited and thinks to herself ". . . the joy of talking to a man who understands me!" (176) Finally, there is someone who also believes in the equality of the sexes and recognizes Salomé as the great muse. When she had believed or thought of herself as inferior to men, he shows her she is wrong: "You have a soul deep enough to hold your whole country" (176).

While Hostos recognizes Salomé as an important piece in his plan to spread his positivist approach, her poems on love and heartaches because of her husband's absence are not well received by Pancho. He believes that this kind of poetry is weak and

unsuitable for a married woman, especially his wife, to express so publicly. He quips: “You must think of the future as the bard of our nation. We want the songs of *la patria*, we need anthems to lead us out of the morass of our past and into our glorious destiny as the Athens of the Americas” (177). Notwithstanding his positivist ideology, Pancho still cannot accept that a woman has the right to openly proclaim her feelings for a man. He plays the role of the prescriptive and patriarchal censor of what a woman could write or not write about. He refuses to accept that the poems about *la patria* and love come from the same source and ideology: love for country can also be love for her husband, the patriarch of the family. Her verses came from the same space, “With the last few poems, I had begun writing in a voice that came from deep inside me. It was not a public voice expressing my secret desires that Pancho was dismissing” (177). Salomé is the poet of passion for both her nation and for her husband, both representing *la patria* and the patriarch.

When Salomé realizes she is pregnant she refuses to inform Pancho. Disturbingly, Salomé believes that her husband shouldn't be bothered her news and feels that her matters are not as important as his needs in the public political sphere. President Meriño's government that begins as a progressive and prosperous regime soon becomes a repressive, violent, and corrupt. Pancho is undecided whether to remain with Meriño or leave. To complicate matters, Salomé's anxiety about her husband's absence, his perceived collusion with a repressive regime, his patriarchal views, Salomé has a miscarriage. Salomé suffers post-miscarriage trauma evidenced in bodily chills and fever. In her depressed condition of mourning over her unborn child, and without her husband to care for her emotional needs, Hostos becomes the replacement male. Though her

illness hinders her writing she still is able to come out with a poem, “Sombras.” Salomé receives visitors who are concerned about Meriño’s brutal regime, the constant bloodsheds, and the repression of the news media: “Many wished that Salomé would get better and write one of her poems that would stir up patriots to rise up against this renewed wave of bloodshed” (187). Despite the urge and the pressure to write against this trend, she is wary of writing new verse for la patria. She acknowledges that she “had lost heart in the ability of words to transform us into a patria of brothers and sisters” (187). Of course, she may also be worried that any poetic vitriolic against the government verse could harm her husband. She, much like Hostos, believes this: “The last thing our country needed was more poems. We needed schools. We needed to bring up a generation of young people who would think in new ways and stop the cycle of suffering on our Island. It was time to put away my childish toys and roll up my sleeves” (187). Nonetheless, she accepts that la patria has become a lost landscape that needs reclamation and protection through education. Her poetic muse is then slated to be silenced so she can dedicate her efforts to teaching. History would be made and written from the private landscape of her home and her weapons would be the desk, classroom, and family.

As the narrative moves to the second decade of the 20th century, Camila finds herself in Washington DC in 1923 with her father Pancho. Pancho is working to be reinstated as President of the Dominican Republic. Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal had represented Pancho and gotten elected president on Pancho’s behalf because Pancho was then living in exile in Cuba. However, Pancho’s Presidency lasted for only six months (July 31, 1916-November 29, 1916) when several events put him out of office: First, the United States invaded the Dominican Republic during the First World War, in an attempt

to use the island as a military base to stave off what they considered to be the evil of a growing communist wave. They offered him to continue to be a puppet president but he “refused to be their puppet” and moved back to Cuba to establish his government in exile (190). While in exile in the United States of America, having rejected their offer to be their puppet man Pancho constantly though fruitlessly requests a meeting with President Warren G. Harding to ask him for reinstatement as the legitimate president of the Dominican Republic. Camilla acts as the liaison between Pancho and Scott Andrews, the person responsible for helping her set up the meeting between Pancho and the President of the United States. But after seven years in exile, Pancho begins to realize his time is up even if he still claims that he is the President of the Dominican Republic. Thus, regardless of everything that Camila tries to tell her father: “he cannot save a country that does not want to be saved in the way he wants to save it” (191), yet in this confusion, Camila recognizes still accepts that her father is a “Force of History” (191). Meanwhile Peynado, who once was Pancho’s “friend and protégé,” was also in Washington but working on his own agenda for the future of the Dominican Republic (189).

Unable to let Camila out of her obsessive control, Marion moves to Cuba with Camila after her graduation from the University of Minnesota. In Cuba, Marion opens a dance studio and dedicates some time to teaching English to wealthy young girls in Cuba. She lives her life as an ex-pat in Cuba with all the privileges that being an American in the Caribbean entails. As a white, American woman, Marion could live in Cuba and be critical of the island while enjoying all the perks of being friends with the daughter of a former President of the Dominican Republic.

In contrast to Marion's selfish and unreflecting attachment to Camila, Scott Andrews, the young marine "military aide at the White House" whom Camila had met on a previous trip to Washington, is sweet on Camila and offers to help arrange and coordinate a meeting for Pancho with the president of the United States. At this point he does not demonstrate his interest in Camila while she is still in the USA (195). In her confused state of mind, Salomé's ghost appears to Camila's as a way of empowering her and letting Camila know that she is doing right and should not be afraid. The appearances of Salomé's ghosts to Camila are moments of mother-daughter bonding. The woman who had in her life composed passionate poems about la patria, is transferring her vision to her daughter who is taking care of her father, and also working to continue the mother's dream of promoting the homeland. Thus, Camila's memories of her mother and the ghosts that appear to her are not intimidating to her; they appear in the clear sky:

Contrary to the behavior of most ghosts, her mother's face never appears in the darkness. Camila gazes up, and, like a schoolgirl assigned a problem at the blackboard, she begins connecting the stars into the shape of the future everyone expects of her. She will live in a house, not unlike this one. She will bear children, not unlike her little nephews. She will kiss her kind husband, a man not unlike Scott Andrews. ...Already she feels bored with this version of what is to come. (205)

Like her mother therefore, Camila realizes that the socio-cultural impositions of femininity and womanhood are not for her.

Camila realizes that Scott Andrews is interested more in courting her than helping her father meet his President. She has never felt such anger and gives him an ultimatum:

if he wants her to consider his proposal, he must make the meeting happen between Papancho and President Harding: “. . . I swear I heard my mother speaking to me in a voice very low, but firm: *This is what it means to love your country. Duty is the highest virtue.* What an oppressive ghost my mother has become! I, too, am an occupied territory” (207). In the end, Camila discovers she has been betrayed by Mr. Andrews who was actually helping Peynado to move along the American agenda on the island, suddenly recognizes that for all these years, she never owned her body or her world. It had been ruled and controlled by Marion, Scott Andrews and her family’s designs. The narrative returns to a time before Pancho becomes president.

So, in *Seis: Ruinas*, there is a narrative retrieval that sends us to Pancho’s student days in Paris, France where he has gone to study medicine while Salomé stays behind in charge of the children and the school under Hostos’ mentorship. Engaging an epistolary technique, the narrative is rendered through letters she writes Papancho while he is away for two years, more time than they had both anticipated. It is 1887 and Ulises “Lilis” Heureaux is President of the Dominican Republic. In one of the letters she writes: “The work we are doing, el maestro reminded me, is a seed in the ground, invisible until it flowers—unlike a poem I can hold in my hands” (218). She was shaping the nation one student at a time from her home/ school while those that opposed the government were exiled to Haiti and as Salomé states in one of her letters: “Our old enemy now harbors the seeds of our future! But it remains to be seen whether our patria shall ever flower. [. . .] It seems they have only two choices: destierro o entierro, exile or death,” the same fate Hostos was now facing—he was leaving to Chile to open up schools there (220). Turmoil

in the Caribbean force great intellectuals such as José Martí and Hostos to live in exile and forge patria outside of their own, “our whole Caribbean is living elsewhere” (226)!

Camila lives with her brother Pedro “Pibín” in Minneapolis while both are attending Graduate school at the University of Minnesota. It is at the university that Camila meets Marion who is impressed with the “two anonymous foreign instructors from an insignificant country [. . .] the son and daughter of the president of a country a stone’s away from Florida” (235). But the truth was that the President had no country to rule over; her father was a president with no land. While in Minnesota, the siblings make headlines: “CHILDREN OF FORMER PRESIDENT OF SAN DOMINGO PREFER THE USA,” they feel outed and betrayed (238). Pedro explains to Camila, “Our father was ousted by the Americans because he would not agree to their demands... We are here because the occupation of our country does not permit us to return” (239). In the meantime, Marion grows more and more attached to Camila. They become lovers behind Pedro’s back as Camila knows that her family would never approve of such a non-traditional lifestyle. Camila knows she is looking for sexual relations and love but is sure that these can come from a heterosexual relationship. In bonding with Marion therefore, she believes she is bonding with her mother, not in any incestuous fashion, but in a mother-daughter relationship. It is “mother [she] was looking for” (242).

Siete: La llegada del invierno, marks Pancho’s arrival home as a medical doctor but Salomé has already uncovered his secret life in France, he has fallen in love and has a new life in Europe; Salomé is distraught and has become very ill, the family doctor suspected tuberculosis. Pancho decides that the best medicine for Salomé was the beach so they send her off to Puerto Plata, the northern part of the Dominican Republic, so that

she could be closer to the beach. Salomé is inspired by the ocean and feels inspired enough to write two new poems: “Tierra!” and “Fe”. Writing and this new landscape happened to be her best medicine and Pancho was happy to have “Mi musa, mi esposa, mi amor, mi tierra!” back (270).

Seven: Reply. It’s 1909 and Camila is just 15 years old. She had been living in Cuba for 5 years and had not seen her aunt Ramona. Camila is a sickly child, like her mother, with weak lungs and suffering from depression. When Mon, the guardian of her mother’s memories, travels to Cuba to visit Camila for her fifteenth birthday Camila is happy and excited to see her; it’s the closest she feels to her mother. *Ocho: Luz (1893-1894).* Salomé and Pancho must close the school and go into exile. Salomé is pregnant with Camila and is frustrated with all the violence enveloping the island and their ideologies crashed with Lilis’ dictatorship. Salomé rubs her belly and tells Camila, “Wherever we end up, remember, *this* is your patria!” (302). Salomé decided on the name of Camila after reading *Nuna Pompilius by Florian*. Camila was a character who was friends with Numa, and she was the “wandering Camila, with the fleet feet who could run through a field of grain and not bend a single stalk, walk across the ocean and not wet her feet” (306); Camila, like her namesake, grew up to be a wanderer.

Eight: Bird and Nest (1897). Camila is three years old and is leaving with her mother and brothers to El Cabo, Haiti where her father is exiled. Salomé’s illness has gotten worst but feels she has to be where her husband is and have her family together. The departure makes her sister Ramona and her Mamá upset and they don’t want the children to leave, specifically Camila, who has grown very close to her aunt. “You are going to forget your mother unless we keep reminding you,” Mon explained” (318). The

trip from Santo Domingo to El Cabo is by boat and this memory never leaves Camila's. In this chapter we see bits and pieces of Camila's remembrances of her mother, Salomé, before her death. "Salomé Camila, her mother's name and her name, always together! Just as on that last day in the dark bedroom she remembers everybody crying and the pained coughing and her mother raising her head from her pillow to say their special name. 'Here we are,' she calls out" (331). They are one, her mother is always with her.

Epilogue: Arriving Santo Domingo (1973). Final chapter where Camila returns to the Dominican Republic to visit her younger, step-brother Rodolfo. It's the first time Camila narrates in first person. She is almost 79 years old and was scoping the family gravesite to decide where she was going to be buried. Camila Salomé was preparing for the inevitable—death. She decided on the plot closest to the ground because finally, "This will be my first permanent home" (334). She would finally be rooted in the Dominican Republic, the country her mother loved with passion and her father defended vehemently. She missed her mother, even at her age she realized her search for her mother followed her throughout her entire life:

. . . I longed for her—a longing that would well up in me in the middle of the night and send me wandering through houses, apartments, wherever it was I was living at the time. I tried all kind of strategies. I learned her story. I put it side by side with my own. I wove our two lives together as strong as a rope and with it I pulled myself out of the pit of depression and self-doubt. But no matter what I tried, she was still gone, Until, at last I found her the only place we ever find the dead: among the living. Mamá

was alive and well in Cuba, where I struggled with others to build the kind of country she had dreamed of. (335)

Camila's return to the Dominican Republic gave her closure, she had followed her mother's legacy—she was part of building a nation. Her time back home is spent with her younger brother discussing Cuba and how they failed to create a nation, but Camila differs: "We have to keep trying to create a patria out of the land where we were born. Even when the experiment fails" (342). History is not written with and by people who give up. They were a family of wanderers and patria was wherever they lived "house is to home as country is to blank" (343). Camila visits the school her mother had founded. She is not recognized by the teachers who now run it; she was shooed away. Nonetheless, she is happy to know that her mother's "instituto had grown to the size of a whole country" (349). She subsequently tells her niece, Elsa, about her love Domingo, in Cuba and how she, "had fallen in love with the artist, his intensity, Africa in his skin—the things that connected me to my mother, not to him" (349). When Elsa asks why she went back to Cuba and not the Dominican Republic, she explains that she got as close to her island as she could: "Who can explain it? That dark love and shame that binds us to the arbitrary place where we happened to be born" (349). Although Elsa believed that Castro was not the answer for Cuba, Camila thoughtfully answered, "There are no answers...It's continuing to struggle to create the country we dream of that makes a patria out of the land under our feet. That much I learned from my mother" (350)—the landscape was always in the making.

Camila is bent on having her full name, Camila Salomé Henríquez Ureña, on her tombstone. She fears her nieces had not fulfilled her wishes, so she decides to visit the

gravesite. Because she is blind, she cannot read the tombstone so she asks a nearby boy to read the tombstone back to her, but the boy can't read. Camila takes advantage of this moment to teach the boy the letters by tracing them with his fingers. Camila, much like her mother Salomé, are one. . . Salome passes away on September 12, 1973 in the Dominican Republic—she is always the teacher like Salomé—her search has come full circle. At the tombstone, “[The Dominican Republic] convokes and evokes a landscape of rootedness, a place where the horrors of [history both past contemporary], humiliation, [exile and persecution], converge and generate spaces for self-identification. [Camilla’s] emotional and devotional reverence for the land, now that it is a place where” mother and daughter “can reunite” and derive “emotional and spiritual security from this brief yet lasting corporeal [and spiritual] bonding with [the Dominican Republic’s] natural environment” (Kuwabong 47). Thus, though physically blind, Camilla develops an inner vision that supplants the physical eyesight. Her inner vision gives her a clarity, depth, and strength of psychoemotional attachment and guarantees an uncluttered entry into a greater dialogue and connection with her landscape and history. In teaching the boy how to read, Camilla transfers historical, family, and landscape knowledge to the next generation, just as the letters and diary entries, shopping lists, and songs in *The Swinging Bridge*, and the ghostly voices that emerge from Jamaica’s landscape to instruct Jean in *The True History of Paradise* transfer knowledge and history to Jean and Mona.

Chapter 5:

Concluding Thoughts

Visual surprise is natural in the Caribbean; it comes with the landscape, and faced with its beauty, the sigh of History dissolves. (Walcott “Nobel Lecture”)

What started out as a fieldwork course to St. Croix and my meeting with Patricia Gil Murphy, and the subsequent reading of her novel about *Buddhoe* about this Cruzan hero and leader the led the 1884 Slave rebellion and secured freedom for the enslaved in the Danish West Indies, which inspired me to further research the historical novel in the Caribbean, has finally developed and culminated into this dissertation about Caribbean women authors rewriting and revisioning history. Yet, I am still haunted by questions about the narrative and ideological “authenticity” of an outsider such as Patricia Gill celebrating Cruzan even if her work triggered and initiated my intellectual curiosity that has resulted in this dissertation. Second, my confession that Patricia Gill’s *Buddhoe* ignited my interest in Caribbean historical fiction does not erase the fact that her book focuses on the male protagonists and antagonists in her book to the almost silencing Anna Heergaard, the most important influence on the events that both *Buddhoe* and Peter Von Scholten, the then Danish West Indies that culminated in the emancipation proclamation in St. Croix. However, I feel encouraged also that non-native outsiders can also bring some light to shine on areas of history that otherwise would never be told. I also reference Maryse Conde, a Guadeloupean female writer whose historical fiction

about West African kingdoms has generated a lot of studies about the relationship between fiction and history, especially when performed by a non-native of the area: *Segu* (1987), *A Season in Rihata* (1988), *The Children of Segu* (1989), *The Last of the African Kings* (1994).

However, no study of history is complete without a quick definition of the word “history”, defined by the Merriam-Webster.com as “chronological record of significant events (as affecting a nation or institution) often including an explanation of their causes; events of the past” (“history.” *Merriam-Webster.com*). This definition, besides being simple, was highly problematic. “Chronological record” brings up questions of chronology and linear timelines. If we stop and look at history as just a “chronological record,” are we leaving any room for other versions of history? What happened before, during and after an event? What happens when we look back and piece versions of history? Chronology then is not relevant when I am examining Caribbean women writers as they insert their (re)visions of history and include narrations which mix past with present. The novels’ narration present in this research are non-linear-they break away from the chronological. Another problematic phrase stems from “significant events”? Who or what determines the significance and how it affects the nation or institution? In other words, this is a very Western definition and lacks other ways of encountering and understanding history.

If focusing on history and the novel Lukás is one of the prominent scholars that arise. His most recognized work *The Historical Novel*, published in 1937, is recommended reading when focusing on the Historical Novel which he defines as:

...the historical novel is not the re-telling of great historical events, but the poetic awakenings of the people who figured in those events. What matters is that we should re-experience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality... in order to bring out these social and human motives of behaviour, the outwardly insignificant events, the smaller (from without) relationships are better suited than the great monumental dramas of world history. (42)

This definition, although an important starting point, is still a European/ male focused definition. Once again, terms such as: “great historical events” is problematic. Who gets to define “great historical events”? His definitions prove to be limiting but opens up a conversation about how the historical novel has evolved and continues to be analyzed and researched which eventually led me to theorists such as Hayden White and Robert Young.

Hayden White’s most read and acclaimed work, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, he makes an argument against a scientific view of history. According to White, all historical accounts are narratives that “explain” much of what happened in the past rather than just some dry transcriptions of archival historical facts. Therefore, when wanting to interpret any historical account, the historian must construct a linguistic protocol, complete with lexical, grammatical, syntactical, and semantic dimensions, by which to characterize the field and its elements *in his own terms* (rather than in the terms in which they come labeled themselves), and thus to prepare them for the explanation and representation he will subsequently offer them in his narrative (30).

History is no longer an absolute “truth,” nor can historical events be viewed scientifically. While it can’t pass as unproblematic, it at least begins to bring us closer to what I am focusing on in this doctoral thesis, history is fiction since it relies on the imagination to recreate. The historian, as White explains, recreates the historical accounts “in his own terms”; and Caribbean women writers are rewriting their histories “on their own terms.” Velma Pollard, for example, states her reasons for writing about the Jamaica she experienced in the forties and fifties: “In my fiction I make these things affect imaginary people. There is an interrelationship between history and literature which when exploited gives a clearer picture of any given time than either discipline would have been able to offer independently” (17). Similarly, Merle Collins, when writing about how historical events eventually led to the United States’ invasion of Grenada in 1983, believes that in “Using broad details rooted in lived experience . . . dramatizes particular facets of existence, in an effort to understand, dynamically, how events in Grenada during the neo-colonial and post-independence period could have led to the 1980’s and beyond” (25). Their experiences as females in Caribbean cultural spaces and histories are unveiled and performed through their writing, both as an expansion of the narrative representations of Caribbean history and of the literary and cultural landscapes. There is a need to reflect and write about the past to understand the conditions and idiosyncrasies of Caribbean women in present time.

Additionally, I am consoled by historiographer Greg Denning, who echoing Hayden White argues that history is not so much about truth but about performance of fiction (fiction and fact). He persuasively argues that in the study of history:

it is the present that all of us who love history – who write it- who read it- are in touch. We possess the past directly only because we are in supportive agreement that the tone of our narrative and the tenses of our language make the past present. The past is mediated to us by all the interventions that have happened in between. (276)

Thus, my study of these three novelists did not seek to prove the veracity of their facts as presented, but to explore how each of them performed revisionary historiography to insert both the fabulous and the real, the global national and the individual. My purpose was not to erase the annals of Euro-focused interpretations of Caribbean history. I sought to expose narrative patterns where history was not always researched and re-visioned by women. Reading Margaret Cezaire-Thompson's *The Pirate's Daughter and The True History of Paradise*, Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge*, and Julia Alvarez's *In The Name of Salomé* inspired me also to examine how landscapes were also represented not just as passive backdrops for their versions of history, but also as active participants in those histories. May, the protagonist in the novel, writes:

I feel strange saying it but I've always been madly in love with the island of my birth—the land, not the nation or state---it's not patriotism; it's landscapism, which is both a passion for the land and a kind of escape. I used to wake up earlier than everyone else when I was little just so I could be alone with the view and have no one intruding between me and the morning air [...] is Jamaica really changing like everyone says, or has it just outgrown the old stories about itself? It's frightening and chaotic to have that feeling and finally be able to express it in one's way [. . .]

enough of the citizen-of-the-world crap. Time to be a citizen of my own country now. (307)

May's definition of landscapism as a way to identify a connection with Jamaica without getting involved in the politics and histories of a nation seemed an impossible task but a possible direction to begin examining the way land is connected to identity, history and belonging.

Hence, the definitions of landscape as I have engaged it in this dissertation, equally needs further unraveling in the study of Caribbean women's fiction. It needs to be interpreted in various ways--to experience what they exude. Jonna Kato, for example, defines the term landscape as:

[. . .] a way of relating, both materially and imaginatively, to the physical and social world that we inhabit and experience...is not conceived in a visual sense, that is, as a vista that can be observed from the outside. ...a conception of landscape that is experienced through embodiment, . . . The individual, furthermore, is placed within the 'simultaneous production' of various landscapes. . . . conceptualised conjointly in both spatial and temporal terms: . . . Landscapes (in the plural) are thus in the process of constant negotiation. (540-541)

among space, time, society and mind. Landscapes is how we experience it: we live it, become part of it, and it becomes part of us. It is also important to understand that we are part of different landscapes.

Since the 1980's Caribbean women writers, like the ones examined and discussed in this dissertation, have made it a point to distinguish themselves by creating, imagining,

and placing their female characters in the turbulent socioeconomic and cultural and landscape histories of their individual island nations. I believe my dissertation has therefore responded to the call by Nana Wilson Tagoe for a closer examination of Caribbean women writers and their engagement with history, gender, class, race and landscape because women's experience and their writing are intrinsically tied to how they relate to their "history, culture, and political conditioning" (223). Hence, the female protagonists in the works of Margaret Cezaire-Thompson, Ramabai Espinet and Julia Alvarez studied in this dissertation are shown to actively participate in the historical, economic, social and cultural struggles of their island nations. I have shown above how these texts showcase individual females building new "cultural identities, exorcise ghosts of the past and find ways to draw upon the past in an attempt to build a new and better future" (Booker and Juraga 4).

Additionally, I examined how the female characters in *The True History of Paradise*, *The Swinging Bridge*, and *In the Name of Salomé* use island landscapes and cultural spaces to bridge and reconcile their islands histories. These narratives add a female/feminist dimensions to their nation's complex historical discourses, and consequently, help develop women's sense of belongingness to their nations. The natural environments of each island provide, as I have argued that these women explore their liminal spaces to forcefully establish relations or links to their histories, homelands, families, and cultures both locally and transnationally. The landscapes, or the contours of their natural environments, of each island enable each of the women to forge both personal and collective stories from and within a broader Caribbean landscape.

To aid my analysis of history and landscape in the works previously mentioned, I engaged in a discussion of history where I exposed the importance of imagination when revisioning history to create a historical fictional narrative. I emphasized that the historical novel--defined as just not a “retelling” of historical events as would a textbook but a re-experiencing of the past through an imagination an re-interpretation--is present in the works of several Caribbean authors and deserve attention as it provides new voices and versions of the previously imposed Eurocentric narratives of history. Likewise, as I have demonstrated these authors,

Through their novels, . . . explode the univocal expression of history as a description of “what really happened” and replace it with a polyvocality of competing discourses, languages, and points of view. This emphasis on the many voices of the past makes it possible for us to conceive a past that is more than a dead letter, it will help us understand and experience the past as a dynamic flow of values in a force field that can be reconfigured in ways to help transform our future. (Price 9)

These novels revisit history and create new narratives based on the past allowing an inclusion of a plethora of voices otherwise marginalized.

Much like Kalle Pihlainen states in the essay “On Historical Consciousness and Popular Pasts”:

Because the truthfulness and authority of historical representations has been brought into question. . . the broader public now has more opportunities for using the past in ways that are meaningful to them. In this sense, the past no longer belongs exclusively to historians even in

terms of knowledge about it. Hence historical consciousness can no longer be controlled by historical research (if it ever could). (11)

Cezaire-Thompson, Ramabai Espinet, and Julia Alvarez surreptitiously interrogate the past of their islands make and tease out submerged histories disallowed as history. These authors do not seek to “explain”; they wrote in order to “represent,” to tell what had actually happened in the past...” (White 385).

Cezaire-Thompson, Ramabai Espinet and Julia Alvarez have successfully all rewritten the dilemmas of Caribbean identities and in the process challenged through the use of plurality of voices and multiple perspectivity and interwoven plots to subvert, male-centered single plot narrative linearity to reclaim their histories lodged in the annals of memory. They follow “the best tradition of anti-colonial intellectuals and activists: they took critical elements of Western radical discourse and combined it with a dissidence of their own” (7).⁶

My reading of these texts therefore, argued for a woman centered approach to unravel the rich and complex interplay between history and landscape. I further demonstrated that the natural landscape, as represented in each novel, is also a text that records the personal, communal, and national histories of each island, as seen, perceived, and lived by women. My hypothesis proved that, to fully understand the histories of the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, it is pertinent to read their landscapes through the eyes, the words, the struggles, and scripts of their women, which hitherto, has been lacking in the historical and literary discourses of Caribbean islands.

⁶ Young was specifically writing about the “post-colonial intellectuals” who were writing against the “Anglo-European” theories while parting from the “anti-colonial Marxist theories” to create their own “radical discourses”. (*White Mythologies* 7)

As indicated above, Landscape is one of the dominant tools engaged by these authors to extract buried memories. Every inch of land represents those who had lived there, and questions and provides revision of what happened, or may have happened during particular national historical moments. Remembered and narrated landscapes connect narrators with ancestors, develop historical synchronicity that privileges theme over scientific and formal chronicity of in plot.

Writing about and using their landscapes as active agents in the histories of the islands, I have proved that their idea of landscape is neither a romantic idealization nor a project of repossession or reclamation. I argued that the three authors use landscape more as acts of re-entry and revaluation of their languages and voices stored in those landscapes. By so doing they hence legitimize their authors' claim to entitlement in a landscape saturated with their histories. They become counter-narratives that do not just see Caribbean landscapes as a mere place for opportunity and exploitation for the benefits of former and contemporary colonial empires. Landscape is itself a text which enables them to excavate and reveal alt-history in that landscape as acts of feminine reclamations to chart new paths to national consciousness and to negotiate their identities.

They use the natural landscapes of their islands as backdrops to their stories and imagine the stories that these landscapes contained in a time that preceded them. These women create and re-create their landscape within the geographical confines of their island nations and, in some occasions, carry their own representation of island's landscape and history while in the Diaspora as is in the case of Mona Singh in the *Swinging Bridge* and Camila Salomé Henríquez Ureña in *In the Name of Salomé*. The spaces they navigate away from the Caribbean archipelago hold an importance because

they embody and represent their island's national-political as they go back and forth between Canada and the Trinidad and Tobago, like Mona Singh or from the United States to Cuba and eventually the Dominican Republic much like Camila.

In chapter two I examined the histories contained in the landscapes of Jamaica as Jean travels from Kingston to Montego Bay. I presented the text as Margaret Cézair-Thompson's account of Jean Landing in 1978 as she is crossing from Kingston to Montego Bay to take a plane for New York City in the shadow of political violence and social unrest in Jamaica. y. The rivalry between the PNP (People's National Party) and the JLP (Jamaica Labor Party), the political parties during the 1976 General Election, had increased violence and tension amongst Jamaicans is turning life on the island unbearable and tense. Jean Landing loves her island and is conflicted about her decision of leaving to the United States, but she realizes that living in Jamaica could eventually mean that she could be physically harmed—either raped or killed—meeting the fate of her older sister Lana who died in a fire in downtown Kingston. Jean Landing knows that leaving the island on a private plane is illegal, yet her childhood friend, Paul, willingly drives her to her destination—the clandestine airport. Their drive from Kingston to Montego Bay is filled with detailed descriptions of the Jamaican landscape as every landscape she encounters is filled with histories of those ghosts that once inhabited those lands—ghosts that speak to Jean and tell their stories of the life they led on those landscapes she is experiencing. As she listens closely to those ghosts that are tied to the landscapes, she pieces the history of her island: the Spanish invasion, slave revolts, life under British colonial rule, work in the cane fields, and the Chinese and Indian influx in Jamaica. Margaret Cezaire-Thompson is filling in the gaps of the Jamaican history taught in

schools with the voices of those whose stories never made it into the history books; the accounts that rarely are told and not considered important in conventional. Jamaica's landscape contains the stories of Jean's ancestors who have lived during crucial events in the island's history. The history Jean learns is fraught with lessons and warnings as her ancestors guide her, by reinforcing her decision to immigrate to the United States. The history of Jamaica, according to the ghosts she meets, is a history of violence and should she stay, she could face danger and the same fate as her sister Lana, who suffered a madness that led to suicide. Jean uses the landscape to connect with her history. As she gets closer to her destination, her last thoughts are: "panic and history are mine." She takes her history and the landscape with her before she leaves; madness is now the new history of Jamaica, that is all that is left to Jean.

While in chapter two I focused on Cezaire-Thomas almost haunting landscape as voice, in chapter three, my focus was to explore how in *The Swinging Bridge* Ramabai Espinet looks at the silenced histories of Indo-Trinidadian women who crossed the Kala Pani as indentured laborers in 1879 from India to Trinidad. I then proceeded to examine how Da-da gambled his family land away and hence is forced to migrate with the family to Canada. I showed how the pull of the land back in Trinidad makes Kello work himself to death to earn money to purchase it back, for he believed the land contained their historical past and future. I then showed how Mona pieces together the complicated intricacies of her family life and documents, through her narration, the voices of those ancestors that arrived as indentured slaves in Trinidad. Mona's history is not exclusive to Trinidad as a geographical location—her history invades and prevails in the spaces she reclaims as home: Trinidad and Canada.

In *The Swinging Bridge* I centered my analysis on Mona Singh's journey from Canada to Trinidad and back again as she rediscovers and embraces her Indo-Trinidadian identity. Mona, through the trips back to Trinidad as her brother's proxy, is able to recapture her family history and understand that her identity and personal history lies between Trinidad and Canada. Through the stories about the Kala Pani, the letters she finds, she is able to piece together, not only her personal story, but a family history which began in India and ended in Trinidad where she grew up. In "Historical/Political Landscapes and Beyond in Julia Alvarez' *In the Name of Salomé*." I focused on how mother and daughter use the familiar and unfamiliar landscapes to navigate and discover their histories. Camila Salomé Henríquez Ureña from Julia Álvarez's *In the Name of Salomé*, lives between two different landscapes while in charge of weaving together the history of her mother, the renowned poet, Salomé Ureña. Unlike the other two novels chosen for this dissertation, *In the Name of Salomé* focuses on two women narrating their personal and nation's history. Salomé Ureña's life takes place in the Dominican Republic. Considered as the first Dominican feminist, her narrations are filled with descriptions of the constant political shifts on the island riddled by Spanish, Haitian and American invasions as well as frustrated attempts of presidents ruling over a fragile nation. In Salomé's first person narration we learn of the lives of the Dominicans, specifically of the intellectuals fighting censorship and oftentimes meeting in secrecy to maintain their poetry and writing alive and relevant under governments that weren't interested in artists that questioned the status quo—all those histories and names we could read about in the history books come to flourish in the narration filled with details of her lives. Camila had been taken to Cuba at an early age and it was there where she

was raised. After leaving to the United States to study she carries her family's legacy as intellectuals from the Dominican Republic, her work with Castro's revolution and academic/professional life in the United States. Camila's landscape is her body, her physical features and life experiences abroad are testimony to her historical background—her intellectual work and her body reflect her family history. I also analyzed how Camila, specifically, navigated unfamiliar landscapes to embrace and cement her and Salomé's legacy—Camila wanders the world carrying her history while negotiating her identity in the landscapes she encounters. Her history follows her through the landscapes of Minnesota, New York, Mexico, Florida, Cuba and her resting ground in the Dominican Republic. In *In the Name of Salomé* we can see how mother and daughter use the familiar and unfamiliar landscapes to navigate and discover their histories. I also analyzed how Camila, specifically, navigated unfamiliar landscapes to embrace and cement her and Salomé's legacy—Camila wanders the world carrying her history while negotiating her identity in the landscapes she encounters. Caribbean women writers examined in this dissertation questioned and made their versions of history accessible to their audience. They made the past relatable and are slowly loosening the grip of the Eurocentric history taught to us. Cezaire-Thompson, Espinet, and Alvarez inserted their voices and visions in their novels and in the process, they have rewritten the dilemmas of Caribbean identities which simultaneously have challenged, subverted, and appropriated European historiographic and historical linearity to rewrite their own hybridized and creolized histories. The spaces they navigate away from the Caribbean archipelago hold an importance because they embody and represent their island's national-political as they go back and forth between Canada and the Trinidad and Tobago, like Mona Singh or

from the United States to Cuba and eventually the Dominican Republic much like Camila. In conclusion, my position is that Cezaire-Thompson, Ramabai Espinet, and Julia Alvarez all recall, report, and fill the gaps and absences found in main historical accounts. What binds all three is not just their engagement of landscape, and their representations of the social and political tensions in their various islands, but also, the search for historical reconnection with their matrilineages. In a way, then my position at the end is consonant to other scholars who have argued that to read Caribbean women's text is to read a multi-vocal, plural cultural, and plural identities paradox.

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