

ACTS OF GARDENING: IMAGINING THE ENVIRONMENT AND PLOTTING
COMMUNITY IN CONTEMPORARY DECOLONIAL SOUTH AFRICAN AND
CARIBBEAN FICTION

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(English)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN- MADISON

2019

Date of final oral examination: 6/12/2019

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes contemporary Caribbean and South Africa fiction and asks how representations of gardens can help decolonial writers contest capitalist designations of space as well as imagine environmental consciousness, relationships, and environmentalisms. Exploring garden writing and garden representations in novels by Jamaica Kincaid, Shani Mootoo, J.M. Coetzee, Patrick Chamoiseau, Bessie Head, and Nadine Gordimer, I investigate how the gardens evoke complicated histories of colonialism and industrial agriculture and problematize borders between nature and culture. While manicured flowerbeds as well as some community gardens have been associated with apolitical escape and reflection, I follow postcolonial ecocriticism's position of inextricable entwining of history, culture and the environment. In the South African and Caribbean fiction I analyze, subsistence community gardens, organized refuse and decomposition, backyard and houseyards gardens represent gardening as a figurative and material act to deconstruct imperialist environmental discourses and plantation's mass commercial production and alienation. This dissertation examines how garden representations enable writers to: bear witness to multispecies entanglements, reimagine collective belonging, envision strategies for survival and resistance, and inscribe life in plantation geographies.

INTRODUCTION

Plantation Futures and Gardening Imaginations

“[Gardens] can evoke a place of the past or a desired future—sometimes they are one in the same.”-Kenneth Helphand, *Defiant Gardens*

In *My Garden (Book)*: (1999), Antiguan American author Jamaica Kincaid wanders through her own material garden, garden memories, garden books, the history of the garden, especially the botanical garden, as well as gardens in Europe and China. As readers, we follow Kincaid’s meandering thoughts as they move among remembering one summer’s vegetable garden to her observations of a fox on her garden’s border to descriptions of magnolias from one of the many gardening books Kincaid cites. Kincaid’s stream-of-consciousness illustrates how even the most innocuous and ordinary tasks in her garden are haunted by histories of conquest, driven by capitalistic desires, and colored by a complicated legacy of European and American garden writing. Kincaid’s style accomplishes this task because Kincaid intertwines the act of gardening and her arranging of ideas.

In *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), J.M. Coetzee follows a gardener who, although returns to the land, is never able to find the romantic peace that the land supposedly promises, and which has been narrated vividly in South African farm novels from the early twentieth century. As Coetzee analyzes in *White Writing*, the Afrikaner discourse of land ownership found its apex in the farm novel, or plaasroman, which tells of a mythical return to the family garden-farm. By following the central protagonist, Michael K, as he gardens in city parks and abandoned farms, the novel shadows and questions the plaasroman discourse of inherited space and white proprietorship. By portraying K as a feminized black character, Coetzee analyzes the absence of

black labor in South African pastoral myths. As is consistent with Coetzee's other texts, *Life and Times* does not provide a definitive alternative to colonialist relationships with the land.

Imagining work in gardens enables Caribbean and South African authors, like Jamaica Kincaid and J.M. Coetzee, to consider the ways in which capitalism and colonialism's methods of cultivation and harvesting as well as imperialist ideologies have shaped geography and human's spatial relationships to places.¹ The garden enables the investigation of history and thus, helps to show how capital accumulation and economic development "produce" nature.

This dissertation identifies writers, in both the Caribbean and South Africa, who figure gardens as a way to explore the legacy of capitalism and colonialism's production of the environment and imagine alternatives. Although gardens might not at first appear as contested spaces, the gardens I examine in books by Jamaica Kincaid, Shani Mootoo, J.M. Coetzee, Patrick Chamoiseau, Bessie Head, and Nadine Gordimer are not merely spaces to explore apolitical memory or idealize the order of nature and culture. Instead these garden representations enable writers to: bear witness to multispecies entanglements, reimagine collective belonging, envision strategies for survival and resistance, and inscribe life in plantation geographies.

PLANTATION GEOGRAPHIES

Echoing Frantz Fanon's deconstruction of the colonized world, in which he emphasizes that the colonial world is "compartmentalized" to legitimate the colonizer and oppress the colonized (2), Edward Said defines imperialism as "an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control"

¹ Materialist and postcolonial environmental critic Pablo Mukherjee cites Neil Smith's formulation of capital's power to produce space: "with the progress of capital accumulation and the expansion of economic development, this material substratum is more and more the product of social production...it is the production of nature that use-value and exchange-value, space, and society are fused together" (78).

(77). By violently transforming landscapes and encoding places with “temporal narratives of progress,” colonialism arranged the world (DeLoughrey, “Toward” 4). Formally and informally segregating the land “to distinguish and regulate relations,” colonialism and the plantation structure used a “racial logic” to cast spaces as either habitable or uninhabitable (McKittrick 6). South African and Caribbean writers performing garden writing respond to the ways that colonialism inscribed a spatial, corporeal, and temporal schema and the way the plantation wove ecology and capital together.² I will briefly recount Southern Africa and the Caribbean’s stories of colonization in order to highlight how my dissertation explores the roles gardens play in each place’s emergent visions of survival and resistance.

South Africa

Dutch and British merchants expanded their trade with India by setting up a post at the Cape, and almost by accident, the imperial enterprise identified South Africa as a viable settlement (Curry 18). Historian James Curry explains settlement began in 1819 as imperialism emptied what it deemed the “frontier” of what it categorized as “hostile African societies” (18). When diamonds and gold were discovered, “the sudden prospect that southern Africa could become the new Eldorado,” culminated in the South African (Anglo-Boer) War of 1900–02 (19). Land seizure and territory segregation soon followed.

By “confining Africans to 13% of the land, prohibiting land acquisition in ‘white areas,’ outlawing tenancy and share-cropping,” The Natives Land Act of 1913 made African ownership and occupation illegal (Hallowes and Butler 62). White farms were established as the only form

² In the introduction to *Patchy Anthropocene: Landscape Structure, Multispecies History, and the Retooling of Anthropology*, Anna Tsing argues that “the multidimensional crises of our current times...takes landscape as its starting point and that attunes itself to the structural synchronicities between ecology, capital, and the human and more-than-human histories through which uneven landscapes are made and remade” (3).

of commercial agriculture.³ With the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and its successor, the Land Tenure Act of 1970, Curry underlines dramatic percentages: “98% of land suitable for afforestation, fruit growing, and intensive beef production lay in white areas, as did 82 per cent of the land suitable for intensive farming” (24). Land dispossession not only occurred through increasing control and ownership, but also through commercial farming technologies. The tractor decreased the need for sharecropper teams, and pesticides polluted the water and soil as well as exposed workers to toxic chemicals (Hallowes and Butler 61-63). Colonialism and the apartheid government radically shifted how communities could experience and inhabit landscapes. The violent forced removal of the 1950 Group Areas Act established separate residential areas, and restricted Africans, Indians, and coloureds to “bleak, hostile environments, frequently lacking community facilities, cultural amenities” and led to “widespread environmental degradation” (Khan 21-22). Creating hostile environments enabled the apartheid government to legitimate its possession by framing “blacks as environmentally destructive,” and subsequently, allowed for the rise of conservation ideology in South Africa (Khan 18).

Colonial conservation incorporated Eurocentric tendencies to idealize and preserve the natural environment (Khan 18; Grove “Scotland in South Africa” 141). According to Jane Carruthers, the establishment of Kruger National Park went hand in hand with evicting African residents and prohibiting subsistence hunting (*Kruger National Park* 43). Black Africans were cast as poachers and whites as conservationists (Carruthers, *Kruger National Park* 45). Sewage plants, polluting industries and landfills were located next to townships and the government prohibited black South Africans from accessing nature in national parks (Khan 22). Black South Africans were condemned to live in a marginalized geography that barred their movement and

³ Hallowes and Butler: “In time, tenants were reduced to sharecroppers, sharecroppers to labor tenants, and labor tenants to wage laborers. At each step, their command of productive resources was forfeited to the landowners” (62).

vilified their being.

South Africa's settler colonialism not only removed indigenous populations and attached settlers to the landscape through violence and legislation, but it also deployed imaginative dispossession. Rita Barnard explains, by inscribing white nationalism and imperial power onto the landscape, white South African writing erased the conditions of black labor, which powered white agriculture. The *plaasroman* established the Afrikaner rural origins and "provided an illusion of continuity in South African history and a description of an unchanging Afrikaner identity" (Devarenne 627). In "Nationalism and the Farm Novel in South Africa, 1883–2004," Nicole Devarenne examines early farm novels from Jochem van Bruggen's *Ampie: Die Natuurkind* (1924), to C.M. van den Heever *Somer* (1935), as well as early counter *plaasromans* such as Olive Schreiner *A Story of an African Farm* (1883), and suggests that in naturalizing white ownership, the *plaasroman* used the threatened farm as a metaphor for Afrikaner nationhood and tied appreciation of the landscape to romantic reverie.⁴ Colonialism and the apartheid government cleared the landscape, and the ideology of the Afrikaner familial inheritance legitimated rural belonging and stewardship.

Caribbean

Throughout colonial narratives—scientific, ethnographic, and travel discourses—of the Caribbean lies the dream of finding the original Eden, or a place outside the boundaries of modernity.⁵ According to the editors of *Caribbean Literature and the Environment*, Elizabeth

⁴ In C.M. van den Heever's *Groei* (1933), Coetzee describes how the protagonist "falls into reverie" at a stream near the farm watching "a flock of doves coast rhythmically [and swim] elegantly in circles" (qtd. in *White Writing* 99-100).

⁵ In C.L.R James *The Black Jacobins* (1963), he argued that the plantation and racial slavery made the Caribbean unique and the slaves lived "a life that was in its essence a modern life...the slaves lived together in a social relation far closer than any proletariat of the time. The cane when reaped had to be rapidly transported to what was factory

DeLoughrey, Renee Gosson, and George Handley, Caribbean colonialists “confused the Caribbean’s plant diversity with an extraordinary yield for food” (6). Rapid and extensive mass clearings transformed the environment (Grove, *Green Imperialism* 16). In both the British West Indian islands as well as in the French Antilles, imperial agriculture materially and discursively created blank spaces to be possessed by the colonizers (Casid 32). Jill Casid describes the “installation of the sugar plantation” as a process of “felling tress, cutting and digging up low lying vegetation, and burning all roots” (32). Creating an unoccupied landscape allowed colonizers, following Roman imperial law, to take imaginative and material possession. Maps, visual art, as well as scientific classification, portrayed the installation of the plantation as natural and improved (Casid 8). The plantation economy grew in the colonies⁶ through the exploitation of indigenous Caribs and Arawaks, and when they were worked to death, enslaved Africans supplemented their labor.⁷ Wealth and materials flowed from the Caribbean to the European metropolises, with few colonists making settlement. In one of the earliest pieces on British Caribbean colonialism, Lowell Joseph Ragatz, tells how colonial planters sent their offspring north to be English reared, and upon inheritance few returned having nothing more than “hazy recollections” of a distant place:

production. The product was shipped abroad for sale. Even the cloths the slaves wore and the food they ate was imported” (392).

⁶ Richard Price describes the “the post-Columbian Caribbean” arena as a miracle: “In this colonial arena, unspeakable greed, lust, and conquest rubbed shoulders with heroic acts of resistance and solidarity. Millions of human beings were killed outright by enslavement, forced labor and disease. Yet in many parts of the region, vibrant new societies and cultures emerged from the ashes. With this prototypical space of death—indeed, often within the complex interstices that divide it internally—displaced Africans, a motley crew of Europeans, and what remained of Native American populations forged new, distinctively American modes of human interaction. Together, through the complex processes of negotiation between such individuals and groups, which we call creolization, they created whole new cultures and societies” (215-216).

⁷ Donna Haraway describes the necessity of the plantation to bring labor from elsewhere beyond the explanation that there is no longer available labor: “The Plantationocene makes one pay attention to the historical relocations of the substances of living and dying around the Earth as a necessary prerequisite to their extraction. It is no accident that labour is brought in from elsewhere. . . . Because it is more efficient in the logic of the plantation system to exterminate the local labour and bring labour from elsewhere. The plantation system depends on the relocation of generative units: plants, animals, microbes, people. The systematic practice of relocation for extraction is necessary to the plantation system” (“Anthropologist are Talking” 23).

Thus it came about that by the 1830's, most of the Caribbean estates were in the hands of new owners, almost none of whom had ever been beyond the Atlantic or had the slightest intention of going there and all of whom, if anything, were even less qualified to manage tropical farming enterprises than the late proprietors had been (11, 13).

Ragatz history identifies a significant feature of Caribbean colonialism, namely, absentee lordism. Absentee lordism, Ragatz argues leads to deplorable and extreme plantation methods because non-resident owners are focused on income at any cost.

Simultaneously, discourses of paradise, descriptions of the Caribbean as the great maternal womb (DeLoughrey et al. 12), or the linking of the collection of plant species and agriculture with man's communion with God (Drayton 50), hid Caribbean imperial violence. By designating spaces for the sole use of experiment and prosperity, colonialist discourse divided Caribbean natural environments, people, and culture.⁸ Discourses relying on dichotomies, "master/slave, white tourist and black natives"(Braziel 116) made the landscape "a prison, as if everything and everybody inside it were locked in and everything and everybody that [were] not inside it were locked out" (Kincaid, *A Small Place* 79). According to Graham Huggan following DeLoughrey and Édouard Glissant, the plantation system and the "moment of 'Discovery' wretched apart" the "'natural' relationship between people and their environment" (116). Kincaid's *A Small Place* underscores this experience of alienation, or the way inhabitants and visitors to the Caribbean are physically and psychically removed from the place they live

⁸ As Joshua Jelly-Schapiro highlights in *Island People: The Caribbean and the World* (2016): "From the diaries and striving of conquistadors seeking El Dorado, straight through the fierce panoply of glossy websites and guidebooks depicting the islands as unchanging places of smiling natives and eternal sun—the Caribbean has long figured as a place to be consumed, like the sugar it brutally produced, as commodity" (7).

(Huggan 74). Thus, the goal of many Caribbean writers and historians is to emphasize the role land plays as a witness to the “ongoing legacy of the plantocracy” and the “deterritorialization and transplantation of peoples” (DeLoughrey, “Toward” 5).

Plantation logic organizes space and time in the Caribbean and South Africa, and unearthing its mechanisms highlights its presence and makes visible modes of resistance and survival. The texts throughout this dissertation point to the problem of post-emancipation capitalist narratives describing a linear progression away from the plantation. Colonial discourse masks the violence and devastation of the plantation with careful and naturalized ordering systems that render “white plantation ownership and black slave labor” beautiful, as Casid’s reading of a 1777 history of Jamaica underlines (21). The novels in this dissertation call attention to the ways that the structures and discourses of the plantation remain. According to Anna Tsing, the plantation is the ecological simplification of the landscape, which allows for the proliferation of diseases (“Patchy” 6). Plantation’s monocrops create a need for its technologies of transplantation and “coerced and alienated labor” (Tsing, “Patchy” 12). The plantation is a structure of commercial mass production intent on alienation. The plantation structure of “large-scale simplification” is visible on the banana plantations of Martinique, hatchery produced salmon in the US Pacific Northwest, chicken feedlots in southern China, (Tsing, “Patchy” 12-14), and as McKittrick states, “in agriculture, banking, and mining, in trade and tourism, and across other colonial and postcolonial spaces—the prison, the city, the resort—a plantation logic characteristic of (but not identical to slavery” exists both “ideologically and materially” (3). South African farm writing hides the farm’s purpose of producing agricultural commodities according to the plantation structure with transcendent inheritance and devotion, while British

and French colonial Caribbean discourse naturalizes and makes divine its plantation logic. The South African farm and the Caribbean plantations are distinct places with very different naturalizing imperial discourses, but their geographies are knotted together through the plantation.

Decolonial⁹ Gardens

The ways gardens are represented indicates the degree to which the plantation structure is made visible, but all gardens exist as part of the plantation legacy. Botanical gardens, manicured garden flower beds, subsistence gardens, house yards, provision grounds, slave gardening, all of these decolonial gardens and the representations of them are enclosed spaces,¹⁰ limited, bordered, but most importantly shadowed by the plantation. Botanical gardens from Kingstown to St. Vincent have boasted that their gardens are sanctuaries “reconstructing paradise” (qtd. in Anderson 14). As institutional champions of conservation in the Caribbean they were, and are still, characterized as fostering “rehabilitation” (Anderson 16). Yet, as Grove indicates, in his history of early colonial environmentalism, the system of classification early botanists employed, “heightened the symbolic role the island” was supposed to perform, and the botanical gardens part in helping to reduce plantation impacts like soil erosion, simultaneously played into colonialist social and economic fears of disorder (*Green Imperialism* 14). The science of botany “naturalized” imperial power (Casteel 23). Botanical gardens and botanical stations networked to share “new technical knowledge, of improved species and improved methods of cultivation and

⁹ Walter Mignolo (2011) has argued, “(de)coloniality is a concept whose point of origination was the Third World” (273). Mignolo differentiates decolonial and postcolonial from their point of origin. He states that origination of “postcoloniality was England and the United States” (274). Mignolo asserts decolonial is a concept that enables the “delinking from the two major Western macro-narratives,” and “is located in the routes of dispersion...and border thinking.” (274). I use both decolonial and postcolonial to refer to texts and scholars in this dissertation in order to engage and theorize with scholars who use each term independently.

¹⁰ The Latin etymology of the word “garden” suggests that it comes from *gardinus*, which was an adjective with the “sense ‘of or relating to an enclosure’” (garden, n.).

harvesting” and were vital to “the success of the new plantation crops and plant-based industries” (Brockway 6-7). The majority of “natural history, conservation policy, and the language of nature” come from the colonial exploitation of nature (DeLoughrey, “Toward” 12).

Environmental historian, Lydia Pulsipher, highlights the ways that slave gardening on common grounds or provision grounds—gardens on or near the plantation—utilized European agricultural practices. Analyzing early colonialist plantation maps from Jamaica, Casid, identifies the use of imported plants in slave gardens. On the one hand, slave gardens enabled survival, but by using European planting methods and imported plants they also signify colonial transplantation. Likewise, the features of creole gardening, a kind of gardening I focus on extensively in my chapter exploring Patrick Chamoiseau’s *Texaco*, celebrates gardens growing together and protecting each other as part of the landscape rather than separate from it. Yet, in the 1730s and 1740s English landscape gardens sought to liberate nature, sinking fences so that the lawn and “wilder country” blended in (Casid 207). Nonetheless as much as the slave gardens mimicked colonial form, they also “threatened the plantation machine...with the cultivation of herbal potions and poisons, and links to marronage” (212). Caribbean subsistence gardening has been historicized as both inevitable and the seed of resistance (Anderson 2006: 5, Sheller 2000:24).

On the other hand, Caribbean houseyard gardens and ravine or mountain gardens: “represented a completely different concept of agriculture from the common grounds. They were complex systems of environmental management” and “were important strategies employed by slaves to construct a decent life for themselves within a hostile system” (Pulsipher 210, 217). According to Polly Pattullo and Anne Jno Baptiste’s guide to gardens of Dominica, houseyard gardens remain “an integral part of Dominican lifestyle and culture” with many gardens

containing medicinal and edible plants (7). Also, there is a “long established tradition of koudmen (helping hand) in which the community gathers around to help a neighbor with a major chore such as...clearing a garden” (Pattullo & Baptiste 17). Gardening is not only important for subsistence, but community culture is also shaped around it.

In South Africa, the entitlement of white South Africans has limited gardening for those living in the townships due to restrictions on growing and lack of water.¹¹ Yet, Hallowes and Butler, quote *The South African Participatory Poverty Assessment* (1996), which found that the rural poor emphasize a space for gardening as “a key element of adequate housing” (May qtd 68). Meghan Posey’s master’s landscape architectural thesis *Intimate Infrastructure: Garden Making as a Spatial tactic in Post-Apartheid Klayelitsha, South Africa* (2003) gathered garden experiences from many residents in a large settlement east of Cape Town. She describes Klayelitsha as a desolate and inhospitable place, in which residents live dangerously in shacks that are vulnerable to high winds, fire, and flood (9). Nonetheless, Posey found residents growing gardens of ornamental plants, community garden plots, home vegetable gardens, and even gardens of curated rubbish (91-94). Posey concludes that Klayelitsha gardens are survival tactics that operate outside typical ownership schemas, and thus are empowering works. As he writes about neighbors exchanging garden tools, Jacob Dlamini’s *Native Nostalgia* (2010) echoes Posey’s observations. Remembering his township fondly he recalls some homes had gardens that “boasted marigolds, red roses and euphorbias while others did not...some only had Kikuyu grass, one neighbor...had the kind of grass some people insisted was similar to that laid

¹¹ In “The Environment of Apartheid-capitalism: Discourses and Issues,” David Hallowes states: “Apartheid-era urban planning was mainly attuned to the expansion of suburban land use associated with natural market forces in a context of severe income inequality. This left large garden plots, with consequent wastage of water for white people and extremely densely settled black townships often many kilometers from black worker’s jobs and from legal commercial recreational sites” (41).

out at Wimbledon” (121). Calling attention to the growth in his townships’ gardens, works against the way he argues, “outsiders might have seen in a township a homogenous empty space peopled by interchangeable black bodies” (Dlamini 121-122). Both Posey and Dlamini’s discussion of gardens highlight how gardens emerge with and palimpsestically relandscape means of habitation, survival, and identity in South Africa.

Decolonial gardens participate in the plantation system, but do not do the same work as the plantation because their purpose is not the radical simplification of the environment. Each kind of garden from the Caribbean subsistence garden to Kincaid’s backyard garden in Vermont, to township community garden plots, all have varying relationships of proximity to the plantation, materially and figuratively. Tending in the Kllhayelitsha gardens and growing medicinal plants in Dominica houseyard gardens are visible landscape figurations that symbolically show the agency and survival of the community. These garden acts rework community’s relationships to alienating commercial farming systems that threaten their food security, but they also serve as sites of empowerment.

On the one hand, decolonial gardens are stationary. The actions that make gardening productive—weeding, aerating, and processing the soil, tilling and planting—can be transferred from community garden plots to home gardens, and materially the gardens reveal the alienation of the plantation and rework the landscape to mark and embed community presence. Considering the travel of seeds and plants or following the Linnaeus system of classification as Kincaid does, exhibits a planetary awareness of the global forces that every environmental and social act participate in. Kincaid’s garden acts are in bordered spaces, but her interest and investment in planting increases her global mobility, as she travels to China and Europe seeking inspiration. The creole garden in *Texaco* performs a similar role in rooting creole culture to Martinique, but

simultaneously the structure of creole gardening is a movable act that is transposed as instructions for creating squatter communities that are made and remade.

GARDEN IMAGINATIONS

The physical and imaginative act of gardening¹² can both transgress and maintain borders. It can enable mobility and root. Gardening can act because throughout history gardens have served three primary purposes: as a zone to conceive, and often idealize, the relationship between nature and culture,¹³ as a vehicle for arranging existence, and as a physical archive. Historically by erecting borders¹⁴ and marking boundaries, the garden has articulated wilderness and excised any association with animality. This demarcating of the human and the animal, or between the “the laborer and her or his environment” (Mukherjee 66), illustrates that one of the garden’s primary purposes is to “bring nature under human control” (Giesecke & Jacobs 9). In a moment of binary defining, wild Nature is set against the domesticated garden.¹⁵ This act of

¹² In Helphand’s *Defiant Gardens* (2006) he identifies five elements of garden making: life, home, work, hope, and beauty. 1) Life: “Gardens domesticate and humanize dehumanized situations. They offer a way to reject suffering, an inherent affirmation and sign of human perseverance. In contrast to war, gardens assert the dignity of life, human and nonhuman, and celebrate it” (212). 2) Home: “Away from our desired or permanent home, a garden can be a way of transforming a place into a home, or creating an attachment to a new place and also establishing a connection to our former place” (19). 3) Work: “Garden work can provide a sense of purpose, it is an act that provides relief from monotony, idleness, and restlessness” (230). 4) Hope: “The mere act of making a garden implies a future in which plants will reach fruition and results will be enjoyed” (19). 5) Beauty: “Gardens are planned, constructed, and cared for, and the results are carefully monitored Here lies the foundation of an aesthetic sensibility, an eye that registers subtleties and appreciates form, pattern, and a multiplicity of meaning” (241).

¹³ In *The Necessity for Ruins: And other Topics* (1980), J. B. Jackson articulates the desire to see the garden as either nature or culture: “We are determined to see the garden in terms of vegetation, and that may be one of our problems we can never entirely divorce the garden from its social meaning, when we do so, we run the risk of defining the garden in strictly esthetic or ecological terms” (21).

¹⁴ In *Greater Perfections* (2000), John Dixon Hunt highlights how the etymological nature of gardens stresses “the fairly constant requirement that garden space, in its various guises, always be enclosed or somehow marked off from its surroundings” (17).

¹⁵ In Mark Francis and Randolph T. Hester edited collection, *The Meaning of Gardens* (1992), they emphasize “by making gardens, using or admiring them, and dreaming of them, we create our own idealized order of nature and culture” (2).

separating nature from culture masks the myriad imaginative entanglements as well as the uneven history of human-animal assemblages transforming landscapes.

Susan Stewart argues that human efforts to control extend beyond nature. Gardens, she suggests, are a “means of ordering life: codifying and ritualizing social time and space, creating political orders and social hierarchies—including the organization of military order, or structures of force” (111). Stewart’s observations reveal that thinking of gardens as comfortable, apolitical, or as commonplace are in fact constructed ideas of place. Instead, Stewart highlights how gardens temporalize and spatialize power.¹⁶ The temporalization of power often takes the form of choreographing history or memory. Gardening is memory work that, according to Casid, “rather than merely record[s] a dead history, endeavors to materially rework how that matter of the archive is physically remembered, raking over and reseeded the ground of the past for the materialization of a different future” (xiii). Casid suggests that memory work in the garden entwines social and environmental history in a way that transforms space and it can be deployed and mapped ideologically or can transformatively appropriate and trouble the plantation system (195).

Casid’s characterization of gardening also implies that memory work is a creative endeavor. US American author Alice Walker’s essay “In Search of our Mother’s Garden” (1974) is an often cited example of the way that beauty and the aesthetics of gardening by disenfranchised gardeners is part of the resistance to the plantation. The essay recalls Walker’s mother’s gardening practice as she also reflects on African American poetry and art. Gardening, especially by the marginalized, is not often viewed as beautiful, but Walker’s mother’s garden was a “screen of blooms” with staggering variety that every passerby stopped to admire. Casid

¹⁶ In Robert Pogue Harrison’s *Gardens An Essay on the Human Condition* (2009), he suggests “gardens are a form of political action... they never exist independently of the world shaped by human action” (46).

reads Walker's essay as a "reappropriation" of European landscaping and a radical conceptualization of black women's creativity (195). Jennifer Atkinson interprets Walker's essay as an example of the "unacknowledged artistic talent of workers who create and maintain vibrant spaces" and the imaginative potential of the garden to signify the power of black women's magic (*Gardenland* 184).

Remembering in the garden and reconceptualizing beauty in the garden, as the epigraph to this introduction indicates, is always also about hoping. As a "creation predicated on hope," the garden, according to Annette Giesecke and Naomi Jacobs, is "always a utopian construct" (9). Citing "the importance of cultivation of plants" in Thomas More's foundational text as well as tracing the garden as the "central metaphor for the ideal society" from the eighteenth century to the present, Giesecke and Jacobs posit that the idea of utopia "is inextricably entwined with the garden" (12, 10).

Utopic postcolonial thinking gives rise to new concepts and practices that directly impact the present. According to Peter Pioana, Caribbean utopic theories like *créolité*—or "the formulation of a collective historical consciousness in the Caribbean that is never complete, nonharmonious, or nonreductive" (Lewis 98)—not only captures the "flux of present day Caribbean thinking and acting, but in its greatest extension also sets out the principle of future politics of a globalised world" (Pioana 170). *Créolité* and Édouard Glissant's rhizomatic relations tries to connect present Caribbean inhabitants to the past and future by reconceptualizing the diasporic experience as not tied to ancestral origins but interconnected across the globe in diverse and multifaceted experiences. In other words, hope brought through decolonial garden writing is not some "radically other place," or what philosopher Ernst Bloch describes as an abstract utopia (qtd. in Wegner 20). Nor is it a "modernist hope," what Tsing

defines as either hope for “technological transcendence” or “hope for capitalism and humanity to reinvent itself in a ‘greener’ and ‘better’ form” (“Patchy Anthropocene” 24). Instead, the utopia of most decolonial garden writing is one that in trying to describe possibility has an awareness of its own limitations. In Chapter Two, I analyze how Nadine Gordimer’s *Get a Life* (2005) problematizes the perspective of the imagined environmental utopia as it traces the thoughts of a middle-class ecologist, Paul. While walking the lawns of his suburban Johannesburg childhood home, Paul pictures the expansive South African landscape from space. Paul is incapable of seeing human’s relationship from any other perspective than his own. Highlighting the limitations of his view, Gordimer works through the status of environmentalisms in South Africa and through negation invites alternatives. In Chapter Three, by exploring the compelling power of smell in decomposition and blossoming, Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996), reimagines nature-culture relationships. Accentuating the agency of the Caribbean landscape helps Mootoo give rise to flexible being with nature that is not about acquiring knowledge like colonial scientific narratives, but rather seeks to imagine what kinds of communities form through entangled acts of survival. In Chapter Four, Patrick Chamoiseau’s *Texaco* (1992) envisions the utopic creole garden of intermixture and entwined support in the forest hills, but infuses flexibility into a grounded theorization of creole landscape belonging by focusing on walking as fluid map making. Rather than providing a static alternative schema to plantation geographies, focusing on the protagonists’ movement between the city and the country allows Chamoiseau to inscribe community presence and imagine a new creole culture of intermixed identities and memories in the continual process of renegotiation.

In each text, the garden is the vehicle that gives way to reflecting, remembering, and imagining a decolonial future, that in Donna Haraway’s words “stays with the trouble.” Staying

with the trouble, or, as Tsing coins, projecting a “patchy hope,” means “operating on the acute likelihood of failure... the impossibility of doing nothing compounded by the acute awareness of the politically fraught nature of collaboration across multispecies, disciplinary and multi-perspective difference” (“Patchy Anthropocene” 28). In Mootoo and Chamoiseau, survival is an important garden theme because it registers the unavoidable failures that come with hoping for and formulating autochthonous environmentalisms¹⁷ in a globalized world. The authors draw attention to the unique temporality of the garden as a space that is neither process nor product.¹⁸ The garden requires ongoing maintenance.

Chapter One’s analysis of Bessie Head’s *A Question of Power* (1974), highlights how the text’s hope for a radically different future does not fully address the possibility of failure. *A Question of Power* portrays the work of a community garden and imagines rooting black South Africans by using sustainable agrarian practices. Conceiving of other ways of belonging to the land instead of inheritance allows Head to make visible people and places that have been “labeled as incongruous with humanness,” as McKittrick theorizes of plantation geographies (6). Nonetheless her text does the utopic work of fracturing ideology by enabling “readers to think of their shared present in a new way” (Wegner 23). Head, like Posey’s reading of the South African township garden stories, sees in the community garden the potent possibility of a garden that will bring freedom and relief from “consumerism, debt, and the segregation from nature” (Posey 116). In this dissertation, authors use the trope of gardening and the image of the garden to rewrite colonizers’ imagined Garden of Eden, dismantle dreams of wilderness, and problematize plantation simplifications, but also to generate community action in the present.

¹⁷ Lawrence Buell in *The Future of Environmental Criticism* defines environmentalism as, “an umbrella term that may stretch to cover any environmental reform movement, whether anthropocentric or ecocentric, radical or moderate” (141).

¹⁸ Jennifer Atkinson uses David Harvey’s utopian category, “dialectical utopia,” which combines the “processual and spatial,” to call attention to the “dynamic spatiotemporality” of the garden (*Gardenland* 160-161).

GARDEN METHODOLOGY

This dissertation approaches texts from a postcolonial environmental humanities perspective. I presuppose that political, environmental, and cultural histories are knit together and impact responses to colonialism.¹⁹ In Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Jill Didur, and Anthony Carrigan's words, I emphasize, "how globalization and imperialism is integral to understanding contemporary environmental issues" ("Introduction" 2). Landscape cannot be left out of historical narratives. Yet that is not to say that landscape only becomes a participant in the historical process when capitalist development occurs. Rather, as Glissant suggests, "the individual, the community, and the land are inextricable in the process of creating history. Landscape is a character in this process" (qtd. in "Introduction" DeLoughrey and Handley, 105-106). For example, Kincaid portrays the trouble she has in imagining her sense of place in Antigua or Vermont because colonizing ecology generated discourses of knowing that fractured the relationship between colonized people and places. Kincaid's gardens reveal the way that landscape is a participant in articulating history. Describing plant genealogies or just imagining the border of her Vermont garden and the forest, Kincaid's garden reflections illustrate how gardens are always shadowed and made possible by plantation ecologies and transplantation. Kincaid evidences what DeLoughrey et al. suggest in *Postcolonial Ecologies*, "Place encodes time, suggesting that histories embedded in the land and sea have always provided vital and dynamic methodologies for understanding the transformative impact of empire and the anticolonial epistemologies it tries to suppress" (4). Landscape cannot be left out of history and history cannot be left out of landscape. Investigating representations of these "embedded"

¹⁹ Postcolonial ecocriticism, as Byron Caminero-Santangelo and Garth A. Myers contend, "emphasizes both the inextricable intertwining of cultural, political, and natural history and the role of language in representing the environment" (5).

landscapes, which according to Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin in *Postcolonial Environmentalism* are inseparable from material existence, allows scholars to examine the complex impact of colonialism as well as alternative discourses. Postcolonial environmental scholars call attention to the histories that have been suppressed.

As an emerging field, postcolonial ecocriticism has been working to define its methodology and focus. Scholars have questioned what it would mean to bring postcolonialism and ecocriticism into dialogue. In “Environmentalism, Postcolonialism and American Studies,” a chapter in *Slow Violence*, Rob Nixon outlines how US based ecocriticism and postcolonialism have suffered from oversights because of their self-enclosure. US ecocriticism has failed to see its parochialism and historicize and politicize environmental ideas like ecology, while on the other hand postcolonialism has not focused on how environmental issues were intertwined with colonial history and imperial development. Scholars like Susie O’Brien and Anthony Vital have turned to *My Garden (Book)*: and *Life and Times of Michael K* in an effort to grasp what a “multicultural ecocriticism” or “African ecocriticism,” would look like. Vital and O’Brien use these texts because of where they are from and what they represent as other voices to the Eurocentric canon. But more importantly, postcolonial ecocritical scholars turn to Kincaid and Coetzee for how they “unravel the discursive web of colonialism that is concealed in scientific and botanical discourses (O’Brien).

US American garden scholarship has produced compelling readings of how gardens portrayed in US American fiction have responded to the growing environmental crisis by reimagining capitalist value. In Jennifer Atkinson’s scholarship on the place of gardens in

formulations of contemporary utopias,²⁰ she uses a Marxian approach to examine how authors refigure capitalist agriculture's problems of labor and surplus. For instance, reading Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, Atkinson outlines the ways Kingsolver makes a comedy out of excessive squash. Capitalism would read excess produce as waste and negating value, but Kingsolver recounts funny stories of giving away overproducing squash and setting up barriers so that her neighbors cannot give them any of her zucchinis. Extra growth is not the occasion for madness, but rather an opportunity to laugh and revel in the "energetic remainder," or the abundance of life leftover (Bataille qtd. in "Comedies" 264). On the one hand, garden theorizing from the US provides dynamic examples of how writers revise value and waste and searching for similar revisions in decolonial garden writing is an important way to interpret the revision of value. However, the conceptual apparatuses cannot simply and neatly be applied to understand plantation geographies and the specific environmental responses. For instance, in *A Question of Power*, Head underscores the importance of belonging to the landscape without ownership and refigures the value of surplus. Skirting ownership to the environment suggests that value lies outside of capitalist schemas, and revaluing waste interrupts "capitalist regimes based on accumulation" ("Comedies," Atkinson 256). However, this kind of reading would fall short because it does not account for "the ways in which the histories of colonialism have displaced and alienated people from the land," and often the "imaginative and material act of ecological recuperation is deeply fraught" ("Introduction," DeLoughrey et.al 5). As I demonstrate in my reading of *A Question of Power*, understanding how Head counters the inscriptive power of the South African plaasroman, the farm novel, is integral to understanding Head's message of environmental relating through communal labor. Drawing on specific

²⁰ "Comedies of Surplus: Representing the Garden in Contemporary American Literature" in *Earth Perfect: Nature, Utopia and the Garden* (2012) and "Seeds of Change: The New Place of Gardens in Contemporary Utopia," in *Utopian Studies* 18.2 (2007): (237-260).

histories of imperialism allows me to examine garden stories as “think[ing] through the spatial as well as temporal interrelations between capitalism, colonialism, and climate change, and uneven development on a variety of interlocking scales” (“Introduction,” DeLoughrey et.al 17).

My readings also employ a materialist understanding of the relationship between people, animals and the environment. Pablo Mukherjee suggests that “eco-materialism” emerges from thinking about “a constant dynamic and differentiated relation between humans and environment through labour of all kinds” (63). Eco-materialism means not thinking about human and nature as separate entities, but rather as mutually constitutive and the “sum” which makes up the “environment” (65). For Mukherjee this means analyzing how the environment is produced by “the particular dynamics of historical capital at a specific stage and location” (15). Not only does postcolonial environmentalism forefront the historical conditions of emplacement, or more often displacement, it also seeks to understand how the material conditions and significations “enable the production of varied cultural texts” (76).

THE DECOLONIAL GARDEN

Throughout *My Garden (Book)*, Kincaid intertwines writing and gardening, and demonstrates what it means to challenge romantic panoramas, inscribe belonging and nature-culture entanglements, and challenge linear progress. Therefore, Kincaid models what I show throughout my dissertation, that the garden is a significant vehicle that allows authors to express how they hope their community will relate to the environment and articulate environmentalisms. I employ Kincaid’s observations as a postcolonial garden theory that constantly calls attention to the palimpsestic nature of the garden, but I also want to acknowledge that Kincaid’s Vermont garden, the kind of gardening she does is not the same as the kind of gardening the subsistence

gardening Head or Chamoiseau portray. Nonetheless Kincaid's continuous attention to the deep and fraught histories of work in the garden helps me to show how different kinds of garden representations evoke plantation legacies and materially and imaginatively remake the landscape.

Work

Often in the forefront of writing about the garden and landscape, English works, like the poetry of William Wordsworth, emphasize the aesthetic qualities of the garden. The beauty of the light or the wealth of botanical discovery, and if work in the garden is portrayed, it is often evidencing the moral character of the gardener. Throughout her garden book, Kincaid depicts herself planting, weeding, and digging. Upon receiving seeds for Mother's Day, Kincaid:

went outside, dug up the yard and put the seeds in the ground. The skin on my right forefinger split, the muscles in the back of my calves and thighs were sore, and the digging fork broke; for all that, the seeds did not germinate... Since then I *have* become a gardener, and here are some of the things I have come to love and need... a good set of hand tools—a trowel, a dibble, a cultivator, and a weeder... A canvas bag for carrying such things (78-79).

Her list and the description of her experience demonstrate her alienation because of colonial education. Reading descriptions of English garden beds and learning about the science of botany, limited how Kincaid could relate to her environment. The first experience she recalls gardening is painful and she emphasizes the difference from the past experience and the present experience by labeling herself now a gardener. Describing these actions democratizes the imagining of this

act because the romantic perspective seats the authority for these actions to a removed actor. Being specific in the activities of gardening shifts garden writing from romantic reveries of belonging and man outside nature to reflecting on concrete experiences of relating to the environment. Kincaid's labor and her pain are for herself not for nourishment or for others capital gain (O'Brien 139). Both Chamoiseau and Head name specific plants and techniques, discuss building fences and successful cultivation. Representing gardening in decolonial texts, invites inhabitants, whose relationship has been fractured by colonization, back to the environment. Picturing garden work materializes the way plants and decolonial inhabitants are "part of larger processes of colonial, global transformation in which histories of plant movements are bound up with those of capitalist, fossil-fueled developments" (Sandilands "I See my Garden" n.pg).²¹

Presence

Part of the way that South African imperialist and colonial regimes inscribed their environmental imaginaries onto the landscape was by systematically erasing black indigenous presence on the land and creating parks that invoked pristine nature. When South Africa's first national park, Kruger National Park was established in 1926, 3,000 African residents were evicted (Carruthers "Nationhood and National Parks" 128). The policy that restricted Africans from walking on public roads—which they used to cross over the game reserve and work in the Transvaal gold mines—made the white conservationist ideology of uninhabited landscapes appear like a reality (Carruthers "Nationhood and National Parks" 128). Carruthers notes that in contrast the Australian landscape "was not initially attractive to British eyes – perhaps because it

²¹ Postcolonial Environmental scholarship has analyzed the ways transplantation of specific plants helps to envision diasporic relations with the environment. See DeLoughrey's "Globalizing the Routes of Breadfruit and Other Bounties." *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 8.3 (2007).

was indeed ‘implausible,’ its plants and animals were so very strange and unusual – and early settlers worked hard to convert it into a replica of what they had left behind” (Carruthers “Nationhood and National Parks” 127). Some spaces, as Susan K. Martin reads of Australian native gardens, are purposefully ungardened. In other words, if gardening is defined as human ordering and cultivating of space through arrangement and selection that differentiates it from its surroundings, then wilderness is represented as “the abnegation of all things manmade or constructed in the way it is presented” (107). The imperial impulse to mark wilderness is a double erasure since it both removes local inhabitants connection to and lives lived in a landscape and the act of removal itself. Kincaid’s attention to the construction of her garden borders questions the boundaries between cultivated and wild. Sarah Casteel reads Kincaid’s arrangement of her garden according to her memory of the Caribbean as an act of diasporic identity inscription. By not replicating a specific map, Kincaid merges the past and present, and contributes to “diasporic emplacement” (Casteel 107).

But Kincaid also evidences the remainders of marking and enclosing environments through her use of parentheses. Kincaid landscapes her writing on the sentence level with her use of the parenthetical. Typically, parentheses contain information that might interrupt the flow of the sentence; it is secondary or deemphasized information. However, Kincaid’s frequent application leads the reader to question the status of the parenthetical material; it is no longer clear where the most important meaning lies, words on either side of the parentheses modify each other. Often the content of the parentheses appears to be even more important, not just mere secondary thoughts. For instance, in the chapter entitled “Reading,” Kincaid writes: “For me, to look at a landscape covered with this substance [snow] is to look at despair, and I cannot find anything in the history of human beings to make me feel that my view is merely personal (I grew

up on an island in a climate that is tropical and therefore am prejudiced)” (Kincaid 60).

Reflecting on winter in her Vermont garden, Kincaid characterizes her experience in her garden in the U.S. as a universal human experience; however, she also indicates in the parenthetical that this experience of dislike is also very personal. The parentheses do two things in this instance, on the one hand, they clarify why she is in such despair about winter, but that clarification is immediately questioned because of the content of the sentence. In another instance in which she is reflecting on winter, Kincaid does not allow the reader to process each word on its own:

I do not like winter or anything that represents it (snow, the bare branches of trees, the earth seeming to hold its breath), and so I disliked the ground being covered with this soft substance (sticky and at the same time not so), with a color so definite (white) as if it wished to dispel any doubt that might arise in regard to this particular quality (its color, white). (59)

Kincaid advances through the possible symbolism of winter, forcing the reader back around to imperialism through the repetition of the word “white.” It is the color and the representation that inevitably brings her and her reader to see this as a motivation of colonists to go south, which she states later in the paragraph but is clear in this moment. The repetition of the color “white” reminds readers that for her the landscape is always imbued with imperial history. The garden is not a repository for Kincaid’s recollections or idealizations; rather the environment is always interpenetrated with imperialism.

In Chamoiseau, Mootoo, and Head, the garden enables them to find ways to mark presence and work against the ways that “the lands of no one emerged and normalized a mode of

organizing the planet according to life and lifelessness” (McKittrick 8). Using growing and decomposing in the garden, Chamoiseau, Mootoo, and Head portray alternative ways of thriving and surviving on landscapes that have striped black and indigenous lives of value.

Plotting

Sylvia Wynter has suggested that “the novel (as a form) and plantation societies are ‘twin children of the same parents’; the novel, like slave society, is...product of the market economy” (99). The novel that accompanied colonization and those novels that adopted that form, told progressive narratives. As DeLoughrey and Nixon have noted in their readings of postcolonial texts from the Caribbean and India, respectively, experiments in form such as episodic structures interrupts and has the capability to destabilize linear realism. Questioning capitalism’s story of linear progression reveals, as Terry Eagleton suggests, that capitalism is instead a story about repetition and “resolute presentism” (10). Capitalism works to erase the past and invent a future by reproducing its present in fictions of linear progression.

If as Stewart and others have suggested, that gardening is about the order of things, then Kincaid uses the garden to point out the problematic narrative of a linear progression away from racist violence, where history is an “airtight continuum” that “archives the black body” (McKittrick 9). One of *My Garden (Book):*’s purposes is to tell an alternative version of history from the one narrated by imperial botanists and supposedly non-politicized garden writers. For Kincaid, this renarration of the garden is deeply linked to her gardening practices. *My Garden (Book):* is divided into three sections. The first section engages Kincaid’s actual participation in gardening, her own gardening techniques and experiences. The second section mediates on the alienating nature of colonialist discourses and education and the third reminisces about Kincaid’s

travels. Although Kincaid figures herself as an amateur gardener in the beginning and a more experienced one in the end, *My Garden (Book)*: does not tell a story of development. Its loosely connected essays are not a mere collection lacking any arrangement and they are also not one harmonious picture. Rather the essays inhabit different seasons, spaces, and memories and the only thing that necessarily unites them is the continuous awareness of the environment's participation in imperialist history. For Kincaid, "the garden repeats itself all of the time" (61). Every winter the gardener forgets and every spring feels "new." However, Kincaid observes this experience while she simultaneously pours over seed and plant catalogs. Her narrative of remembering and forgetting, couched in the background of purchasing, draws attention to the capitalist mechanism of continually making the commodity new again. However, Kincaid's constant reminder of the botanical industry's past and its participation in slavery haunt these newfangled seeds.

Yet more than arrangement of the text and Kincaid's remarks about the order and memory in the garden, it is Kincaid's use of anaphora, her arrangement on the sentence level, which disrupts linear progression. Anaphora, or the practice of repeating the same word or phrase in successive lines, centers and holds meaning. It echoes and refuses forward movement. It forces the reader to linger and return. In the chapter entitled "History," in which Kincaid renarrates the discovery of the Caribbean, she uses anaphora as she characterizes Columbus the colonizer:

By the time Christopher Columbus got to the place where I am from, the place which forms the foundation of the person writing this, he was exhausted, he was sick of the whole thing, he longed for his old home, or longed to just to sit still and enjoy the first

few things he and come upon, the first few things he had come upon were a lot. The first few things he had come upon were named after things prominent in his thinking. (158)

The repetition of the “first few things” emphasizes Columbus’ disregard. Consumed with thoughts of elsewhere the environment in front of Columbus, for Kincaid, is vacated and filled. The islands are not places of habitation; they are things, disposable and exchangeable. The anaphora in this passage forestalls specificity to enable the reader to sense the kind of distance one would have to have in order to disregard space as Columbus did, but the lack of name is also an echoing of a refusal to use the names forced upon the place, it is a refusal to participate in the same narrative. On the following page, “is as it always was” is repeated:

the sky is as it always was, the sun is as it always was, the water surrounding the land on which I am just making an appearance is as it always was, but these are the only things that are left from before the man sailing with his tree ships reached the land on which I eventually make my appearance. (159)

Kincaid reflects on how Columbus eradicated the Caribs, and it was then that the transplantation of Africans and other plant species arrive. Everything about the Caribbean was transformed by its colonization except for the sun, sky, and the water. However, the repetition of “is as it always was” even calls these constants into question. The repetition seems to say: How are immovable parts of the environment narrated? What other forms of permanence were imposed on the space to designate colonial power? How does environmental change occur? There is desire and despair as well in the repetition of the speaker both wanting “the place that she is from” to stay the same

and the forces that enable transformation are still stagnated by people and places from afar. The anaphora emphasizes pause in the prose and in doing so, Kincaid's garden writing reimagines narrative time.

All of the texts in this dissertation experiment with narrative time and perform alternative plotting. *A Question of Power* plants its garden episodes in and around the protagonist's hallucinations, but never stopping and starting in the same place. *Get a life* is the most realist text analyzed, yet it too does not conform to linear progression as the events in the beginning of the novel do not bring clarity for the characters in the end. *Cereus*'s accounts of Mala's experience are transmitted from an unreliable narrator, although the whole story is told, the beginnings and endings are interspersed. The story opens itself in its unraveling. The inclusion of multiple kinds of French and the interspersing of notebook entries resound *Texaco*'s multivocality. Constantly calling attention to the arrangement of the text evidences the inclusions and omissions in every version of history. Kincaid demonstrates that representing the garden also means telling differently arranged stories of ecology.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES AND ARGUMENTATIVE ARC

Each chapter of my dissertation strives to highlight a significant feature of decolonial garden writing. I focus on how the garden in Head, Gordimer, Mootoo and Chamoiseau's texts performs as a kind of environmental and community rehabilitation. Since the specific histories and environmental discourses of South Africa and the Caribbean vary greatly, I have grouped the chapters by regions. My dissertation begins by analyzing Head and then Gordimer, and then moves to the Caribbean to examine Mootoo and Chamoiseau. This way each authors' recuperative tactics have a clearer relationship to the physical and imaginative forms of their

region's dispossession. Beginning with Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*, I outline the features of the farm novel discourse that bars black South Africans from ownership. Head's figuration of the community garden is the first garden tactic, or act, I seek to emphasize as a feature of decolonial garden writing. Head writes against the discourse of family and inheritance to situate community and imagine strategies for food security and nature appreciation, in which humans are part of the assemblage in the making of place.

A Question of Power allows me to delineate the features of South Africa's discourse of dispossession, and in my chapter on Nadine Gordimer's *Get a Life* I highlight how the suburban Johannesburg garden participates in those discourses making black communities and labor invisible. The central protagonist and ecologist, Paul, uses the garden lawn as the basis for his connection to the environment. Invoking a romantic sublime and using an aerial perspective, causes Paul to severely limit his view of human's relationship to nature. The garden feature in this chapter I am calling attention to is borders. Paul's perspective, like the security gates and fences around the suburban garden cannot be overcome. The garden's borders disable forms of environmentalism to join and give equal primacy to charismatic mega fauna concerns as well as environmental justice concerns. In this chapter I also, designate the significance of decolonial garden writing's attention to dismantling the hierarchy of sight as the most important sense to gain knowledge of the environment. Gordimer problematizes not just Paul's deep ecology and romantic perspective, but the fact that he relies on what he can see. Seeing only produces one kind of knowledge for one kind of life.

While in Chapter Three, I turn to the Caribbean to analyze Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*, I maintain my focus on senses and the relationships between humans and animals. Mootoo's *Cereus* reveals the way that the Caribbean landscape and people have been violently

joined together through ongoing colonial possession and pacification. By emphasizing the potent potential of the blooming *Cereus* and wretched stench, Mootoo signals the power of nonhuman agency and the potential of Caribbean human-animal assemblages. Her portrayal of the garden also questions the role of the human gardener as an imperial and liberalist ideology. Mala's garden might be enclosed, but who cultivates is open to interpretation, and that power identified with garden inhabitants infuses the rest of the Caribbean landscape.

Mootoo's gardening relations imply the assorted ways that humans and plants are driven together, and *Cereus* exposes how many forms of relating are violent. As Mootoo's descriptions reinvigorate agency, they also do not strive to establish or restore a perfect unity. *Cereus'* garden continually returns to sites of violence to reveal the ways that the feminine is read in the landscape. Revisiting the depiction of naturalized feminine madness shows that it is a result of colonial discourses making perverse non-conforming modes of interrelatedness, which is also visible in Head's text. By putting the Caribbean and South African environmental histories and discourses into dialogue, conjunctive themes²² emerge. Since the forms of South African and Caribbean colonial histories are divergent, I wanted to bring them into conversation to see what the comparison might bring to light. The similarities I found in their acts of gardening, has led me to argue that there are shared tactics of decolonial garden writing. For instance, Mootoo, read in conjunction with Head, reveals the significance of nature in the dramatic and violent conversations of Head's text. Although these philosophical wanderings appear unrelated to the garden moments, understanding colonial and nationalist definitions of what is natural reveals the

²² The paratactic reading strategy invokes descriptions about traditional Modernist poetics, and has been formulated by Susan Friedman. Friedman suggests reading paratactically "involves the conjuncture of seemingly disparate cultural texts for the new light this juxtaposition sheds on each text in the cluster" (44). This reading strategy allows new comparative outlooks that extend beyond simple similarities and differences and instead examines "the *conjuncture* of poets looking for the multiplicity of identities, traditions, and locals that once set in relation to each other can produce insights otherwise not visible (Friedman's emphasis) (44).

nature of Elizabeth's pain and the importance of gardening to articulate a different environmental discourse that does not make perverse Black South African women's striving for environmental belonging.

Likewise, when I turn to Chamoiseau's *Texaco* in my final chapter, I read it in conjunction with Head's text as well as Dlamini's *Texaco*, I argue, navigates the precarious process of inscribing creole history and community into Martinique, French History, and French language. The celebration of the creole garden and characters' botanical associations help to root inhabitants to the landscape, but embedding is a dangerous act. The garden that the central protagonist's father, Esternome, establishes in the hills is linked to the practice of provision grounds or gardens around slave dwellings. On the one hand, provision grounds²³ enabled slaves to establish their own food security. However, as property, they could be passed onto their decedents, and thus, "the slave garden was also to root the slave to place" (Casid 198). The subsistence garden binds the slave to the plantation for survival rather than seeking other forms of resistance or survival. Chamoiseau subverts the problematic immovable nature of the garden by tying walking to the practice of gardening. In the text, gardening and walking both perform acts of witnessing, and in doing so, Chamoiseau infuses movement as a decolonial gardening act. The work of the creole garden becomes a blueprint for other gardens and shantytowns that are constantly in process of being relocated and rebuilt. From Head to Chamoiseau, the struggle against containing and restraining black movement is brought to the forefront. Locating belonging in Motabeng is akin to Marie-Sophie's desire to defend and preserve *Texaco*. Both texts emphasize rootedness as well as the processual temporality of the garden.

²³ Sylvia Wynter argues that the provision ground empowered slaves to articulate their identity outside of plantation ideology, which marked their bodies as tools. Through developing a means of substance, celebrated in song and dance, they cultivated their own agency.

Thus, gardening across these plantation geographies emphasizes action. Comparing the ways that the authors in my dissertation portray survival, cultivation, or garden arrangement, I demonstrate how authors use the garden to think through what can be done in the face of imperialism. Gardens help writers from the Caribbean and South Africa envision decolonial futures as they forefront plantation legacies. Identifying what these gardens do— building ecological affinities in the experience of violence, reimagining the gardener, challenging environmental viewpoints that emphasize vision and surveillance, celebrating decomposition, inscribing the landscape and gardening against the view of nature as a sanctuary space, and envisioning communal entanglements and acts of survival—reveals how gardens operate as significant literary devices.

PROJECT LIMITATIONS

My dissertation has two limitations that it is necessary for me to mention at the outset. First, my reading of Patrick Chamoiseau is done in translation, which means that my reading may not be fully attentive to ways in which Chamoiseau makes a place for creole culture in standardized French. Challenging the French language is of central importance to *créolité* and *Texaco*; however, World Literature has long supported the “the essential role of translation as an enterprise that makes texts accessible to other linguistic communities” (Hibbard 667). The conversation around the limitations and access that translation provides is ongoing.²⁴ Some things do not cross “the threshold of translation,” but I follow World Literature’s assumption that translation can help draw together “communal and collaborative endeavors” (Hibbard 672). Chamoiseau’s figuration of the Martinican landscape has circulated widely throughout the

²⁴ See Said’s “Traveling Theory” and the conversation between David Damrosch and Gayatri Spivak from the ACLA 2011 plenary. Rebecca Walkowitz’s *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (2015).

Caribbean, and I argue not including how he has rendered environmental problems in the Martinique, would be failing to attend to the diversity of aesthetic environmental responses to colonial violence in the Caribbean.

Secondly, my readings are marked by my own positionality as a US scholar situated in region of the US that has contributed substantially to US environmental conservation debates. My view of gardening is influenced by the forms of garden discourse deployed in Madison, Wisconsin from both the University of Wisconsin and the greater Wisconsin Garden Network. Simultaneously, I am aware of the degree of circulation and power of the United States environmental discourse influencing areas like South Africa, as is evidenced in William Beinart and Peter Coates *Environment and History: The taming of nature in the USA and South Africa*, in which they examine how both the USA and South Africa shared versions of conservation ideology, perpetuated environmentally destructive agricultural practices, and cleared indigenous populations. I do not specifically examine the role of US imperialism in South Africa or the Caribbean in this dissertation because of the central texts that I have chosen. The four main novels that anchor my dissertation directly engage Dutch, British, and French colonialism. In an expanded project, I would want to include texts and visual art from the Hispanophone Caribbean, like Puerto Rican Karlo Andrei Ibarra. In *Remnants* (2011), he demonstrates the debilitating effects of US occupation in this region by tattooing a bunch of green plantains with North American Free Trade Agreement quotes and letting them decay. *Remnants* signifies the effects of the NAFTA and the use of the island for the United State's economic gain. US imperialism overlaps and is intertwined with British, Spanish, and French colonial legacies, and an expanded project could analyze the intersections.

CHAPTER ONE

Replotting Value: Community Gardens and Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*

For 27 years, I lived in South Africa, I had the experience of a Black South African—the poverty-stricken, slum-dweller; the feeling that there was no way in which you could look around and breathe and feel the air ... Black people had been so completely dispossessed that there was nothing there that Black people owned. Even the air choked you. Black people were totally dispossessed from ownership of land.- Bessie Head, Interview with Linda S. Beard

Bessie Head often expressed her life in South Africa with feelings of rootlessness and dispossession. Her sense of alienation from land and community significantly shapes her writing. As Maxine Sample argues, Head wrote against South Africa's "stultifying environment" to create in her works places that subvert restriction and give space to men and women to "find themselves and transcend social and political boundaries" (31). Head's novels, stories and non-fiction illustrate how intertwined the dehumanizing system of South Africa's apartheid was with the environment. Agriculture is significant not only in Head's writing, but also in biographies of Head and critical discussions of her work. Jonathan Highfield notes that agriculture is often a metaphor for healing. Because her texts detail the trauma of those living under repressive, patriarchal, colonial and tribal systems but also envision future possibilities for a more peaceful Africa, she has become one of the most prominent literary figures of modern African literature.

In her 1974 semi-autobiographical novel, *A Question of Power*, Head tells the story of Elizabeth, a South African refugee who has recently immigrated to the small Botswana village Motabeng, with her young son. Dramatizing violent and chaotic conversations with two

hallucinations, Sello and Dan, and their team of abusers, the text follows Elizabeth as she sifts and winnows through the source of evil she experienced during apartheid. The abusive and erratic dialogues about the nature of good, evil, and power are punctuated by episodes in which Elizabeth participates in village life by helping out, and eventually, directing the village garden. Elizabeth's participation in the garden allows her to see, for the first time, a southern African landscape as a welcoming space where people can come together. The role the landscape plays in helping assuage her suffering is pivotal because legislated dispossession and conservation ideology are at the root of black African marginalization in South Africa. The 1913 Land Act and its successors, the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the Land Tenure Act of 1970, strategically and relentlessly forced African residents to the margins of farming as labor tenants or into crowded and strained urban centers.²⁵ Simultaneously, imported Eurocentric conservation ideology enabled the government's systematic removal of Africans in the name of protecting natural areas.²⁶ Conservationists removed African presence to reprise a primal past in an effort to "separate the destructive force of early twentieth century industrialization, mechanization, and shocking new experiences of time, from the realm of value" (Bunn 207-208). The South African apartheid government's bolstering of commercialized agriculture²⁷ combined with the reign of conservative racist environmentalism and the Afrikaner's traditional "sense of cultural identity as *boernasie*," or "farmer nation," not only forcibly removed Africans from the environment, but also barred their participation in the environmental imagination (Barnard 72). *A Question of*

²⁵ See David Hallows and Mark Butler's account of land dispossession in the South Africa from British occupation to the late 1990s in "*Power, Poverty, and Marginalized Environments*," in *Environmental Justice in South Africa*, edited by David A. McDonald, 2002, pp.51-77.

²⁶ See Farieda Khan's description of the rise of colonial conservation to the rise of environmental justice in "Environmental Racism and Environmental Justice" in *Environmental Justice in South Africa*, edited by David A. McDonald, 2002, pp.15-48. Also, Jane Carruthers portrayal of national parks in the rise of the Apartheid state in "Nationhood and national parks: comparative examples from the post imperial experience" in *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies*, edited by Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin, 1997, pp. 125-138.

²⁷ See Peter Coates and William Beinart's *Environment and History: The Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa*, 1995.

Power directly engages with the material and imaginative effects of narratives of white ownership and legislation that silence black labor and presence.

In this chapter, I will argue that Head's garden disrupts and reimagines South African inhabitants' relationship to land in three ways that intertwine with her vision of a politically unified "brotherhood of man." First, in opposition to the South African literary tradition of the plaasroman, or the Afrikaner farm novel, which values family and lineage as a perquisite for land ownership, Head venerates alternate forms of belonging as noble ways to connect to the land, and moreover suggests, "everyone knows *something* about vegetables" (72). Secondly, not only does the image of the community garden contest the plaasroman's myth of familial ownership, but Head's narrative structure disrupts apartheid's political geography and invites black South Africans to imagine what the environment means to them. Lastly, by giving value to waste, Head's narrative undercuts discourses of rubbish and seeks to give black South Africans a proper and valued place in imagining the environment and configuring their belonging to it.

The careful inscription of Afrikaner identity into the South African landscape demonstrates how apartheid social ideology was naturalized. As Christopher Warnes contends, "the fact that the word *boer* (farmer) remains...synonymous with Afrikaner powerfully suggests the role that the farm has played in the constructions of Afrikaner identity" (123). Between the 1920s and 1940s Afrikaner writers utilized the pastoral tradition to define their identity and belonging. J.M. Coetzee's *White Writing: On the Cultures of Letters in South Africa* (1998), which is one of the most comprehensive accounts of the plaasroman, explains how the plaasroman became the dominant mode of Afrikaans fiction. Urbanization and economic depression caused partly by growth in the mining industry and drought, (Beinart, "Soil Erosion") created a class of poor and landless Afrikaners, and in response, the plaasroman sketched the

“ideal rural order” (Coetzee, *White Writing* 71). The plaasroman provided a “transcendental justification for the ownership of land,” at a time when the commercialization of agriculture forced farmers off the land (110). The plaasroman used many different strategies to argue that ownership was based on generations of family labor, and in doing so, it made any other form of ownership illegitimate (Wenzel 94).

In his reading of the prolific Afrikaans writer C.M. Van den Heever, Coetzee analyzes how the plaasroman establishes ownership. Van den Heever’s novels picture farmers paying for their farms in blood, and the bones they leave in the soil mark their lasting claim (Coetzee, *White Writing* 87-88). Coetzee highlights how Van den Heever’s farmers are “mystically bound” to the land, which becomes both a constant calling to the farm and a right that they cannot forsake (*White Writing* 86, 88). Plaasroman farmers describe their proprietorship as marriage, in which they must “love the farm, love this one patch of earth above all others” (Coetzee, *White Writing* 89). Thus, the farmer comes to see his attachment to the farm beyond his individual self; his life “is the lineage” (Coetzee, *White Writing* 113). The plaasroman works carefully to inscribe the land and tie it irrefutably to white Afrikaners. In legitimizing white claims, the farm novel erases black share-cropping or wage work on white-owned land.

The plaasroman remains significant not only because it characterizes Afrikaner identity and environmental imagination, but also because it is complicit with the “coming-into-being” of apartheid (Warnes 124). In making the argument that white farmers are the ideal stewards, the plaasroman inevitably contributed to the South African government’s vilification of black farmers during apartheid. The South African government blamed black farmers solely for soil erosion, and subsequently prohibited black sharecropping and forced black farmers on to native reserves, where any farming practices were rigorously controlled (Beinart and Coates 66). As

Helen Tiffin and Graham Huggan argue in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, entitlement is the tension between imaginative possession and the laws that govern ownership (82). Apartheid legislation intertwined the production value of land with racist beliefs. The “capitalization of agriculture” not only disenfranchised and displaced Africans, but apartheid policies also contributed to increase in drought because of “inappropriate farming on marginal land,” (Butler and Hallows 63) and to polluting soil and water as “large commercial farms [used] huge amounts of pesticides” (A.Booth et. al qtd. in Butler and Hallows 63). All the while, conservation attitudes, laws, and reserves “alienated blacks from mainstream environmentalism” (Khan 24). Black South Africans were witnessing environmental degradation by the white farming industry, while simultaneously being blamed for environmental destruction and barred from conservation as well as restoration activities like soil conservation²⁸ or the enjoyment of “natural and recreational amenities” (Khan 22).

From Jan Rabie to Etienne van Heerden to J.M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer, white English and Afrikaans writers have highlighted the problematic inscriptions of the farm in the plaasroman tradition and its contributing racist ideologies to apartheid.²⁹ Subsequently, critics have argued that they participate in the “counterdiscursive plaasroman” (Warnes 124) or “counter-pastoral” tradition (Huggan and Tiffin 97). Head’s writing has not been associated with this tradition,³⁰ but throughout this chapter I will make the case for why reading *A Question of*

²⁸ Khan cites how: “The conservation and education services provided by the Division of Soil Conservation and Extension in the Department of Agriculture were aimed solely at the white farmer” (21).

²⁹ In “Nationalism and the Farm Novel in South Africa, 1883–2004,” Nicole Devarenne emphasizes the significance of the plaasroman in the growth of Afrikaner nationalism, and traces versions of the genre in order to draw attention to the way that it embedded white supremacy in land ownership.

³⁰ In “‘We bear the world and we make it’: Bessie Head and Olive Schreiner” Robin Visd compares Bessie Head and Olive Schreiner, and focuses on how Head’s writing directly cites Schreiner’s. Visd highlights the way that “Head’s social critique parallels Schreiner’s and also compares how each author symbolizes the landscape. Schreiner emphasizes Europeans and their descendant’s conflict with nature, whereas representations of farming in

Power as writing against the plaasroman allows readers to see the space Head creates to invite black South Africans to imagine belonging, identity and ownership outside of apartheid's silences, removals, and divisions.

Much of the first scholarship about Head's writings used biographical details about Head in order to draw parallels between Head's life and her protagonists (Sample 133). According to Sample, throughout the early 1990s, scholars performed "psychoanalytical" readings of *A Question of Power*, and praised Head for the "psychological depth of the novel" (Sample 133). In the late 1990s, critics began to read her as a political writer, whose visions of inner personal struggles and peaceful, ideal communities could be interpreted as "literature of protest" (Sample 134). Being read as a political writer links Head to other black South African writers in exile like Dennis Brutus, Keorapetse Kgositsile or Lewis Nkosi, whose texts also critique the structural violence of apartheid. Head shares some themes with significant 1970s political novelist Miriam Tlali, who often wrote about the lives of Soweto inhabitants after the 1976 uprising. In *Amandla* (1980), Tlali explores the political debate through the lens of the familial experience, and according to Kelwyn Sole, shows how individual characters are "part of a racial brother-and-sisterhood stretching far beyond immediate family" (72). Tlali also, emphasized the significance of women in communal life and included descriptions women initiating small gardens, education, self-defense groups and more in her novels (Sole 79). However, unlike her contemporary black South African writers, Rob Nixon argues, Head's "stories are preoccupied...with tensions between peasant women's agricultural authority and their subordination to local patriarchy, and with women's crimped sense of economic and social

Head are often sites of refuge and healing. While the *Visd* details both authors writing about the African farm, *Visd* does not reference the plaasroman tradition.

mobility” rather than “the imaginative recuperation of a South Africa that is past and elsewhere” (“Rural Transnationalism” 251).

Throughout Head’s oeuvre, from her detailed history of a Botswana village in *Serowe: Village of the Rain Wind*, (1981) to her novels, *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1968), *A Question of Power* (1973), and collection of short stories, *The Collector of Treasures* (1977), Head witnesses and documents agriculture. *When Rain Clouds Gather* depicts how English agronomist Gilbert Balfour works with South African exiles and local people, who have suffered at the hands of a corrupt tribal chief, to set up an agricultural collective and establish sustainable farming practices in opposition to the cattle and goat grazing that have increased drought in the region. The story “The Wind and a Boy,” in *The Collector of Treasures*, details how agriculture organizes Tswana women’s lives: “She was there all the time till the corn ripened and the birds had to be chased off the land, till harvesting and threshing were done” (Head 71). Critics and biographers have highlighted the environmental themes and Head’s concern for people’s relationship with nature throughout her writing. For instance, in “Cape gooseberries and giant cauliflowers: Transplantation, hybridity and growth in Bessie Head’s *A Question of Power*,” Anissa Talahite argues that the garden is a metaphor that enables Head to critique and rewrite “the Christian myths of creation and creativity that have traditionally been shaped around [traditional Western] patriarchal images of the land and female fertility, female temptation, or unbound female desire and sexuality.” Yet, Highfield contends, none “look directly at the way agriculture and farmers are represented and the implications of that representation” (103). In my analysis of *A Question of Power*, I examine how Head works to reimagine land and value outside apartheid ideologies.

In *A Question of Power*, Head highlights how anyone can find meaning in working the land, and in doing so, invites Black South Africans to establish their identity in the

environmental imaginary, and thus changes the terms of their association with the landscape. The first day Elizabeth is to start work in the community garden, she thinks about how everyone is suited for this kind of labor because “everyman and woman is, in some way an amateur gardener at heart and vegetables are really the central part of the daily diet...Everyone...knows *something* about vegetables...if their grandfather didn’t grow a vegetable, then their aunt did” (72). The repetition of everyman and everyone emphasizes that the ability and desire to cultivate is not bestowed on special groups by divine right. Elizabeth, who has no prior knowhow, is assigned to help out and she learns from other students. Likewise there is no necessity to pay for Elizabeth’s belonging in nature with “blood, sweat and tears.” Elizabeth even resists the kind of threats that the village women encounter as they farm: “She cancelled totally the idea of being that kind of farmer who earned her year’s supply of food in breakneck battles with dangerous wild animals” (60). Instead, just living in a mud hut in Motabeng makes Elizabeth feel close to nature and incites “a great wonder about the soil and the food it produced” (60). Head’s portrayal protests against the ideology of familial inheritance that supported the removal of black South Africans from either participating in commercial or subsistence agriculture.

The text provides many details of how the garden is prepared and cultivated. The narrative spends time following Elizabeth’s conversations with Small-Boy, one of the most knowledgeable local volunteers, as he describes in detail fertilizing the garden: “I place three wheel-barrows of kraal manure on it and then broadcast one pound of chemical fertilizer in the proportions of two parts Nitrogen, three parts Phosphorus and four parts Potash...I turn the soil once and deeply with a digging fork. I am careful to push the digging fork deep into the soil” (74). The watering system as well as the seedling bags gets the same closely detailed descriptions. Detailing specific agricultural methods like this itself is an act of protest because it

aims to educate readers, but simultaneously, the thoroughly described garden labor stands in direct contrast to how labor is portrayed in the *plaasroman*. Coetzee notes how in many of Van den Heever's novels workday operations and tasks are left unnarrated in favor of "timeless activities" such as plowing or reaping, which are seasonal and recurrent and allow Van den Heever to meditate on the mysterious love that he has for his farm (Coetzee, *White Writing* 103).

By portraying the garden as site of communal collaboration in which volunteers can come and go, and yet still lay claim to its space, Head's Motabeng Community Garden directly interrupts the *plaasroman*'s vision of ownership and belonging. *A Question of Power* features scene after scene of labor in the garden. Head shifts the focus from laying claim to the land based on birthright and maintaining it by pouring one's blood and bones into communal labor amongst a disparate group of individuals, who require no prerequisite to participate. When Head portrays agricultural work in the garden either building a fence or preparing seedling bags, her descriptions call attention to the number of participants. Head pictures a flurry of work by many, and the work creates togetherness: "There was a tremendous clashing and banging of work-tools all around as the students swarmed over the construction-works" (123). Tom, an American, Kenosi, a young volunteer from Motabeng, and Elizabeth dig new trench-beds in the garden together: "Kenosi and Elizabeth worked behind [Tom's] pick, quickly scooping out the loosened earth with spades" (124). When Elizabeth reflects on the work, she does not revel in the way that the labor has tied herself and other villagers to the land, as in the *plaasroman*. She does not speak about making her mark or about how their labor means they own the land. Instead, Elizabeth talks about how it provides them independence from South African commercial agriculture that not only alienates black South Africans, but also under nourishes with "half-rotting orders of green vegetables" (124). Working in the garden generates collective belonging; it is not

necessary that laborers be devoted to the landscape. Kenosi works in the garden, but also works for the local industries wool project. Elizabeth leaves for seven months due to psychological distress, but her transition back to the garden is described as fairly seamless. Tom also has several arrivals and departures from the garden. The garden invites *everyone* back: “take me. Turn me into a one-acre plot of cabbage, green beans, carrots, beetroot, tomatoes, onions, peas, and lettuce” (112).

Head evokes a sense of belonging not unlike J.M. Coetzee’s *Boyhood* (1997), an autobiography narrated in third-person. According to Jennifer Wenzel, Coetzee dramatizes “love of land without legal ownership” (Wenzel 111). The narrative’s boy realizes that his love of the farm is born not out of claiming the farm (“The farm belongs to me”), but rather that the farm “belongs to no one” and “I belong to the farm” (Coetzee, *Boyhood* 96). The boy rejects capitalist and traditional Afrikaner ownership, but still feels tied to the land. Because *A Question of Power* has not been read as a counterdiscursive plaasroman, her strategies for dismantling the farm novel’s ideologies have not been compared to other counter-pastoral writers like Coetzee. However, I contend that reading Head in this context allows readers to see more clearly what Head is saying about belonging and environmental ethics in South Africa. While Coetzee highlights that the land lies beyond anyone’s ownership, Head instead emphasizes that a sense of closeness with the landscape can be achieved by anyone.³¹ Against the South African discourse of exclusivity, Head highlights how Elizabeth, who has never felt drawn to the landscape before, just after living near it for a brief time, feels a part of it. Living in her mud hut next to the insects

³¹ In “Hell of Desire: Narrative, Identity and Utopia in *A Question of Power*” Clare Counihan, argues that the garden allows Head to imagine an “ideal alternative” that “champions [...] egalitarian and universal humanism,” but in doing so “eras[es] difference and [s]quash[es] [...] desire” (79). For Counihan, Head’s garden problematically evacuates raced, gendered, and national identities “as the condition of admittance into [the] idealized future” (70).

and smell of “mouldy grass,” Elizabeth felt like there was no distinction between human and animal life (60).

There is no need to wed the land in order to care for it or feel tied to it. Instead of a description of heteronormative love to form a union with the land, Head describes the use of seedling bags to grow magnificent “cabbages, tomatoes, cauliflower and peppers” with “shimmering, green leaves” (124). After their work digging trench beds, Kenosi, Tom, and Elizabeth

prepared seedlings in plastic bags for transplanting into the trench-beds. Into each small plastic bag with its six inches of soil manure mixture they dropped four cabbage seeds. Eventually after a month, and gradual thinning, each bag would hold one gigantic cabbage seedling. They’d make holes with spades in the trench-beds, then cut away the plastic and place each seedling with its mould of earth into the holes...all the seedlings grew [despite] the intense heat. (124).

Head describes an effective technique for seed germination in desert landscapes. Using plastic bags protects seeds from being blown away before they can germinate. The gardeners marvel at the seedlings success despite the climate. Removing martial relations as the only way for the land to prosper, Head’s depiction undercuts the association of the land with passive female sexuality awaiting male monogamous partnership. However, Claire Counihan critiques Head because by “circumventing the natural and idiosyncratic processes of flowering and pollination, the garden reproduces sterility” (79-80). Since Counihan reads the garden as a way for Elizabeth to stabilize her identity, which includes her sexual and gendered identity, the lack of metaphors about gender

or female desire mean for Counihan that Elizabeth's new healed identity is disembodied (80). Counihan is not alone in her criticism of Head's praise of Western, modern, scientific and disciplined agricultural critiques. Jonathan Highfield claims that while "women form the core of the workers who transform the agrarian community...European agricultural knowledge catalyzes those women....Head's favoritism toward imported agricultural knowledge is problematic, particularly when the imported cabbages require an inordinate amount of water in a region where drought is part of the weather pattern" (110-111). Highfield suggests that because Head does not problematize, and in fact, lauds European agricultural knowledge, she ignores and unwittingly supports a history of colonization and undervalues local knowledge. He argues this has material consequences because, like the watering systems pictured in *A Question of Power*, the imported crops and techniques can damage landscapes. Highfield and Counihan make important critiques because Head portrayed agricultural work in her fiction and nonfiction as an exemplary way to form community and claim belonging. Privileging authoritarian and European knowledge have the potential to contradict her aims, and yet, by emphasizing scientific and non-local agricultural techniques, Head writes against ancestral claims of belonging and good stewardship that can only come by way of inherited ownership.

Further, I contend that Head's garden in *A Question of Power*, like the agricultural project in *When Rain Clouds Gather*, are still powerful images of protest that produce significant environmental imaginaries. Counihan and Highfield's critiques minimize Head's protest because they do not situate Head's writing as a response to South African cultural and material relationships to land, thus undercutting an important contextualization. As Maureen Fielding observes about *When Rain Clouds Gather* where she reads the agriculture collective's reclamation of the land as a "healing gesture," in South Africa the "reclamation is really a

transformation of land that has been controlled by uncontrollable forces into land that can be managed by people who live on it” (20). When contextualized against South African apartheid capitalism and the narratives of ownership that buttressed it, Head’s portrayal of practical communal cultivation imagines a different kind of value for the land, not property value nor ancestral belonging, instead the land has value because it has the potential to provide food security for its inhabitants.

The image of gardening not only disrupts the Afrikaner cultural identity as *boernaise*, but the structure of Head’s novel also replots value. Critics often characterize *A Question of Power* by its themes of fragmentation (Sample, “Artist in Exile” 6). Moments of gardening appear intermittently throughout the narrative of Elizabeth’s encounters with Sello and Dan. Gardening takes place when Elizabeth awakens, usually at the start of the day, but gardening also appears suddenly. For instance, at one point in the text, Elizabeth is recounting her walk through the plots in the garden with one of the Danish volunteers, Camilla, but then the narrative quickly shifts back to Elizabeth suffering under the brown-suited Sello and his companion Medusa forecasting Elizabeth’s death. Then, the narrative shifts to another time when Elizabeth meets Kenosi and they begin working in the garden together. There is never an all-encompassing image of the garden, rather the garden is fragmented into separate moments: one moment describes the building of the fence, and then in another some plots are planted or arranged. The two scenes don’t precisely correspond chronologically with each other.

The sporadic structure works against the boundaries erected around a community, or a particular plan for the garden. Gardens are about order, and have long served as metaphors for

ordering life,³² but Head's narrative structure replicates Elizabeth's gardening techniques. She plants in "holes, made when knotted roots of the thorn-bush had been dug out," and not just in the neat and clean "streets" of the garden mapped out by Grahame, the English farm manager (123, 203). She also experiments with different plants and seeds in her yard. Elizabeth uses the space available to her according to her own ideas. Head described *A Question of Power* as a book that is "written in such a way that it invites people to fill in gaps and notes where the author has left blank spaces. There are actually blank spaces in the book where the reader walks in and fills in" (Head qtd. in Beard). Head's structure and garden do not dictate order. Rather, the text and garden encourage the work of imagining cultivation from multiple points of view.

For example, in the middle of the novel when Elizabeth has been working at the garden for some time, there is a garden episode that follows Elizabeth meeting Tom and telling him what ideas she had for the garden—how Kenosi and she needed help "pick digging to construct deep beds"—when Elizabeth is transported to a hallucination. The space of her hallucination is in "fields of pretty-looking flowers" that must have been "seen in the garden of Eden" (114). In the hallucination, Dan tells her about the nightmarish thoughts people have about abusing the helpless, and Elizabeth is reminded of her life in the slums of South Africa. Tortured lonely women are figured as David facing a behemoth of Evil. When the hallucination ends, readers

³² In *The Passionate Gardener* (2006), Rudolf Borchardt argues the garden is "always a notion of order" (32), and in *The Garden as an Art* (1993), Mara Miller further expounds on idea that gardens represent order: "A garden is any purposeful arrangement of natural objects (such as sand, water, plants, rocks, etc) with exposure to sky or open air, in which form is not fully accounted for by purely practical considerations such as convenience (15).

find themselves at Elizabeth's house, but this moment is not contiguous with the one that came before the hallucination. Before the hallucination, Elizabeth and Tom are eating together. After the hallucination, Elizabeth sees Tom walking on the road being hailed by some village women. The fragmentation allows the reader to contemplate the nature of those ideas explored in the hallucination. Meaning is neither directive nor prescriptive. The narrative structure of *A Question of Power* stands in direct contrast to the narrative goal of the plaasroman. Coetzee contends: "The craft of the prototypical Van den Heever plaasroman must...lie in creating the preconditions for an epiphany, an eruption into words" a steady movement "towards the revelation of the farm as a source of meaning" (91). In successive moments, Van den Heever's protagonists commune with nature, which in turn verifies their identity and the land's value. Calling attention to the construction of writing and the environment, *A Question of Power* emphasizes how pastoral and conservative ideologies inscribe proper ownership on to the land. Even though the hallucination incorporates floral imagery and the Garden of Eden, there is no direct link between episodes.³³ Elizabeth's hallucinations don't make sense of the garden episodes, and the garden episodes don't make sense of the hallucinations.³⁴

³³ In *The Language of Landscape* (2000), Anne Whiston Spirn describes the references to Garden of Eden imagery in gardening as: "a complex symbol, [that] embodies pleasure, fertility, sustenance, and renewal. (70). In *A Question of Power*, all of the references to Roman History, Biblical stories, Egyptian mythology, overlay each other and highlight the way that Head is exploring the way history and religion have been constructed (Talahite). The references to the Garden of Eden are also reminiscent of plaasroman writing in that they incorporate edenic imagery to strengthen its justification and fortitude against the threatening forces of modernity (Devarenne 628). Head undermines the idealization of land in the myth of Eden by emphasizing the ordinary elements of her community. Symbolic images are juxtaposed to plain, yet positive, descriptions of her community's progress: "Surrounding the garden were the partly erected work buildings for the project; a brewery, a pottery house, the foundations for a kitchen, weaving house, washroom and toilets and the partially erected walls of a large shop that was to house and distribute the goods they produced" (89).

³⁴ Marlene van Niekerk's *Agaat* (2004) rewrites the plaasroman tradition by describing the story of the African farm a paralyzed female land owner, Milla, and her coloured servant, Agaat. Like Head she subverts the plaasroman's concrete identification of the meaning of the land. Van Niekerk confines to her bed with illness Milla, and in doing so makes it difficult for her define and see her ownership. At one point Milla asks Agaat for the maps of the farm to see the "distances recorded...of my region, of my place" (Van Niekerk 40), but Agaat delays giving the maps, and thus, denies the protagonist "the knowablity of the African land through maps" (van Houwelingen 98).

Hence space and place are open to interpretation, but more importantly the boundaries between spaces and places are crossed continuously. The plot structure and the garden free readers from the limitations imposed upon them by apartheid, colonialism, and patriarchal societies, a technique Head also employs in *When the Rain Clouds Gather* (1968). As Sample observes, “crossing thresholds and boundaries is part of the text’s articulation of narrative situations [and] the movement through space...suggests a possibility for healing” (Sample, “Space” 33, 34). Rita Barnard, in her influential essay about Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist* (1973), similarly describes how Gordimer’s novel calls attention to “apartheid’s territorial schemes” (84), that systematically “dumped” Black South Africans, dubbing them “surplus” people, into “dust and poverty” and then read that waste as “evidence that Black people are not farmers” (72). By using the “discourse of rubbish” the apartheid government “justified exclusion without seeming to say anything about race, apartheid or any such ugly topic” (Barnard 84). For much of *A Question of Power*, the garden and the internal dialogue follow the kinds of boundaries marked by apartheid. When Elizabeth is in the garden it is described as: neat and ordered (113), the plants “shimmer” (124), the air is perfumed (100), and it is peaceful (125). Whereas the scenes of Elizabeth’s internal strife are frantic with Sello and Dan calling innumerable characters out of the shadows. Elizabeth at one point finds herself “deep [in a] cesspit...filled to the brim with excreta” (53). The hallucinations are mostly invisible experiences to the rest of the villagers in Motabeng. However, images of surplus and waste are not contained in the descriptions of Elizabeth’s mind. Instead, Head renders waste and surplus beautiful and welcome in the garden, and thus the images work against the divisions of ownership and cleanliness and waste and invisibility.

The image of the Cape gooseberry signals its overproduction: “One day, as she walked through her garden she noted thick mats of brown husks lying on the ground beneath the gooseberry bushes. With Kenosi, she harvested an enormous basket of berries” (152). Elizabeth “at first” was in “sheer panic having so much fruit on her hands...it looked as if the harvest of ten pounds of fruit a week would continue for an indefinite period” (152). Elizabeth was overwhelmed by the surplus berries’, but the problem of surplus is only momentary, “at first.” Head describes Elizabeth as easily incorporating the surplus into the local industries project: “the work had a melody”(153). When the reader encounters another image of the extremely productive gooseberry, Elizabeth again makes light of the quantity that continues to exceed her expectations. Elizabeth and Kenosi “richly” sigh at the sight of “thousands and thousands of gooseberries,” thinking “they’d have lunch and then pick the berries and start some of the jam-making in the afternoon” (204). Using the surplus is not only seen as easy but it also provides Elizabeth with the greatest sense of hope she has experienced. The gooseberry scene is one of the last images in the book. Without causing a “terrible mess,” Elizabeth’s ability to include the gooseberries and provide a valuable product for the local industries’ store, whose profit is directly shared within the community, allows her dream of black South Africans belonging to be realized. She falls asleep, her terrors kept at bay for the night, by touch of her hand on “her land. It was a gesture of belonging” (206).

The garden’s production not only resignifies surplus, but also revalues waste in its depiction of manure. *A Question of Power* overturns evaluations of excrement. Throughout Elizabeth’s conversations with Sello, she is forced to endure the sight and stench of excrement, and Sello and Medusa often refer to her as filth. The excrement horrifies Elizabeth and sends her into extreme panic. The waste in the conversations with Sello represents the evil of man and

some men's debasement of others to the level of filth in order to prioritize their own desires and needs. It also invokes the liminal spaces of habitation for Black South Africans, which "are themselves marked by litter, with their inhabitants, uprooted from any old economic forms providing their own material order, unable to afford the amenities that support a modern tidiness" (Vital 193). However, Head reimagines these overwhelming images of negative value when she exhorts the beauty of manure. She watches as one of the community gardeners "turns lush heavily-manured soil" and she feels as if the "air is alive" (73). The "wheel barrows of kraal manure" are carefully integrated with the soil, and Small-boy, one of the most knowledgeable village volunteers, exhorts how it "promotes quick growth and improves the quality of the vegetables" (74). Head reverses the designation of waste by showing that even what appears worthless contains value.

Head's image of the community garden is not just a metaphor for the "brotherhood of man" that she arrives at after sifting through the evil and power that Sello and Dan sling at her. Rather the Motabeng garden joins a political future with a materialized environmental future. As a utopia, the garden imagines an alternative to apartheid divisions. All different members of society who previously would have been regarded with distrust because of their status and beliefs—Eugene, an Afrikaner and Camilla the Dane, and Tom, an American—all work together with villagers seeking a better understanding of each other. While gardens have long served as vehicles for hope, they are also about transforming space. *A Question of Power's* garden democratizes knowledge of the environment and invites Black South Africans to participate in the landscape. It argues that everyone has a claim to agriculture because everyone eats and is a part of nature, and the text dramatizes how empowering individuals with knowledge will help communities thrive.

Yet, the problem of ownership remains unresolved.³⁵ The land reformation is an issue that South Africa still struggles with today (moving the deadline for land redistribution from 2014 to 2025), and which cannot be solved by inviting everyone to lay claim to the land without ownership.³⁶ Disenfranchised black South Africans should have a claim to capital, and not acknowledging this trivializes rural poverty and ignores the material realities of capitalist dispossession and ongoing policies and practices of erasure.³⁷ Head's dream is monumental in its environmental imaginary against the plaasroman and apartheid geographies, but it is not complete. Nonetheless her fragmented and compromised utopia strives to untangle land and people from racist ideologies. She envisions a different value for the land, one that is based on sustaining practices for the community and the environment, and she invites black South Africans to reimagine value outside of capitalist and conservationist definitions. While *A Question of Power* cannot resolve problems of ownership nor account for the extraordinary experience of loss by a turning towards an ideal, it nonetheless highlights the need to reformulate black South Africans relationship to the land.

³⁵ David Hallows writes in "The Environment of Apartheid-capitalism: Discourses and Issues:" "Given the private property protections afforded whites in the 1996 Constitution and a 'willing-seller, willing-buyer' land reform policy essentially designed by the World Bank, the scope for post-apartheid restitution and redistribution of land was severely limited. The first democratic government achieved only a handful of land restitutions, with fewer than 30 of 40,000 cases were settled during the first government. Not even 1% of arable land was redistributed in a separate programme for a 30% land redistribution during 1994-99...The Department of Land Affairs and Agriculture lack the capacity to intervene on behalf of rural black people" (40).

³⁶ Yoruba Richen's *Promised Land* (2010) documentary/PBS POV episode includes testimonies from many white Afrikaner farmers and rural black Africans. The ideology of the family farm runs through each of the white farmers descriptions of their property. Rural black Africans are pictured as wholly stuck, having registered land restitution claims that have gone nowhere.

³⁷ In "Land Reform: Rights and Wrongs" in *The Economist*: Special Report South Africa, from April 27, 2019, describes the problem with the initial constitutional section to begin land redistribution. The section stated that landowners would receive "just and equitable compensation;" however, this has led to the stalled redistribution (9). The article explains how the Economic Freedom Fighters have put pressure on the ANC, who are characterized as "incompetent and corrupt" to begin "expropriation without compensation" even though it might hurt the economy because of the continued suffering of landless poor South Africans (9-10). It emphasizes land restitution and critiques the ANC's failure to process claims and interrogate property rights in areas where there is no formal register. Jon Allsop's May 2019 article in *The Nation*, "Why South Africans Are Talking About Land Expropriation," similarly lays out the ongoing land redistribution problem in the wake of the latest elections and emphasizes the voices of rural black poor in their increasing demand that things need to change.

CHAPTER TWO

“Ten dams for one delta seen from Space”: Envisioning Environmentalism in Nadine Gordimer’s *Get a Life* and Contemporary South African Fiction

Since the early 1990s, environmental activism in South Africa, especially in impoverished rural and urban communities has experienced tremendous progress. Prior to the liberalization of South African politics and economy, care for the environment was a tool of racial oppression as colonial and apartheid governments forcibly removed black South Africans in the name of preserving and protecting wildlife. As an environmental discourse emerged that considered the living and working spaces of black South Africans, so did “protests against plans to site a nuclear power station” and “demonstrations against the proposed construction of a toxic waste recycling plant,” as environmental historian Farieda Khan notes (28). Campaigns addressed vanadium poisoning of mine workers and reconciliation for forced removal of communities from national parks’ spaces in the form of “community access to ancestral land” (Khan 34-36). Despite the progress of environmental justice, Khan points out that no national environmental movement has been able to motivate “mass environmental action” or fully express the concerns of poor communities (36).

After conducting a seven-year 70-participant study of the history of environmental movements in South Africa, Carl Death concluded similarly that while South Africa had a vibrant history of rural environmental activism, as well as having many different organizations centered on conservation concerns (the greens), environmental justice concerns (the browns), and land activism and anti-poverty movements (the reds) (1221), there is “no clearly identifiable, relatively unified and broadly popular environmental movement” (1216). Death expressed

concern over South Africa's lack of unification because he believes it impacts South Africa's ability to address environmental grievances: "Popular movements...drive progressive change, and a strong and coherent popular environmental movement will be required to shift South Africa's development path onto more sustainable and less inequitable trajectories" (Death 1217). The lack of unification or mass popularization is rooted in South Africa's legacy of environmental racism and injustice, and has been visualized in wildlife documentaries since 1965. According to environmental historian Thomas Lekan, films, like Michael Grzimek's *Kein Platz für Wilde Tiere* [*No Room for Wild Animals*] and *Serengeti Darf Nicht Sterben* [*Serengeti Shall Not Die*], use resplendent "technicolor close-ups of orchids and wide shots of treeless Serengeti plains" as well as numerous shots that seem to "immerse [themselves] in a flock of birds," and subsequently, perform "aerial de-territorialization" (189-192). The airman's perspective transforms landscapes into the last frontier pitting the existence of African wildlife against indigenous inhabitants. The visual strategies of the films magnify and echo the rhetoric of most South African contemporary non-governmental organizations, which prefer the distant vocabularies of "technical and scientific discourses" (Death 1222). Poor rural communities continue to feel that the interests of charismatic mega fauna outweigh the inequality they experience.

Nadine Gordimer's *Get A Life* (2005) responds to this environmental problematic. Weaving in and out of the Bannerman family's thoughts, *Get a Life* explores what ecology and environmentalism can mean in South Africa when it is visualized from a suburban, middle-class, well-meaning male point of view. By dramatizing ecologist, Paul Bannerman's, work on real environmental campaigns, like against the mining of dunes along the coastline,³⁸ to working

³⁸ In *Get a Life*, Paul never refers to the mining company by name. However, the description of the mining company's intentions suggests that Gordimer is referencing the Save the St. Lucia campaign. Environmental

against the construction of the Pebble Bed Nuclear reactor in Koeberg, to his detailing of his team's collaboration with green and brown organizations like "Save The Earth, Earthlife, [and the] International Rivers Network"(Gordimer 89), *Get a Life* places the current state of South Africa's environmentalism on center stage. The protagonist's garden becomes the staging ground for this debate about conservation, the rootedness necessary for an environmental perspective, and attention to environmental grievances. Action in the novel is initially propelled by Paul's thyroid cancer diagnosis. Paul is relegated to his parents' suburban home for a period while his radiation therapy risks endangering his young family. Paul spends the majority of his quarantine in his childhood backyard garden remembering how he once: wrestled in the grass with a playmate, climbed the jacaranda tree, heard the "nagging cries of hadedas," and learned the difference between squashing a snail and releasing a slingshot at a bird. He also meets with his ecologist colleagues to discuss the status of his current projects that aim to combat environmental exploitation as well as examines his relationship with his wife, Bernice/Benni, wondering if he can overcome the "incompatibility between the advertising industry and environmental protection" (58). By navigating Paul's subject position, his work and his family, *Get a Life* asks how ideas of the global environment are produced and what effects global frameworks have on South Africa's bifurcated and multiple environmental movements and their ability to address longstanding environmental grievances.

The garden in *Get a Life* is quite different from other South African narrative gardens such as Head's garden. Head's utopic sustainable community garden is full of anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, and environmental justice practices. The sustainable garden, as Naomi Jacobs suggests, is "an ecotopian text that attempts to model an ideal realm in which nature and

historian and ecotourism director, Martha Honey, describes this campaign as protests against Richards Bay Minerals. The town of St Lucia was caught in a tug of war between mining and conservationist interests. Both didn't acknowledge the claims of the more than 3,000 people, who were forcibly removed from this area.

humankind coexist in harmony” (156). Trying to achieve a sustainable garden, as Elizabeth, the central protagonist, does, is a practice that is self-consciously anthropocentric and recognizes the way that apartheid-capitalist practices shaped nature and systemically underdeveloped black agriculture. Unlike Elizabeth, Paul is never pictured working in the garden. The garden boasts massive lawns and beds of shrubs, where Paul on rare occasion watches black workers labor. Paul cannot even communicate with the laborers. Once he calls out in isiZulu, but no response is ever received except for “a grin that might or might not be incomprehension”; only the hadedas answer (37).

While many of Gordimer’s earlier texts from apartheid era such as *The Conservationist* (1974) to post-apartheid *None to Accompany Me* (1994), forefronted a critique of South Africa’s conservation ethic and its effects on the lives of the rural black poor by illustrating the consequences for black Africans, *Get a Life*’s black characters exist on the margin of the text, barely spoken of and rarely speaking. The silence billows in this text and critiques its protagonist’s environmental missionary vocation to “save the earth” (94). For while it is Paul’s job to consider land reform concerns like rural blacks’ economic empowerment as the result of development projects, the overarching environmental discourse Paul professes is pristine ecology and nature without human intervention (145). Using the garden to think through environmentalism in South Africa allows Gordimer to focus on how Paul’s vision of the environment affects the capability of an ecological discourse to address environmental grievances. As Jacobs argues, gardens are about “presenting visions of more perfect worlds... and the journey towards them” (168). Significantly, Paul’s garden is not the site of any of his own garden labor, but only his garden reflection.

Critics disagree about the outcome of Paul's reflections. Byron Caminero-Santangelo argues that Paul sees the environment as "garden-like—shaped by social institutions" (225). Paul and his family are firmly situated in the middle-class, and Paul's social identity influences how he perceives the environment. On the other hand, according to Anthony Vital, because of Paul's subject position, Paul's ecological thought is very limited. Vital contends that Paul's thinking is "broadly romantic" in that Paul constructs nature and culture as opposing categories (103). Nature is constructed as an Other from this subject position, and thus can become something "the comfortable classes" can mount "seemingly endless defensive action of uncertain outcome against" because there is not another side to global capitalism (106). Caminero-Santangelo offers a more optimistic reading when he suggests that Paul perceives what has been suppressed by his economic and social status. Caminero-Santangelo argues since Paul is aware, he is capable of change, and thus, "even some of the institutions with which he is associated have the potential to be transformed and could become even more useful in creating a better future" (232).

Yet, *Get a Life* does not offer alternatives, elevated ethics, nor easy or clear condemnations. Rather it points to what is omitted. Vital outlines some of the omissions: "lack of interest in production and consumption cycles as they relate to the environment, (108) silence about environmentalism of the poor (109), black subjectivity (109), and "land ownership and conservation" (110). Following Vital, my analysis examines the way the novel portrays vision, omission, and invisibility. By exploring *Get a Life's* motif of vision, I will show that the three visions portrayed (above, below, and on the ground) all highlight distance—distance that makes it difficult to overcome borders and imagine communities even as the ecologist voices concerns about problematic land redistribution and the effects of consumer capitalism. Perspectives like Paul's father, Adrian, and his desire to see archaeological artifacts signify that seeing direct

evidence means gaining knowledge, but this vision, and its preservation, elides the social, political, and economic forces that influence interpretation. Aerial views, like those invoked by Paul, are not only disembodied tricks,³⁹ but they also flatten culture and power differences. By more closely investigating the mechanisms of the discourse Gordimer portrays, I show how Paul's ecological standpoint and activism privileges the visual. Activism within global capitalism is complicated by hierarchizing vision over other senses. For as Rob Nixon questions in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, "How...are we to act ethically toward human and biotic communities that lie beyond our sensory ken?" and "Who gets to see and from where?" (15). The middle-class environmental perspective Paul uses makes black communities, and the environmental violence they suffer, invisible. I conclude by comparing *Get a Life* with two recent expressions of the South African environment and investigate what versions of environmental justice might be possible in South African science fiction.

ABOVE

Although Paul has many projects that he and his team are working on—"the national toll highway through the Wild Coast, that great botanical treasure of endemism, crop lands of subsistence farmers; the mining concession for the sand dunes"⁴⁰—the possible damming of Botswana's Okavango Delta occupies his imagination. He asks: "How old is the delta that is part of the cosmos visible from Outer Space? Astronauts report it." (93). Gazing at the delta, Paul's cosmic view invokes the "visual genealogy" of earth as the Blue Marble (Lekan 175). As Lekan

³⁹ Recalling Donna Haraway's critique of the "god trick" in "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective."

⁴⁰ It is significant that Paul focuses on the dams as opposed to mining because it shows concretely how his subject position affects his ecological point of view because as McDonald argues, mining is South Africa's single largest industry and has "produc[ed] a legacy of solid waste and water contamination that will take another century to remedy"(8), yet it is the dam that becomes his obsession.

notes, the Apollo mission photographs of earth, or the Earthrise images, catalyzed an environmental rhetoric that relied on a “disembodied, masculinist gaze of a technoscience that purports to be neutral” (175). Paul’s transcendent view figures the delta as “geometric perfection” (Lekan 181). Time is immeasurable and the delta’s ecosystem contains: “grandeur, and delicacy, cosmic and infinitesimal complexity” (90). The delta’s “co-existence with a desert is a system of elements contained, maintained—by the phenomenon itself, unbelievably, inconceivably” (91). The delta’s system is untouchable, totally removed from the conceptualization of the human imagination. From this distance, Paul sees the dams as “man-made scratching and gougings in comparison with the planet’s own design” (93).

Paul zooms in to the flora and fauna of the delta, moving just like the earlier wildlife documentaries. He is mesmerized and enthralled as he recalls the complexity of the eco-system:

If we identify the tree species, you’ll learn from how far and from where water journeys have brought them? What journeys! They have brought sand and it’s leached from along its routes, salt. Six hundred and sixty tons a year! That’s the figure! In that calm delta disturbed only by the hippos and crocodiles, evaporation in an area bordering on a desert is extreme. The salt content becomes high; contamination problem, ay. Yebo! But no. Managed by matter itself. Trees suck up the water to the island for growth. Salt comes with it. The sand filters the brackish stuff: clean water flows back, supports fish and the predators of fish, the crocs, hippos, fish eagles. (91-92)

Paul repeatedly exclaims the perfect unity of the delta. The aerial arabesques Paul’s view performs allow him and the reader to view the eco-system from all angles. Gazing at this

distance provides an encompassing perspective, yet at this height, the viewer can never participate. It is a safe distance. As Lekan highlights in his analysis of Blue Planet environmentalism: “Such aerial images accelerated a trend already underway in human geography from environmental determinism to an analysis of human culture as an independent, and largely destructive, ecological agent” (184). Aerial images lead to narratives of environmental degradation that problematically remove human agency and asymmetrically affect decolonized groups. “Decolonized peoples,” Lekan contends in this situation, cannot be “trusted to serve as stewards of their wildlife heritage and primeval landscapes, for...they are too vulnerable to the seductions of Western modernity and without the Apollonian tools necessary to mimic a God’s eye view of their plight” (189). Characterizing the delta’s sublime grandeur sets transcendent engineering against human intervention. In doing so, Paul employs an environmental ethic that is problematic because it fails to visualize communities⁴¹ and thus displacement becomes unimaginable. Saluting hippos and crocs not once but twice, Paul envisions threat to the Okavango’s ecological complexity not to the people who fish, hunt and live there.⁴²

Part of what haunts Paul’s thinking about the Okavango project is the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP). The LHWP shadows the proposed Okavango project as well as the suburban garden, which most likely receives water from the LHWP. As Patrick Bond’s history of the LHWP explains, the LHWP both caused environmental damage, which included the destruction of “crucial habitats of the Maluti Minnow (an endangered species) as well as displaced people who used the land for farming and grazing (145, 143). The project also affected Lesotho villages because the rapid “socio-economic modernisation...brought with it a

⁴¹ See Rob Nixon’s *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor*, in which he analyzes American West Dam activism, like that of John Muir, of the 1960s and the way it made communities invisible.

⁴² See John Bock’s “Economic Development and Cultural Change among the Okavango Delta Peoples of Botswana” in *Botswana Notes and Records*. Vol. 30, pp. 27-44, 1998.

dramatic increase in HIV/Aids” (145). McDonald adds that the LHWP was and remains controversial because it was intended to “provide water to Gauteng, the thirsty industrial and domestic heartland of the country,” yet as soon as this water became available it didn’t seem to be needed (9). Paul’s inability to see the wreckage for human inhabitants bespeaks a larger problem for environmentalisms globally as well as in South Africa. His reliance and exhalation of nature against the ten dams becomes like a refrain through the remainder of the novel that shows the distance created by some environmental perspectives. These environmentalisms carry unacknowledged residues and blind spots. Although environmental justice movements have a lot of traction in South Africa and at one point Paul even claims to be part of the browns, the kind of vision of the environment Paul articulates separates and minimizes human concerns. Paul is more concerned if the delta can continue to “support fish and the predators for the fish, the crocs, hippos, fish eagles” (92) than what will happen to the people living in the region, in much the same way South African media emphasized the plight of penguins in the floods and oil spill on the Cape Flats (Khan 38).

As Paul’s ruminations about the delta come to a close, so too does this section of the novel. Paul is agitated by the knowledge that his seclusion in the garden is coming to an end and that life will beckon him; he hears the distant calls of “Daddy!” (94, 96). Through the rest of the novel, Paul tries to shake the everyday demands and return to the harmonious but flattened view of nature he has cultivated. Paul’s cosmic perspective is echoed in the repeated reference to and image of birds throughout the novel. When Paul and his family visit the Black Eagle sanctuary, later in the novel, Paul exalts the eagle’s flight as pure mastery, with a wingspan capable of “blind[ing] the sun” (163). Paul is drawn to the eagle’s height, like the delta viewed from space; the eagle’s movements are out of reach “up there” and exude a natural brilliance and power. Paul

critiques his family's inability to grasp "the bird's point of view" (163). Paul figures his vision alongside the adorned bird, and emphasizes the eagle's vision above all else as the most magnificent attribute. Paul is obsessed by what can and cannot be seen, and he is annoyed and feels "hopeless to explain" to his family that they cannot disturb the eagle's habitat by playing with the leaves or swimming in the water.

By emphasizing Paul's perceived social isolation, the text is critical of the way the view from above devalues human perception of the landscape and elides concerns of black communities. Life continues to happen in the bird sanctuary section: children play, *Lyndsay*, Paul's mother, thinks about her estranged husband in Mexico, and Bernice tells Paul she is pregnant. All the while Paul tries to reflect deeply about nature and his role in the "survival" of the eagle (168). His lofty thoughts are juxtaposed to his family's. In portraying Paul's removed vision, Gordimer criticizes global scientific and technical discourses that describe nature. *Get a Life* calls attention to the environmental discourses' gap between people and nature.

BELOW

As Paul repeats "ten dams. Ten dams seen from Space" throughout the novel to remind himself of what he is defending as an ecologist, so too does his father, Adrian, have a refrain that is fearful of the destruction humans can bring with modernization. Adrian is described as having missed his vocational calling to archaeology so that he could support his wife's law career. However, Adrian explains his appreciation of archeology as the: "experience of seeing unearthed accomplishments of the ancient past when you belong to an era where there are wars going on over who possesses weapons that could destroy all trace of it" (178). Radiation's threats of obliterations have loomed over much of the novel with Paul's cancer diagnosis and treatment,

but Adrian's articulation of nuclear threat is about more than voicing "the world's collective fear" of nuclear capability, as Paul describes it (99). Perceiving the planet and global history as fragile means that it is also always vulnerable to destruction, and for Adrian like for Paul, that destruction echoes Cold War fears. Nuclear testing produced toxic landscapes and seemed to signify the acceleration of Western expansionism thereby eroding the myth of the frontier.

Yet, Adrian's interest in archaeology as a witness of the past is not only significant because it parallels Paul's perspective. Archaeology is another way of articulating and gathering knowledge about life, and is reliant and devotional toward the survival and collection of the physical artifacts of human existence. While there are differing approaches to the study of archaeology (positivist, relativist, and a combination of the two), Adrian's view most closely aligns with positivist archaeology. According to archaeological theorist Lewis Binford, positivist archeology believes it can adequately represent human history through direct observation of surviving evidence and knowledge of causes. The value of the artifact lies in seeing it first-hand. This view of the artifact is also akin to John Berger's account of art before the camera, which made "the eye the center of the visible world, but the human eye can only be in one place at a time" (9). On Adrian and Lyndsay's trip to Mexico they "stand beneath the Rivera murals;" "saw the "Ambras Emerald-feather head dress;" "walked the length of the Teotihuacán plumed serpent;" and were "distracted by a giant Mayan eagle" (105-107). Adrian feels comfort from seeing these cultural objects because "of course, we understand the present a bit better by knowing the past" (107). But this "knowing" can only be grasped by seeing the surviving relics of the past in person. In this sense, the past remains fixed and cannot reflect the socio-political forces of the present. The seeing is also only done by a limited number of viewers at a time, and thus, mobility and class limit access to the past. Modernity's progression is always

already threatening the past, but relegating meaning only to the viewers both protects the past and accelerates fears.

As Adrian imbibes the past, Lyndsay considers the cultural status of their tour guide: “how did this Scandinavian come to be a guide in Mexico?” (106). In tension with Adrian’s definitive knowledge gathering, Lyndsay’s observations emphasize movement and the displacement of meaning because as people and objects travel, the meaning no longer resides in the surroundings (Berger 10). Moving through an exhibit of passport photography, Lyndsay seems to both recognize and remember the movement of all people around the world. Generations of movement are echoed in Lyndsay recalling her trips around the world for law conferences and her affair, which the reader can’t help but juxtapose to Adrian and Paul’s views of the past and nature, and doing so, exposes Paul’s fears of globalization. Displacement is a problem for the version of environmentalism Paul professes because his ecological standpoint is rooted in his attachment to his local environment. In *Sense of Place, Sense of Planet*, Ursula Heise suggests that most environmental movements in the US and elsewhere have had a history of privileging “place-based thinking” or “ethics of proximity” as a starting point for environmental activism (40, 62), yet environmental movements based on “an attachment to place, rootedness, locality and belonging” often manifest exclusionary politics (Death 1233). The characters’ fear of displacement is haunted by South Africa’s history of displacement, which the text does not visualize, but the omission is palpable as only Paul’s homes are described.

The global connections *Get a Life* does portray are through Paul’s sisters: Susan “married an ostrich farmer [who] bec[a]me unexpectedly prosperous due to the worldwide demand for low-cholesterol steaks... , and Emma is a foreign correspondent [and] lives in South America” (35). However, this global imaginary highlights connections of sameness rather than difference.

Friction of “awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (4), as Anna Tsing defines, is the starting place for a planetary sense of environmental community making because they “serve as a departure point for understanding different experiences and practices that have become detached from place” (Heise 55).

Difference in the text always remains just out of view or on the margins. The concerns of rural blacks or black empowerment are only brief notes in Paul’s projects. For instance, as Paul finishes the “final objection to the mining project,” he and his colleagues briefly consider the conflict for rural blacks, who have been offered money from the mining company, but the mining will destroy their dunes and habitats where they live (146). The meeting concludes by focusing on bringing in some “high-profile party of save-the-earthers” to get attention for the project (146). Thus, the projected image of this environmental grievance won’t be the community most affected by it. Cultural and ecological networks that shape daily life are “imbricated in larger networks,” but the characters only see the world within their network.

GROUND

The majority of the novel is set in the Johannesburg suburbs, with sprawling lawns, single-family white middle-class occupants and silent and barely visible black labor. Urban planning scholar Martin Murray notes that there are “fifteen homes to every 2.5 acres, three persons to a household...about half that of Soweto” (173). The population stands in stark contrast to the urbanized poor. However, more than unequal land distribution is “the invidious pattern of selective segregation [which] has evolved as the urban propertied elite have insulated themselves in fortified workplaces, enclosed shopping malls, gated residential communities, and high-density townhouse cluster developments, protected from the outside world by physical and

semiotic barriers” (Murray 176). There are only a handful of settings—the garden, Mexico, the Black eagle sanctuary—described in detail in the text, which can partly be explained by the novel’s intense concentration on the character’s interiority, but it is also a symptom of the characters’ myopia, their focus on a certain kind of life lived in the suburbs. In order for this kind of life to be considered, borders have to be erected, but they are always shadowed.

One of the borders Paul maintains in the garden is between cultivated and the wild. Paul acutely observes how the suburbs are cultivated to the point of resembling humanity. One of Paul’s entrances to the garden is met with: “birds who ring out like mobile phones” and suburban “lawn worms [and] compost bugs feeding on cultivated flowers” (49). For Paul, the cultivated flowers of the suburbs “have no connection to the wild environments of his work where creatures ignore” you (50). Paul critiques the suburban lifestyle because every part of the suburban environment signals human intervention, which is antagonistic to the magnificence of nature, and thus, Paul establishes a boundary between wild and domestic landscapes. This separation pits civilization against nature and sets the stage for Paul’s reflection on the ten dams. The boundaries in Paul’s discourse supports the boundaries of the suburbs.

In the garden, the past and the present are neatly contained. The garden is Paul’s quarantine, but it also was where he was “banished to be got rid of by the preoccupations of an adult house” (49). Every time Paul enters the garden, memories of his youth come into view. Paul recalls “tussling contests and cricket runs, “experiment[ing] with mutual masturbation,” “climbing favored trees, moving over the exhilarated pace of somersaults, [and] pursuing the capture of a vivid grass snake” (49-50). Nature in the past is for the pursuit of timeless masculine recreation. The border around youth and freedom that Paul erects in the garden highlights how his present ecological standpoint is rooted and contained in his self-definition and identification

as middle-class male. By enabling Paul to have a clear grasp on the past, the garden becomes the staging ground for his visions of the environment.

Paul works hard to maintain the distinction throughout the novel. At the “half botanical garden for indigenous species, half wildlife protection habitat” of the majestic black eagles, Paul decries the experience of nature at a zoo (161). In zoos, Paul argues that “the caged eagle become[s] a metaphor for all forms of isolation, the ultimate in imprisonment. A zoo is a prison.” (159). Paul again and again needs to make the distinction between freedom that the wild allows and the artificiality and limits of civilization. Yet, the boundary between the wild and the domestic is constantly troubled. Knowledge gained in the garden, his memories of youth as well as his experience of isolation and recovery from radiation, lead him to believe/hope that the earth is this grand complex organism that can recover despite human activity and that it is outside of the human lifespan to know it. However, this conclusion calls into question his profession because if he is a “conservationist” here to “save the earth,” what does it mean if the earth doesn’t need saving? For Paul, the garden in one way reassures him of his view of nature, but then it puts doubt into the work he does, it creates doubt for the reader. Partly this doubt signals the contradiction inherent in the conservationist’s premise: there exists a state of nature with man outside of it, one in which there is continual renewal, but this is a false state. The borders become troubled by the way that memory and wilderness blind Paul to cycles of consumption and production. Paul’s failure to acknowledge what Vital notes as one of the text’s omissions around the “the consequences of human productive activity,” means that the real confrontations with globalization in South Africa can’t be apprehended (108).

Thus, *Get a Life* calls attention to the falsity of borders, which the structure highlights. The novel is broken into two: the garden quarantine and after quarantine. The first section is

slower with few to any events taking place. The image of Paul and his idea of nature comes closer into focus, but the text zooms out. The second is an onslaught of action from: Lyndsay and Adrian's trip to Mexico; Adrian's stay in Mexico and subsequent affair and move to Stavanger, Norway. Lyndsay's adoption of Klara, a three-year-old mixed-race girl infected with HIV. Shortly followed by Adrian's unexpected death and finally by the birth of Paul and Bernice's new baby. It might follow that what transpires in the garden, the way life is conceptualized dramatically affects all of the characters' decisions and actions in the second half of the novel. The second chapter's title, "states of existence," tries to imply that there is knowledge gained in the quarantine, and that there are distinctly known states of existence, but this conclusion is always out of reach.

While Paul's view of planetary change is rooted in conservation and ecological disciplines indebted to colonial and apartheid discourses, Gordimer does not portray Paul's views of the environment as wholly unsympathetic or him as totally unaware his point of view's limitations. This is part of what makes Gordimer's portrayal of Paul so different from Mehring in *The Conservationist*, whose perspectives were racist and without possibility for change. Periodically, Paul comments on the way environmental issues are connected with the problematic seizing of land begun during conquest and legitimated and extended during apartheid. When he thinks about Benni's offer to take him to a luxury resort in the bush to become reacquainted with nature, Paul criticizes the leisure industry's participation in continuing in indigenous land dispossession and development (56-57). Also, when he and his colleagues review one of their projects, in which an Australian company is applying to mine on a fragile ecosystem that is also where black farmers use the land for their subsistence, Paul considers

more than just the green or typical conservation concerns. Yet, Paul continues to privilege his ecological standpoint.

Get a Life's employment of free indirect discourse and focalized narration, suggests that Paul is self-conscious of his point of view. On the one hand, Paul poises himself as capable of interpreting nature's criticism when he hears the Hadedas "squawk[ing] derision" during a work visit with Thapelo (85). Paul sees himself as someone who is so connected to nature that he could interpret and stand up for the environment, and Paul calls on his childhood memories to legitimate his current profession and environmental point of view. However, Paul also acknowledges that the garden "resounds, echoes with the animation of its past" (83). The focalized narration signals that Paul is aware of the way the garden's past heavily signified with "small boys' fantas[ies]" colors the present (83). Paul's half awareness makes his character more sympathetic and likewise highlights the ambivalence of the text's message. Whereas Caminero-Santangelo reads the possibility of change in Paul's awareness, I would argue that the sympathy the reader feels with and for Paul is part of the problem that the text highlights. The violence of Paul's point of view cannot be quickly or easily villainized, it might even seem benign, but its shadows are broad-reaching. As Death points out, while some environmental justice groups have traction, there still remains a constant need to define "daily struggles over issues like housing, water, electricity, land, transport and so on...[as] environmental struggles" (1227).

COMPARING VIEWS OF ENVIRONMENTAL STRUGGLE

Get a Life, like Gordimer's earlier fiction, enables readers to "see the way relations of power and privilege are inscribed in the apparently innocent spatiality of the quotidian" (Barnard 59), and in doing so, it imagines a complicated terrain for South African environmental activists

to navigate, in which every environmental impulse is haunted by histories of uneven development and bear global connections without critical reflection. *Get a Life*'s motif of vision emphasizes the role humans have in the environment, and thus also considers the anthropocentric nature of ecology. Other South African texts thinking through ecology, such as Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*, question the study ecology because it inherits and maintains colonial systems of scientific enquiry and try to oppose it (Vital "Situating Ecology" 304). Coetzee's text pushes against what it means to be an ecological being, and in doing so is suspicious of how many South African environmentalisms are anthropocentric, which contradictorily "stresses the value of the natural while excluding nature from consideration in a history of social processes" ("Situating Ecology" Vital 313). In a 2012 review of recently published post-apartheid urban fiction, critic Meg Samuelson suggests that novels in the "apocalyptic register" can particularly "perform 'ecological thinking.'" Briefly summarizing Lauren Beukes's *Zoo City*, Henrietta Rose-Innes *Nineveh*, and Sifiso Mzobe's *Young Blood*, Samuelson proposes that these texts mediate on the way that nature and culture are interconnected in order to call attention to "the brutal disparities of contemporary urbanization" (Brawley 153), or what Mike Davis in *Planet of the Slums* defines as "[the] overcrowding, poor or informal housing, inadequate access to safe water and sanitation, and [the] insecurity of tenure" (qtd in Brawley 154). By exploring Jane Rosenthal's *Souvenir* (2004) and Lauren Buekes *Zoo City* (2010), my goal is to examine what kinds of ecological thinking emerges from reimagining the farm and the city and how undermining the binary pair contributes to the dialogue of the representations of environmental justice struggles in South Africa. Comparing Beukes and Rosenthal's texts with Gordimer's, I will work through the heterogeneous expressions of the environment authors use to resist ideological representations of the South African landscape.

Set in the Karoo in 2070, Jane Rosenthal's *Souvenir* (2004) imagines the devastations of global warming on South Africa. Tsunamis have wiped out coastlands and the interior is a desert. Characters are often described desperately seeking shelter from the horrific midday heat. The novel follows the title character on her dirigible as she traverses through the hostile, rural landscape, repairing wind turbines that provide energy for local farms. Souvie, as she is referred to, also traces the journey of her adopted father's sister, Aunt Jem. Reading often through Aunt Jem's journal, Souvie is especially observant of the flowers, as her Aunt collected clippings and planted trees and gardens during the year or so that Aunt Jem "was an artist turned farmer who'd gone off into the interior in a bakkie [a truck]" (18). While Souvie is a beautiful clone, her mother's affection for her drives her to connect with her family, and her name comes from the famous rose her Aunt often planted, the *Souvenir de la Malmaison*. Along the way Souvie looks expansively across the landscape: "Turning to look back, the whole length of the Tanqua Karoo lay below them, the hillsides an outrageous pinky mauve—the long distance effect of flowering purple vygies" (47). Souvie is not the only one who appears to be nostalgically invested in "bygone ways of life" amidst this "dystopian future" (Heise 5). Souvie meets Obed William, a state lepidopterist, who is also traveling the Karoo counting butterflies in his donkey pulled wagon. Obed Will, whose father was Nigerian and mother was Tswana, sees himself as "a gentleman-adventurer of scientific bent...modeled on explorers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries...he was dressed in manner of Le Vaillant or Lichtenstein" (35).

The text is not entirely critical of its characters' pastoral visions and adoption of scientific and Linnaean discourses, despite the fact that characters are not Afrikaner. While the science fiction mode highlights the deleterious effects of climate change, the text doesn't seem to adopt the recognizable counterpastoral strategies, like those used by J.M. Coetzee. In texts like *The*

Life and Times of Michael K, Coetzee overturns the mythic Van den Heever family farm and its occlusion of any other occupants by portraying Michael K “reclaiming displacement and tracklessness...working the land without owning or inscribing it” (Barnard 31), and in *Disgrace*, Coetzee critiques traditional associations of the city and country by depicting crime and the new black pleasantries. Instead, *Souvenir* follows Obed Will and Souvie and explores their budding romance on a predominantly idealized karoo. Nonetheless the novel’s attention to extinct baboons and spliced half dog baboons as well as the emphasis on Souvie’s survival through adaptation, suggests a reinterpretation and understanding of human’s relationship with nature.

Lauren Beuke’s *Zoo City* (2010), on the other hand, is set in an alternative present-day Johannesburg, where criminalization is made visible by permanently linking humans to animals, though there is a lot of slipperiness about the meaning of that relationship. The text follows Zinzi December, who has along with gaining a companion sloth, also received a mashavi, or spiritual power to find lost things when she unintentionally becomes involved in her brother’s murder. Zinzi uses her new talent to eke out a survival in the inner-city neighborhood of Hillbrow. Working to make ends meet, Zinzi helps to orchestrate fraudulent email schemes and locate missing things, and people including a missing pop star on the request of a ruff and reclusive producer, Odi Huron. By following Zinzi navigate city sewers, going to and from the suburbs, as well as her own dilapidated apartment building, Elysium Heights, the narrative remaps the city, and slum spaces are envisioned through the flourishing strategies of the people who inhabit them. Telling the stories of how people in Zinzi’s life become animal sheds light on the violent experiences of many present-day immigrants across Africa that seek refuge in the Hillbrow. For instance, Beniot, Zinzi’s lover has, been separated from his wife and three children due to conflict in the Congo, and he himself was a child soldier, acquiring his mongoose while

defending his family. The text disrupts “colonial productions of urban space by illustrating its multidimensionality” (Harrison 8), and by imagining animals in the city, Beukes disrupts the separation of nature and the city.

Both texts, engage in ecological thinking and resist ideological representations in the way that they portray the connection of nature and culture, explore human animal respons-ability and envision adaptation as not merely survival but flourishing, using Donna Haraway’s phrasing.

Zoo City brings nature into the city through natural metaphoric descriptions of urban infrastructure and its modern inhabitants, while *Souvenir*’s characters recollections of the past on rural landscapes works against the erasures of early pastoral narratives of empty untransformed landscapes. In *Zoo City*, gunfire is described as cicadas (59), car horns are ducks (140) sprinklers on suburban lawns hiss (102), “gates behave like rhinoceroses on roller skates, “the traffic takes on the rhythmic shush of a low tide,” (197), “data is like water—the spirits move through it” (191), and homeless teens live in “rat’s nests” (214). Language yokes nature and the city together. In the slums, we expect to see urban populations suffering, but using this metaphoric language, Beukes turns colonial animalization of people on its head and imbues naturalness into parts of cities that have been circumscribed as urban waste. Describing the sounds and actions of the city as akin to nature emphasizes not only the consistency of violence-experienced everyday, but also that nature is not out somewhere else. Simultaneously, many of the animal familiars are exotic creatures hailing from across the globe, but as Bradey Smith states “there is no Kruger Park...no sense of a wild expanse beyond the city that such creatures might call home” (349). The “zoo plague” or Acquired Aposymbiotic Familiarism emphasizes the inseparability of nature and culture.

In *Souvenir*, nature and culture are interconnected as the landscape is saturated with history. By retracing flower and tree cultivation from Aunt Jem's journals, Souvie documents how native and non-native flora and fauna have arrived: "she watched over the side as the road slipped away beneath her, half hidden by the spreading crowns of the flowering gums, dark green with a gloss of red where the new leaves were coming out. She pondered the fact that Aunt Jem had only planted along one side of the road so that strictly speaking it was not an avenue" (48). Souvie, as her name entails, is the flower, "a relic of the settler past" (19). Souvie also notes the survival of some trees despite the changes to the landscape from extreme effects of climate change: "the ancient trees and gardens had been planted to memorialize long ago wars, and had been kept alive by successive townfolk, despite the desertification of the interior" (70). Therefore, Souvie not only records local transformations, but also global. While the novel's use of science fiction enables Rosenthal to imagine the effects of climate change, significant environmental justice issues are portrayed flatly. Some of the farmers that Souvie meets are Khosian, but the text gives no explanation about how land redistribution took place in light of all of the present-day conflicts. It often cites acts like "Total Prohibition of Polymer Packaging Act," but doesn't explain how communities and landscapes are dealing with the overabundance of polymers that don't decompose.

Nonetheless, by exploring human animal response-ability, both texts interconnect nature and culture in order to think through the ethical treatment of humans and nonhumans and the ecosystems all beings inhabit. In *Zoo City*, the exact meaning of the animal familiars is intentionally blurry. While visiting the counseling center, the director Veronique articulates one of the circulating meanings of the animals: "It's very now. Global warming, pollution, toxins, BPA from plastics leaching into the environment has disrupted the spiritual realm or whatever

you want to call it, so, if you're Hindu, and you go through some terrible trauma, part of your spirit breaks away and returns as the animal you were going to be reincarnated as" (183). While the novel examines many dimensions of the affection between zoos and their animals, this one is significant because it connects the effects of the complex forms of human and animal engagements with the global effects of the Anthropocene.⁴³ Thus, the way that Zinzi and other aposymbiots, must move through life reflects enmeshed agencies. In the text, Zinzi worries about how the dire living conditions affect sloth: "Sloth blinks up at me sleepily from his roost, like a misshapen fur coat between the wire hangers. He's not good at mornings. There's a mossy reek that clings to his fur and his claws, but it's earthy and clean compared to the choke of stewing garbage and black mold floating up the stairwell. Elysium Heights was condemned years ago" (4). Sloth's nature is juxtaposed with the filth, but it is precarious as are many of the lives of the inhabitants. Zinzi and the sloth share a close connection so that when Zinzi is trying to resuscitate Benoit, Sloth places his hand on hers and when she is relapsing, he tries to swipe a drink away from her. The animal familiarity forces the reader to reflect on the entangled experiences of toxic urban environments.

In *Souvenir*, human animal responsibility is highlighted in the text's reflections on extinction and cloning. Obed Will as a lepidopterist counts the remaining butterfly species, and the amateur clone-farmers, the Van der bijls, as well as scientists in the city, try to save baboons by splicing their genes with donkeys. Souvie glimpses the werebaboons, as they are called, as one of the Van der bijls parades it through Sutherland, and Souvie's "skin prickling all over,

⁴³ Eugene Stoermer and Paul Crutzen (2000) define the Anthropocene as "the age in which human industry has come to equal or even surpass the processes of geology, and in which humans in their attempt to conquer nature have inadvertently become a major force in their destruction" (Haraway et al. 1). Haraway et al. in "Anthropologist are Talking" discuss the problems with the name Anthropocene because it simplifies multispecies engagements by emphasizing the Earth's present state is "the result of a species act" (5). Anna Tsing responding and agreeing with Haraway's critique emphasizes, "It is a bag of everything; it is the world of living things; it is all the mass and the matter, and the interconnection of everything on the surface of the Earth and in the water" (9).

some ancient limbic response. She felt confused, contaminated. Not for the first time she heard the revulsion, wondered if she were included” (69). As a clone herself, Souvie is sensitive to how the town reacts to the creature. Wendy Woodward suggests that the problematic clone species as well as the species at risk of extinction in the novel signal “the end of pristine nature” (343). On the other hand, Heise in *Imagining Extinction* argues “extinction discourses” often are elegiac or tragic narratives of decline in which charismatic megafauna, often photogenic butterflies, are used to elicit sympathy and action. However, Heise points out that the result of most environmental tragedies is conservation, which privileges only some species. *Souvenir* often tempers its nostalgia with the presence of Souvie, a strategy that sheds critical light on elegiac narratives. For instance, Obed begins telling Souvie that their current location in Laingsburg is a bit of a “lepidopteral desert” because of the presence of all the cloned butterflies. He quickly becomes self-conscious, saying: “I do map the clones—after all they have their place, have survived the global chaos—but I am most excited by mapping the old uncloned ones” (112). While *Souvenir*, obscures how communities’ change and the uneven distribution of the effects of the Anthropocene,⁴⁴ the novel productively uses cloning to question the kinds of narratives that environmentalist rely on to impel human concern.

Whereas Darwinism would explain adaptation and extinction as natural processes, *Souvenir* and *Zoo City* reexamine adaptation as a form of resistance. In *Zoo City*, urban outcasts, and the cities they live in, creatively flourish, or in Bueke’s words “improvise or [remix] themselves” (qtd in Dickson). Zinzi continuously performs different roles, journalist, addict, hustler, in order to navigate the city and find lost things. According to Dickson, Zinzi “alters her

⁴⁴ For Tsing, “anthropos” in Anthropocene does not refer to humans, but rather, “a particular kind of being invented by Enlightenment thought and brought into operation by modernization and state regulation and other related things” (Haraway et al. 7). Haraway prefers the term Capitalocene because it “insists a historically situated complex of metabolisms and assemblages...It takes a longer history...looking at slave agriculture, not coal...as a key transition” (“Anthropologists are Talking” 21).

dress, her posture, her way of speaking and writing...to gain access to the spaces, people, and information she needs (Dickson). *Zoo city* emphasizes the “available means that urban slum dwellers have access to” such as “barters, favors, crime and magic” in order to rework the city (Dickson). The animal familiars and the shavis or psychic talents that sometimes accompany them not only enable inhabitants to participate in informal economies, but the animals are also companions and as such point to the varying ways that communities of support are formed. Benoit tells Zinzi how he became animal after he finds out about her involvement in the 419 fraud email schemes. Benoit’s disappointment motivates Zinzi to change because his story is one of the scam lines. After she pays her debt, she sends out a warning to every email the scam reached. Following Zinzi’s transformations and connections between characters highlights how people are flourishing.

In *Souvenir*, the rose hedges, and Souvie as the rose, comes to signify how transplanted seeds and plants flourish in unexpected ways in dangerous places and times. Souvie “is impressed by” a 70-year-old hedge of roses that her Aunt Jem had planted which “had stood there in baking sun and cold snowy winters,” and the roses are not just thriving, but a “damp” and cool “barrier” for bees in “contrast to the heat (30). Aunt Jem herself is captivated by “how the roses came to these places...how skillfully, how lovingly the slips and cuts must have been cared for” (93). Like Souvie, a barbiolon made to be a sextoy, but adopted by her parents and cared for like a child, the text emphasizes that flourishing takes place when humans have empathy for natural processes as well as when what lies outside nature is included. The novel concludes with Souvie’s pregnancy and with optimism.

Both texts force readers to reflect on the interconnectedness of nature and culture and how colonial and imperial divisions obscure entanglements. *Zoo City’s* language makes nature in

the city more transparent and revises notions of urban waste. Beukes's text emphasizes the many forms of enmeshment through exploring companion animals and reflects on the ethics around humanness. *Souvenir* examines the history of the environment and challenges notions of pristine nature and its decline by reflecting on cloning. While *Souvenir* still occasionally deploys ideas of the Karoo as distinct from the city such as when Souvie worries about all the abundance the "megalopolis" will offer for Obed Will, the novel's illustrations of spectating climate change and cloning challenge rural discourse as well as prevailing narratives of concern.

Gordimer's portrayal too critiques anthropocentrism as it demonstrates the ways that communities come into view while others do not. Employing realism, Gordimer does not envision a mass environmentalism outside subject positions, but instead she calls attention to the mode in which the environment is grasped. Gordimer challenges whether ecology can be used as a form of scientific inquiry because of the impossibility of middle class scientists to use it to also attend to environmental justice concerns. Beukes and Rosenthal depict futures that bring attention to the significance of entangled experiences of the environment and question the kind of narratives environmentalist rely on. Using science fiction, allows Beukes and Rosenthal to perform ecological thinking and forefront the unequal relations linking human and nonhuman animals. While Heise claims science fiction "makes the present available for critique and transformation," she suggests in environmentalist writing "focusing on contemporary scenarios of pollution and social conflict as the material for futuristic visions" or "choosing real present-day places as the settings for disasters to come...forces [audiences] to perceive the present as a – mostly dystopian – kind of future" (9-10). Caminero-Santangelo contends that environmentalist visions should not be measured by "how close [they] come to (or how far [they] deviate from a single narrative of effective resistance to imperial processes creating unjust socioecological

geographies,” but rather by considering “how they contribute to productive but always limited visions of such struggle” (188). According to Caminero-Santangelo, then, the productivity of Buekes, Rosenthal, and Gordimer’s texts is best understood as part of the ongoing heterogeneous expressions of environmental struggle. They all call attention in differing ways to the “socioecological consciousness” and strive to reimagine environmental being in South Africa. Yet, while Gordimer points to the necessity to give greater consideration to environmental justice movements, if there is to be anyway to bridge the divide between poor black communities and animal rights groups, for instance, then the distance Gordimer highlights between humans and animals must be attended to. Both Buekes and Rosenthal’s texts investigate entangled experiences and emphasize these experiences as the starting point to learn how to engage, react to, and acknowledge suffering.

CHAPTER THREE

Caribbean Vitality: Entanglements of the Gardener and the Garden in Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*

“while we were
composing calypsos, dancing sambas,
and generally fooling around, he was
out there buying up not just all our

ground, but the very air we breath;
he’s rented our air spaces, taken
control of our seas and beaches;

underground he’s taken mining leases
and overhead he’s set up satellite dishes.
We all live in dread that we can’t

mash ants without his knowing. On top
of it all, he’s acquired rights (from
God knows where) to dump (if he wishes)
his garbage on our shores”-Olive Senior, “The Immovable Tenant”

“Still standing, looking out the window, you see
yourself lying on the beach, enjoying the
amazing sun (a sun so powerful and yet so
beautiful, the way it is always overhead as if on
permanent guard, ready to stamp out any cloud
that dares darken and so empty rain on you and
ruin your holiday; a sun that is your personal
friend.” -*A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid

The tourist’s gaze and value of rain Jamaica Kincaid satirizes, and Olive Senior’s critique of the sale of the very air Caribbean inhabitants breath, both show how tourist, colonialist, and capitalist views have constructed the Caribbean as a passive, timeless landscape ready for the taking. From the moment of discovery to the brutalities of the plantation system to dependence on the tourist economy, Caribbean landscapes and people have been isolated and perceived as static.⁴⁵ Vivid scenes in Stephanie Black’s *Life and Debt* (2001) depict how the International Monetary Fund loans and World Trade Organization policies have made ruins of many Jamaican farm industries. Long shots of landscape, divided into monoculture plots, Jamaicans laboring in the fields and with farm animals, are juxtaposed and repeated against images of unused produce,

⁴⁵ In *Roots and Routes*, Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues repeated stories of isolation have defined the Caribbean islands. Islands existed far removed from European centers. Colonialist discourse claimed islands as laboratories, edens, utopias, and spaces ready for settlement (8-9).

milk, and empty agricultural facilities. The ruins of industry, the absence of production, and surplus food going to waste all highlight the ongoing interpellation of the Caribbean environment in “economies of consumption and colonization” (Sheller qtd in Braziel 110). Ruins and monoculture fields are the marks of colonialist and imperialist trauma on the environment, trauma that disassociates nature from history. These sites attest to the destruction of soil quality and native species by the grafting of colonial order onto the landscape as well as the forced farming practices that focus on global exportation rather than local sustainability. The inextricable human and natural trauma is mystified in discourses of global economies and scientific inquiry.

Responses to the Caribbean’s fractured formation and passive figuring have taken many forms. In trying to express and repair the fracture between people and their environment, some Caribbean authors have sought to return to the land. Yet, this return is for a recovery of origins and is problematic because it keeps the fracture intact; it fixes nature and the garden in time and depicts it as a pristine refuge, thus repeating European narratives of the Caribbean as a Garden of Eden.⁴⁶ While the return to the land from exile may seem like a pastoral mode of writing only to be associated with Negritude⁴⁷, it also shows up in more contemporary Caribbean writing like Michelle Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987). Returning to her grandmother’s land after living in the US and London for many years, Clare Savage, the novel’s protagonist, sees her grandmother’s house, but also “nothing but the chaos of the green—reaching across space, time. When only Arawaks and iguanas and birds and crocodiles and snakes dwelt there” (Cliff 172).

⁴⁶ In *Second Arrivals*, Sarah Casteel highlights the way Haitian novelist, Jacques Roumain, in *Masters of the Dew* (1944) figures nature and the garden in the novel as “a refuge from corrupting outside forces”(137). The main character, Manuel’s discovery of a mountain spring symbolizes the recovery of “magical Eden...that will ensure the renewal of his people and bring about the genesis of a new Haitian peasantry” (137).

⁴⁷ In *The Environmental Imagination*, Lawrence Buell notes, “Negritude can be thought of as a pastoral mode because” it uses “nature-attuned myths” to enable someone “who has experienced exile” to express a desire “to return”(64).

Clare imbues the landscape with precolonial images of nature and people not bound by imperial domination. Viewing the graves of her family, Clare traces a connection to her family and the endurance of resistance: “obliterated...wrapped by wild vines which tangled the mango trees shading their plots, linking them further to the wild trees, anchoring their duppies to the ground” (Cliff 8). Clare bathes in the river on her grandmother’s farm. Here she recalls how her mother “felt about this place...it was where she was alive, came alive...the tree with the sweetest mango seemed her cherished goal...and she always managed to find it deep in the bush” (Cliff 173). Clare and her mother Kitty were “lost,” but bathing in the river, cleansing herself, allows Clare to reconnect to nature. Suddenly, “each bend in the river came back to her” (Cliff 174). Clare remembers the burial place of the slaves along the river, but the landscape is crystalized in her gaze. The guerrilla soldiers and Clare are able to rediscover “things that had been planted long before—before even her grandmother—which had managed to survive the density of the wild forest. Cassava. Afu. Fufu. Plantain” (Cliff 11). The landscape becomes a refuge, and thus it remains separate. As Yi-Peng Lai has noted, Clare’s view of the land is draped in nostalgia, “the recent neocolonial history of Jamaica is distant” (47). Imagining the land from “recreated memories” helps Cliff to construct diasporic identity, but it is dependent on seemingly pastoral configurations of the environment (Lai 47). Although Cliff cultivates resistance to colonial discourses in the landscape, by emphasizing history’s mark, nostalgia also makes the image of the environment more static, locked in time. In doing so, Cliff’s reclamation of the natural environment reproduces its own limiting boundaries. Diasporic identity finds an impossible place because Cliff’s landscape and botanical imagery remain freighted with a desire for origins on this land.

On the other hand, Glissant and others have imagined nature and the world landscape as an energetic process of becoming, related in rhizomatic and creolized patterns. Writers like Kincaid, Derek Walcott, and Kamau Brathwaite, disarticulate the construction of the Caribbean islands as isolated static Edens; “there is a dialect between land and sea” as DeLoughrey importantly notes (*Roots and Routes* 32). History, culture and the earth are not connected in one “primordial spot” but rather have “submarine roots...extending in all directions in our world through its networks and branches” (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 67). Distance and diaspora allows these Caribbean authors to reimagine relations between nature, culture, and humans. Whereas some writers such as Olive Senior and Lorna Goodison have been characterized as inverting and refracting symbols of nature through a “dialogic process,” Glissant, Patrick Chamoiseau and Kincaid emphasize the active role that nature plays in shaping identity and history (Tiffin “Replanted,” 149). Throughout Glissant’s writing, he emphasizes man’s place in nature (*Caribbean Discourse* 73). Jana Evans Braziel argues representations such as Walcott’s Soufrière in *Omeros* and Kincaid’s *The Autobiography of My Mother* perform “ecocritical resistance” (111) because they envision humans in symbiotic relation to vibrant, spawning, and dynamic worlds, in which there is “eruptive potential” for creating future alternatives to disaster (121). The Caribbean environment in these texts is not a recovered magical Eden, but rather a hybrid, changing, plural space of interrelating.

Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996) extends the possibilities of understanding and seeing nature’s role as an active participant. Set on the fictional Caribbean island, Lantanacamara, in the town, Paradise, *Cereus* moves through several layers of storytelling in order to describe the traumatic life of Mala Ramchandin. Tyler, the gender queer nurse caring for Mala at the Paradise Alms House, takes it upon himself to tell Mala’s story of incest,

seclusion, and gothic infamy. Tyler is both a very observant narrator constantly portraying himself as aware of other's expectations and observations, while simultaneously he struggles self-consciously to only tell her story: "The temptation is strong, I will admit, to be the romantic victim. There is in me a performer dying for the part, but I must be strict with myself and stay with my intention to relate Mala Ramachandin's story" (15). Tyler feels impelled to relate Mala's story because villagers have long suspected her of murdering her father. When Mala arrives at the Almshouse, she does not speak; she only makes bird and insect calls. Tyler's complicated negotiation of piecing together Mala's story and finding his own identity invokes the Caribbean's troubled and often untold histories as well as the impossibility of communicating the Caribbean condition.⁴⁸

Mala's story unfolds piecemeal and interwoven with the present. Most action takes place in the past at her house in her garden-yard. As a young girl, Pohpoh (Mala's childhood name), is first pictured caring for flora and fauna with one of her childhood friends Boyie (Ambrose). She saves snails from schoolyard games, and is told by her mother's friend and lover Lavinia that protecting a snail will "ensur[e] the fullest protection of the benevolent forces of the universe" (54). Following her mother and Lavinia's botched escape with her and her sister, Asha, Mala becomes isolated in the garden and her house. Mala runs back into grab her bag of shells and clipping of the cereus plant, and is subsequently caught by her father. Chandin sequesters Mala and her sister and inflicts nightly sexual abuse upon Mala. After training to be an entomologist in the Shivering Northern Wetlands, Ambrose returns and visits Mala, where for a short time, the

⁴⁸ The moments when Tyler acknowledges his narratorial role echo similar moments in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and thus also evoke Jean Rhys *Wide Sargasso Sea*. These canonical hauntings in narration are further complicated by Mootoo's rearticulation of Caribbean environmental imagery. In Casteel's "Marvelous and Gothic Gardens," she highlights the moments in Mootoo that evoke Rhys and Brontë, like the moment of discovering Chandin's corpse which she reads as "an ironic replaying of *Jane Eyre*, Mala is a beastlike Bertha to Ambrose's Rochester, subhuman in her violent frenzy" (149).

garden and its insect inhabitants help Ambrose and Mala to imagine a future. When Chandin discovers their relationship, and in a conflict with Ambrose and Mala suffers an irreparable injury, Mala fortifies herself in the yard, where she stays enraptured by blossoms, birds, and intoxicating aromas of decay.

Mala inhabits the yard. She gathers and arranges snail shells into “neat line[s],” but she is not the curator of the backyard. Mala’s experience of and with her yard questions the dichotomy of gardener and garden. From the onset Tyler describes her as having a “curiously natural smell;” she smelled of “rich vegetable compost” (12,11). Over the course of the novel, odor becomes a vehicle of the coemergent forms of vitality and agency, which thus transforms the bifurcation of the role of gardener and garden to illustrate nonhuman vitality and power. Mala collects shells, insects, and flowers for her backyard garden, but her collecting is in juxtaposition to her childhood friend and lover Ambrose and his scientific study of insect life. Insect illustrations scattered throughout the text call into question the scientific gaze. Thus, Mootoo’s text explores how entangled portrayals might modify the static and passive construction of the Caribbean and the roles of the gardener and the garden.

In this chapter, I will investigate what the entanglement between Mala and her garden reveal. Imagining resistant assemblages, Mootoo extends Kincaid and Glissant’s characterization of nature. Following the way Mootoo portrays action as dispersed amongst and between many in the garden, I argue Mootoo imagines gardening as more than rewriting of history into the landscape or the labor of making identity, but rather an environmental praxis that transforms human-animal interaction. If the plantation system, indentured labor, and the moment of discovery tore people from the landscape, then Mootoo figures gardening as a way to mend that alienation. Gardening is only not about defining the role of the cultivator. Instead Mootoo,

emphasizes the vibrancy and activity of a landscape that has been produced and disregarded by capitalism. She makes community with decay and overturns discourses of rubbish. Locating action outside the human subject and portraying Mala as “surviving collaboratively” with her environment as they all “learn skills for living in ruins,” Mootoo’s garden writing reconfigures how knowledge is perceived and community is formed (Tsing, *The Mushroom*, 5).

US discourses of gardening typically envision gardeners as actors, but Mootoo’s text works against this narrative. In Pollan’s *Second Nature* (1991),⁴⁹ in which he reflects on U.S. nature writing and environmental thought, he asserts that the garden is a starting place to establish an environmental ethic because the garden has to do with “man *in nature*” (225). In ten notes, Pollan lays out how he thinks the garden can provide answers to combat the wilderness ideology, or the idea that nature stands outside of human history and action.⁵⁰ He focuses on the gardener’s perspective and what the gardener can do:

2. The gardener learns to play the hand *he*’s been dealt.
3. Garden may sound like a hopelessly anthropocentric concept, but is probably one we can’t get past.
3. The gardener doesn’t waste time on metaphysics—on figuring out what a ‘truer’ perspective on nature (such as biocentrism or geocentrism) might look like.

⁴⁹ In Sarah Casteel’s *Second Arrivals: Landscape and Belonging in Contemporary Writing of the Americas*, which examines postcolonial pastoral and New World garden writing, she compares Kincaid and Pollan because both write about gardening as a way to “recover remembered landscapes” (Pollan 40). Casteel argues: “This mnemonic function of the garden contributes to the articulation of diasporic identity in both Kincaid and Pollan’s New World garden writing.”

⁵⁰ William Cronon highlights in his now canonical essay “The Trouble with Wilderness” that removing humanity means that there is no way to live with nature. Humanity cannot intervene in environments it has contributed in creating and moreover the separation makes recognizing nature more difficult because, for instance, the tree in the forest is so opposed to the tree next to the apartment complex.

4. *he* recognizes that *he* is dependent for *his* health and survival on many other forms of life, so *he* is careful to take their interests into account...*He* is a wilderness advocate.
5. The gardener tends not to be romantic about nature.
9. The gardener feels *he* has a legitimate quarrel with nature—with *her* weeds and storms and plagues, *her* rot and death.
10. Nature is apparently indifferent to *his* fate, and this leaves *him* free—indeed, obliges *him*—to make *his* own way here as best *he* can.

(227-233, italics mine)

These samples from the notes construct the persona of the gardener. The gardener is masculine and the earth is feminine. The gardener looks plainly at his garden, and the gardener directs, leads, and cares. Pollan's focus is on how the gardener sees his work in relation to Nature. Every note details what the gardener does. Nature, although, revised from earlier romantic and atemporal formulations is still a thing to be manipulated. Pollan's description is significant because it self-consciously acknowledges the long relationship humans have had with influencing nature, and it works hard to bridge the distance that the idea of wilderness creates, but by solely considering how the gardener should act, even if it is in imitation of nature, Pollan's focus fails to recognize the agency and power in nature; nature remains a passive construction despite his attempted rehabilitation. The gardener makes the garden, and Pollan's description relies on neoliberal individualism.

Guides to gardens in the Caribbean like Polly Pattullo and Ann Jno Baptiste's *The Gardens of Dominica* do not question the role of the gardener either. Gardening is "management," they suggest, whether "at a high altitude on volcanic soil" or in a "costal garden

on limestone deposits” (7). Gardening for many Dominicans, they suggest, describes cultivating “any piece of land” (7). The history of gardening that Pattullo and Baptiste narrate elevates and emphasizes how the indigenous Amerindians were the first gardeners. They also call attention to how many gardens, “today, more than ever, the subsistence agriculture of the *jardin Caribe* provides an assurance of food supply and nutritional stability which the fluctuating cash income of the neo-plantation economy of the banana industry cannot,” quoting historian Lennox Honychurch (8). Recalling the maroons, Caribs, and slaves’ art of subsistence farming and plant knowledge, Pattullo and Baptiste provide a resurgence narrative against the plantation system. Nonetheless there is no sense in which the gardener *acts with* the garden. Pattullo and Baptiste underscore stories of survival through cultivation on “unfertile” areas such as “the steep slopes and foothills away from plantation estates” (9). Pattullo and Baptiste practical gardening guide marks a problematic gap in environmental relationality of gardens and gardening between fictional-philosophical representations (e.g. Walcott, Glissant, and Kincaid) and writers with environmentalism’s charge.⁵¹

Instead of reinvigorating the human role through integration, Mootoo’s image of the yard and garden as an assemblage highlights the vitality of nonhuman nature, and the tangled forms of relating. Pollan’s image of gardening, in many respects, follows traditional designations of labor; however, as Tsing contends, “life requires the interplay of many kinds of beings” (vii). New materialism, or vital materialism, reconceptualizes agency and power: “agency, is not...exclusively associated with human beings and with human intentionality, but is a pervasive and inbuilt property of matter” (Iovino and Oppermann 3). Causation is far more complex and

⁵¹ Baptiste, who also owns an ecotourist retreat in Dominica, has suggested in a piece in *Islands Magazine*, that her retreat offers “naturalist garden walks and bird-watching” because her mission is to “stay pure and nonintrusive and gentle. We want to keep the island pristine” (128).

“reality emerges as an intertwined flux of material and discursive forces” (Iovino and Oppermann 3). As Jane Bennett, in *Vibrant Matter*, suggests: “the world is a dense network of agencies” (13). By acknowledging how human and nonhuman agencies are enmeshed, dichotomies of mastery are broken down, and alienation through objectification is replaced with entanglement. Thus, capitalism is not overturned by images of active free agents, but rather the notion that Donna Haraway describes as sympoiesis: “Critters—human and not—become with each other, compose and decompose each other, in every scale and register of time and stuff in sympoetic tangling, in ecological evolutionary developmental earthly worlding and unworlding” (*Staying with the Trouble* 97). Figuring the time of multispecies becoming, Haraway contends that “nothing makes itself” and that every critter is knotted in “diverse intra-active relating in dynamic complex systems” (*Staying with the Trouble* 58, 60). Bennett describes this as multiplicities: “there are always in play many, overlapping, and contesting pulls (and thus also pushes), operating through and across bodies, bodies that are themselves in constantly varying states of activity and passivity” (“Of Material Sympathies” 243). Following new materialism, then, stories of gardening must emerge not through the privileging of one human agent over another because the results are static, rather they must be dynamic stories of becomings and beginnings, in which bodies belong to ecological assemblages. They must be stories that will enable sympathy, empathy, and knowledge, and where “situated violences” and “refuges of biodiversity” (like the slave garden, as Haraway contends) can displace and reformulate each other (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 60).

RE-ODORING LANDSCAPE

In *Cereus*, the trope of odor not only calls attention to the agency and power of matter, but also portrays an assemblage that contradicts passive constructions of the Caribbean environment. Smell, Tsing argues, is: “a sign of the presence of another, to which we are already responding. Response always takes us somewhere new; we are not quite ourselves any more—or at least the selves we were, but rather ourselves in an encounter with another. Encounters are, by their nature, indeterminate; we are unpredictably transformed” (*The Mushroom* 46). Smell inevitably tells entangled stories because smell is an encounter; neither bodies are passive and importantly, smell is not only a human trait. Catriona Sandilands, a critic who reads Mootoo as an example of feminist ecocritical thought, notes “plants often detect each other” through smell (99). Smelling is significant throughout the novel. *Cereus* focuses on two provoking scents: the intoxicating cereus blooming and the miasma of decomposition and filth.

Smell propels action in the text, and it most clearly coalesces in the scenes of the cereus blooming and the discovery of Chandin. On the night of its blossoming, the cereus sends its “dizzying scent high and wide into the air” (134), and compels “pairs of lovers” to stop in front of Mala’s house. But it is not only the town inhabitants drawn to the yard. The cereus’ intense and steady scent was also an “urgent call to insects and bats to find and pollinate the flowers” (138). All are drawn to the yard where Mala sits. The scent is not just for human enjoyment, but rather enmeshes human and insect desire. The flower acts on and through varying species. Nature is not other and passive to human desire, but dependently interwoven. Watching the night, Mala is transported through her memory. Mala, seeing herself as Pohpoh, recalls one of her young nightly adventures where she saw and was entangled in the perfume:

The acidic smell of bird droppings contrasted with a stronger, very sweet odour. Among the bushes was a single cereus plant... With the force that comes from a broken fire hydrant, the cereus blossoms spewed heavy perfume in the air, luring the thousands of moths and flies whizzing by, colliding and humming so loudly that an ominous drone hovered in the air around Pohpoh's face... The scent of the cereus with its two edges—one a vanilla-like sweetness, the other a curdling—so permeated the air that she could taste it on her tongue as though she were lapping it from a bowl. (153)

The cereus compels nocturnal pollinators to drink its nectar, but the flower's heavy fragrance draws Mala too. All bodies are lured to the flower, and Mala/Pohpoh's attention to the insects' attraction exceeds the definition of the flower outside of the meaning evoked by her memory and identity.⁵² The cereus is not just a plant that is significant to her because of the cutting that Lavina initially gave to Mala, rather many in enmeshed networks of relationality experience its power and aliveness. Mala/Pohpoh is at once her present and past self, divided and together. She is like the moth, but also watching the moth. The opposition between her, the moth, and the flower blur.

Mootoo portrays a complex performance among Mala/Pohpoh, the lovers, the cereus, and the moths. The emphasis on multiple senses complicates desire and identity boundaries. Smell also compels action forward in the discovery of Chandin's body. Otoh gains knowledge slowly as his body is overtaken by disgust. Otoh returns to Mala's yard to deliver a package from Ambrose, and the "remnants of last night's fullness now souring in the heat. Replacing the perfume was an even more startling one that seemed to emanate from the wall behind the blossoms... appeared to be the full-bodied foulness of an overflowed latrine" (154, 153). The

⁵² Casid reads the cereus blooming as a "carnival of unruly queer networks of desire" (xx).

scent, again, blurs time and entangles memory as the latrine smell reminds Otoh of “his grandmother’s house, down by the edge of the cane field” (153). The ruins of the plantation agronomy and the accompanying slave provision grounds haunt the yard. At once, the loss and exploitation of the land and people are evoked even in the mention of the cane field, as well as the slave gardens that according to Haraway: “provided crucial human food, but also refuges for biodiverse plants, animals, fungi, and soils” (*Staying with the Trouble* 206). Otoh’s individuality is obscured as Mala and the smell lead him toward Chandin’s body because Mala believes she is leading Ambrose to Chandin to show him they no longer need to be afraid. The miasma, “quickly grew nauseating. Within seconds the contents of his stomach rebelled, rising, twisting, and turning. The combination of odours and the heat made him dizzy. The stench made him want to drop his package, gramophone and all, clasp his stomach, hold his breath and run as fast as he could back out of the yard” (154). The smell intensifies, “an odour far more intense than that under the house burst out like a gaseous belch, knocking him back onto the carpet of dust” (162). The foul sublime the decay enacts on Otoh contorts his body. It stops his breathing and turns his stomach. Using odor to move action through this sequence transforms the dynamic between Otoh, Mala, and the yard.

Sarah Casteel reads Otoh’s visits to Mala’s yard as evoking exploration narratives. She notes the presence and disturbance of renaissance discourses of the marvelous and the rhetoric of wonder. Yet, Otoh can never normalize his experience through these registers, and Casteel argues, Mootoo’s decaying yard employs gothic dystopian imagery to highlight the “trauma of declining empire” haunting the yard (149). Following the motif of odor, I argue also evokes and critiques colonialist narratives of exploration because it shifts power from the explorer seeing and absorbing the landscape. As my reading of vision in Gordimer’s *Get a Life* highlights, seeing

claims, seeks control, and emanates from the human observer. Instead, of *seeing* Chandin and knowing his death, which might transfix meaning from the observer, smell questions and reframes power, agency, and knowledge. When the police arrive and it appears that there is a sheet covering Chandin's body, the visual knowledge is undermined because it is a blanket of moths. The transformative power smell embodies challenges passive constructions of the environment and postcolonial inhabitants.

As a complex site of causation, smell transforms bodies and memories. During the scene in which Mala and Ambrose make love, it is the smell of "coconut oil" on Mala's scalp that enralls Ambrose. He recalls dreaming as a youth of the smell⁵³ between Mala's legs "a hot mustiness with two different scents—balsa wood from the silk cotton tree that he used to make spinners with, and the ripened fruit of the cannonball tree" (217). Mala's "compelling odor" is the seat of Ambrose's bodily desire. Likewise, Ambrose's smell on Mala seals her guilt for Chandin. Smell in these moments ignites passion and incites rage; smell compels. It is the thing between Ambrose and Mala and Mala and Chandin that makes its presence known. Smell "enacts itself...in ways that are indifferent to human well-being" ("Of Material Sympathies," Bennett 240). Odor allows objects to exceed their status as objects. Thus, while the representations fight against desexualized natural images,⁵⁴ the smell in *Cereus* also invokes the transformative power of matter.

⁵³ Scientific researchers have confirmed that early life memories linked to scent remain with people throughout life. Initially noted in the literature of Marcel Proust. As *Psychology Today* author Christopher Bergland describes, in *Remembrance of Things Past*, Proust illustrates "how forgotten childhood memories are brought back into consciousness with their original intensity when the protagonist in his story dips a madeleine biscuit into a cup of tea." Researchers have tested the "Proustian memory effect" "to identify how the scent of a product evokes personal emotional memories and influences the appeal of a product to potential consumers" (Bergland n.p.).

⁵⁴ In Tiffin's "Replanted in this Arboreal place," she argues: "Jamaica Kincaid, Olive Senior, and Lorna Goodison deal directly with the complex cultural and representational history of flowers and implicitly or explicitly with the complex parts these played in the denigration of the local" (154). Tracing the imagery of roses and other plants in these writers, Tiffin argues that transformed desexualized botanical images of love recuperate "embodied sexuality" (155).

However, the odored affinities are always punctuated by violence. For Sandilands, “different forms of violence...texture the novel as a whole” (93). Sandilands argues that the comingling of the human and nonhuman in *Cereus* is “part of [a] complex web of violent affinities,” and “affections cannot be separated from the brutalities that gave rise to them” (93). Sandilands reads Mala’s connection with her garden as one that is made possible because they are all threatened and vulnerable. Violence informs the very fabric of *Cereus* and it can be seen in many forms beyond the plot. *Cereus*’s focus on entomology both through Ambrose’s choice to study it and the pinned images in the text all point to violent multispecies relationships. Before the story even begins there is an insect image. Following a blank page, Tyler’s opening words are superimposed over an image of a dragonfly and other insects punctuate the first paragraph. Some of the insect drawings are recognizable, and in doing so, the text invites the reader to pin down the name of the insect with anthro-, phallo-, eurocentric discourse, but the text never offers any clarification. Mala mimics the cricket’s song but never describes what the cricket looks like. While the images turn like hands on a clock, they are also static. The insects are not portrayed in flight, but rather stationary as they might be viewed in a textbook, and the insect life cycles, egg or larva, are not represented. Often the images fill the space between the endings and beginnings of sections of chapters, but sometimes they appear more frequently separating paragraphs, like when the cereus blooms, there is an image every page, yet when Mala and Ambrose consummate their love and Chandin discovers their relationship and is killed, there are no insect images. The images play an important role in highlighting the closeness of Mala and language with nonhuman life. Mootoo’s unnamed illustrations both evoke and skirt reader’s scientific gaze.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Casteel also notes how the images: “small line drawings of various species of insects scattered throughout the text playfully evoke the illustrations that 19th century naturalists habitually included in their diaries and publications” (142).

The text tries to invite the insect presence into storytelling, but by figuring Ambrose's interest in entomology it also directly reflects on human and insect violent enmeshment, and capitalist designations of space and beings. Ambrose is able to fund his entomology studies by promising the Revered that he would "return and work as a good Christian in the ministry of agriculture" (199). However, Mala quickly asks: "You goin to work in the cane fields, Ambrose?" to which Ambrose replies: "I got him to agree that I would work in the area of tourism" (199). In this quick exchange about Ambrose's future career nature's value moves from childish fascination to speculating on the value of "spider silk" and ecotourism. Nature's value outside of Mala's yard is only wonderful to "foreign visitors" (200). Continuing her reading of the discourses haunting the text, Casteel argues that figuring Ambrose's interest in ecotourism, "identifies continuities between natural scientific discourse and the tourist gaze, in particular their reliance on the rhetoric of wonder" (142). Connecting them underscores the violence that remains in neocolonial relations and environmental definitions. Mala's entanglements are juxtaposed against Ambrose. Ecotourism, which is predicated on conservation, still relies on deploying mechanisms of observation that will continue to obscure the history of violence and dispossession.

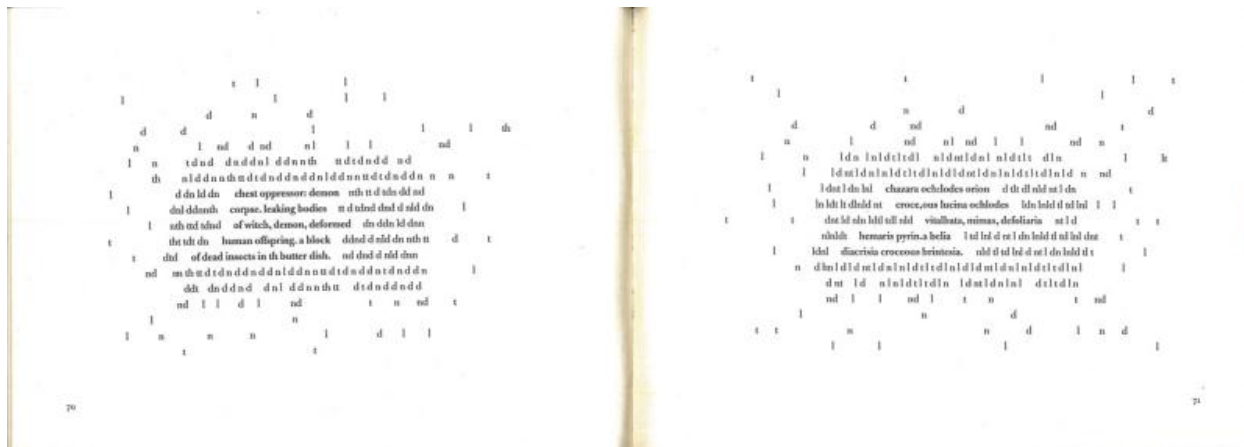
To better understand *Cereus*'s deployment of entomology, it is helpful to compare it to another text that mediates on lepidoptery through images in the text and textual images. Canadian poet Angela Rawlings *Wide Slumber for Lepidopterists* (2006) explores the intercorporeal violence of rape, colonial settlement,⁵⁶ language, and scientific study by inhabiting and making strange lepidopterist descriptions of moth life cycles. Rawlings overlays human

⁵⁶ Focusing on the way the poem "unites the gothic uncanny with real concerns" about colonial exploitation of the environment," Sarah Groeneveld argues in "Unsettling the Environment: The Violence of Language in Angela Rawlings' *Wide Slumber for Lepidopterists*" that the text works against the "colonial enterprise of 'fix'[ing and pinning] cultures, languages, and literatures in problematic ways" (147).

sleep with the moth life cycles, from egg to chrysalis. The lepidopterist vocabulary is paired with sleep stages so that the section “egg” is linked to “insomnia,” and “egg larva” to “dyssomnia” and so on. Throughout the collection there are illustrations (drawn by Matt Ceolin) of moths, wings, jars and other things, which the concrete poetry parallels (dual jars 56-57); however, the word images are not always recognizable as sometimes words and letters are scattered across the page in unknown shapes. The distance between the textual and the representation is further distanced and deconstructed by Rawlings performances of the text. Each time Rawlings reads the poetry it is slightly different and there is some degree of improvisation. The text’s emphasizes breath and spoken language. The text opens with a repeating poem of “a hoosha ha” that could either be labored breathing or the sound of wings. According to Lynn Keller, Rawlings’ textual designs, on the one hand, are an example of “using language as bioform, making pages into butterflies,” and on the other hand, the distance between text, image, and breath also highlights, “the textually mediated character of our knowledge of butterflies, the distance between representation and the living animal” (n.pag).

Yet, much like *Cereus*, Rawlings enmeshes human and insect transformation in violence when the poem evokes pinning a specimen and rape. In the section titled “Narcolepsy” the poem reads “pin leg. Chew waste or rest. Part/ and partners lips. Push labial vibration across leaf,/across membrane. Spit dew. Spin waste with hand and in and/ turn” (Rawlings 30). The words resonate across insect and human bodies, and purposely avoiding distinction bridges

forms of violence.



(70–71), Matt Ceolin (illustrations), published by Coach House Books, 2006

In darkness, pain, and pleasure *Wide Slumber* disturbs the boundary between human and animal bodies. The images and the text emphasize the shared vulnerability or “sensation of being” (Elizabeth Costello qtd in Keller, n. pag). *Cereus* and *Wide Slumber* both use images to draw attention to the violence of colonial and scientific discourse, but *Wide Slumber*’s images and textual representations are actively resisting interpretation and legibility. There is a sense of aliveness with both breath and image. On the other hand, *Cereus*’s images invoke stasis, which is juxtaposed to the activity of the yard and odor moving characters. For Sandliands, the affinities in *Cereus* are “sometimes painful, sometimes destructive, and sometimes even deadly because they are configured through and in the midst of proliferating brutalities” (96), but they also offer “possibilities for a redrawn understanding of human and ecological community” (101). Both texts emphasize that ecological assemblages are predicated on histories of violence, but through examining the mechanisms of sight and technologies of violence, specifically, relationships based on knowledge gained by killing, collection, and categorization, new possibilities can emerge in both Mootoo and Rawlings.

DISMANTLING THE GARDENER

As the trope of smell reveals, the flora and fauna of Mala's garden disrupts characterizations of passive landscapes. By emphasizing the way that action and movement emanate from multiple bodies, Mootoo's garden becomes a powerful site of resistance. Mootoo transforms the role of gardener in her use of language and cultivation, and thus, imagines gardening as a radical environmental praxis.

Mala throws off the yokes of interpellation when her verbalizations transform from "lexically shaped thoughts" to feelings that corresponded with her surroundings: "she laughed, sometimes as quietly as a battimamselle flapping its wing tips against water in an old drum, or as raucously as a parrot imitating her imitating it" (127). Mala's behavior ignores human social decorum, but she is not just mimicking the animals she observes. Underscoring the reciprocal nature of Mala's sounds breaks down the human animal boundaries defining Mala's identity. Helen Tiffin argues that Caribbean writing often counters colonial representation in the garden because flora and fauna carry significant "symbolic freight" ("Man Fitting" 202). As Kincaid in *My Garden (Book)*: emphasizes, Linnaeus's act of naming plant species and creating a system wiped away the history of people and plants "from far away...so new names could be given" (122). Naming, Kincaid argues, is an act of erasing, "a murder...a spiritual padlock with the key thrown irretrievably away" (122). Language makes identifying and knowing the Caribbean landscape almost impossible. In writing the environment, Tiffin contends, Caribbean writers must engage the European imaginative ideals and representations and work through "the multiple visioning and matching and mismatching of imagination and embodied experience" ("Man Fitting" 210). Reading V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*, in which Naipaul/the narrator

describes his time in the Wiltshire countryside, Tiffin highlights the ways that Naipaul tries to make sense of the Wilshire weather and trees. The landscape has been so imbued by representation; it is hard for the narrator to understand what he is seeing or how much he can see. Wordsworthian images, fairy tales and “root meanings of English words” filter his experience of this place and his reflection on his “tropical island” (209 & 210). The representations do not just haunt, they also blind and bind. Naipaul, according to Tiffin, does not reverse the colonizer and colonized roles by surveying the English countryside; rather his experience illustrates the way “the intimate nature of human being in the land is not by ancestry or migrational adaptation but through...representation” (“Man Fitting” 212). Naipaul’s being in the English garden emphasizes the weight and burden of colonial representation and shows the way Caribbean writers struggle through.

While Mootoo’s garden is always already then freighted with the weight of representation, her depiction of Mala moving away from language is not just about gaining representational agency from the history of exploitation in the Caribbean. Rather the emphasis on Mala becoming-animal, in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s notion, disperses agency from a sole actor. The text names insect and animal species, but Mala is uninterested in the business of identifying. Mala lets “Aves, Hexapoda, Gastropoda and Reptilia...roam broadly” (128). She does only one thing: “every season she rummaged through the yard for carcasses of those fallen prey to natural causes and, with ritual grace, she facilitated an honourable disposal” (128). Mala’s only plans for her collection are to bring them to a room in her house. She collects the decay from her garden reversing the process of scientific discovery and cultivation:

Mala walked along the wall, negotiating webs and nests, pinning her new cache to the remaining spaces. The insects that had fallen crunched beneath her feet. They were fodder for a vibrating carpet of moths, centipedes, millipedes, cockroaches and unnamed insects that found refuge in Mala's surroundings. Death feeding life. (130)

Mala doesn't study her gathering; her pinning is haphazard, and what she has collected serves to nourish more life, though that is not her aim. Her collection is both an act of composition and decomposition. The insects and animals seem to be singled out by name, but they all end up in Mala's bucket or on the ground, bodies mixing and feeding. In portraying Mala performing the actions of an entomologist and a gardener, but subverting them by refusing to acquire knowledge, Mootoo suggests that postcolonial gardening, in which the gardener is part of an ecological assemblage, is an act of resistance. As my reading of odor suggests, the text focuses on action and while Casteel argues that "the mutability of the natural landscape" undermines "stable identities" founded on "a fixed relationship to place" (158 & 162). I would argue Mootoo's text not only redefines identity in displacement and works through problematic desexualized and heterosexualized images of nature, but also imagines a different relationship to being in and with the environment.

Thus postcolonial gardening in the Caribbean, for Mootoo, is about confronting representation and interpellation, but also about imagining diverse relating. Coetzee's *The Life and Times of Michael K* also imagines cultivation by deemphasizing the gardener as primary agent. Comparing the way that *Cereus* and *Michael K* focuses on refiguring relating between humans and animals as resistance to colonial regimes, calls attention to resistant postcolonial garden writing tactics that are utilized in both regions. *Michael K* is set in South Africa during

Apartheid. K, whose occupation is a gardener, returns to his family farm. K's garden highlights and rejects the European colonial past and the romanticized landscapes of the South African farm novel by blurring the barriers, especially those between the human and the animal. The garden and K's animal likeness are an opportunity to rethink the ways in which language, colonialism, and many other institutions have orchestrated a barrier. The text associates K with the animal through repeated similes. The first description of K's body remarks that his "lip curled like a snail's foot" (*Michael K* 3). At the work camp sleeping out in the open, K thinks, "I am like an ant," as he plunged his hands into the sand (*Michael K* 83). When the doctor tries to take K's wrist, he describes K's arm "waving like an insect's claw" (*Michael K* 135). The animal discourse is also a specter discourse as it evokes a history of treating Africans as an animal other, but in the garden, Coetzee uses K's animal likeness to reimagine the South African rural experience with the landscape. By describing characters like animals or by giving them animal characteristics, Coetzee and Mootoo work against alienation.

K always sees gardening as "part of his nature" (59). K is drawn to gardening more than he is to his own preservation. Sleeping at the abandoned farm, K aches "for dawn...the pleasures of digging and planting he had promised himself, impatient to be through with the business of making a dwelling" (99). K's garden flourishes and feeds rebels, but K himself starves. K gives himself entirely to the plants he tends. K desires absorption with the earth, not domination over it: "Like a worm he began to slither towards his hole, thinking only: Let darkness fall soon, let the earth swallow me up and protect me" (107). K's status is akin to animal, and the nature of his devotion and labor to the environment, forces readers to rethink that gardening is about bringing nature under control. K, unlike Linnaeus or the patriarchal archetypes from C.M. van den Heever's farm novels, does not try to possess the landscape. He desires to live completely with

it. Instead of considering his garden and his shelter as passing on to subsequent generations, K dreams of everything he has returning to the earth including his tools, which he hopes one day to be eaten by “insects...when one day he no longer needed them” (*Michael K* 104). Coetzee’s garden imagines the human and the animal joined together as a collective. Like *Cereus*, *Michael K* spends time portraying K’s gardening and agricultural practices. As I showed in my reading of *A Question of Power*, Afrikaner farm novels showed agricultural work only to the extent that it could legitimate ownership through devotion to the landscape. Postcolonial gardening labor in Coetzee, Head, and Mootoo, reimagines the relations between nature, culture and humans because they move beyond symbolic recasts and focus on material interactions. Whether Mootoo is read as moving from static constructions to fluid and hybrid or trying to imagine becoming animal, postcolonial gardening for Mootoo and Coetzee decentralizes singular identity construction and emphasizes relating to the environment differently.

Imagining dynamic and responsive relations of gardening, neither *Cereus* nor *Michael K* arrive at restorative or organic visions. For K, the possible escape into the animal other is always also impossible. Like the fences—which K is also continually involved with constructing (the work camp, as well as the one in the garden)—the simile keeps and constantly recalls the barrier between humans and nature. In doing so, Coetzee highlights humanity’s shared experience of what Giorgio Agamben has named carceral modernity.⁵⁷ The garden enables readers to see the ways in which these barriers indebted to colonialism continue to persist and orient humanity’s relationship with nature. In *Cereus*, the violence in the garden thrusts species together. In the process of Mala becoming the cereus, it is not so much “organic unity” as Mala discovering that through being treated like a snail a “violent affinity” might be gained (Sandilands 101). As both *Cereus* and *Michael K*, envision gardening as a method for becoming animal and understanding

⁵⁷ *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press, 1998.

semiotic and material entanglements, they both emphasize the entrenchment of boundaries and the violence of border-crossings. The final garden pictured at the end of *Cereus* is not Mala's, which is "different from the others. The plants arranged in any order" (176). Rather it is the orderly Almshouse garden, which only hints that changes might be possible with the unexpected effects of the cereus blooming coming soon.

Gardening for Mootoo doesn't reify the identity of the gardener; instead, cultivation is about community making that invokes the genre of the "yard novel," which Brathwaite associates with the figuring of a Caribbean sense of community (qtd in Radović 55). The "yard novel" according to Stanka Radović,⁵⁸ has no "central dominating consciousness" nor single protagonist, rather it is a "communal stage" for the "theatre of impoverished living," that enables audiences "to examine the role of poor housing conditions as they simultaneously impede and stoke the dream of self-possession and autonomy, material ownership, or ultimate escape" (Radović 59). Her readings of Roger Mais, Earl Lovelace, Naipaul, and Joseph Zobel, show how community making is about redefining the people in yard from being epitomized by the poverty and garbage that surrounds them and that evokes the Caribbean history of brutalization. The yard novel insists on "'humanness'" (Lovelace qtd in Radović 75). The "yard novel," like Head's gardens, seeks to resist discourses of rubbish. Through imperial operations the Caribbean has been, on one hand, figured as the Garden of Eden and on the other as a dumping ground for the ruins of industry and tourist waste. While the stench of Mala's yard incites repulsion, the descriptions emphasize the value of decay and garbage to create and feed life. Rather than constructing identity and identification with the landscape, Mootoo resists Western capitalist desire by following the yard novel's focus on imagining community with nature:

⁵⁸In Radović's chapter, "A House of One's Own: Individual and Communal Spaces in the Caribbean 'Yard Novel,'" she sketches the genre's development, and suggests that yard novels focus on how identity is formed collectively.

Mala's companions were the garden's birds, insects, snails and reptiles. She and they and the abundant foliage gossiped among themselves. She listened intently. With an ear pressed to the ground she heard ant communities building, transporting food and breeding. She listened to worms coiling arduously from place to place. She knelt on the ground and whispered to the grass and other young plants, encouraging them to grow, and then she listened as they stretched up to her. She did not intervene in nature's business. When it came time for one creature to succumb to another, she retreated. Flora and fauna left her to her own devices and in return she left them to theirs. (127)

Mala seeks identification with the environment that has also been the victim of colonization, and in doing so, emphasizes the intertwining brutalities of exploitation. The description of her gardening practices highlights her desire to be in association with the nature rather than its overseer. They speak with one another. Mala does not labor in the garden; rather she listens. Decay feeds life and the Mala's minimal arranging and collecting help to dispel negative associations of waste. The grotesque figures are those that invade the yard for profit. After arresting Mala, the police officers collect birds and section off the mudra to sell, and tell each other "that the size [of this mudra] would make each one [them] a rich man" (187).

Mala's gardening practices are resistant in ways that are very different, and perhaps more fluid and inclusive, from the way other Caribbean writers gardening practices have been read. On the one hand, in *No Telephone to Heaven*, Cliff figures "the labor of planting...the process of creating and recreating a landscape" as the way to construct diasporic identity (Lai 44). By cultivating "diverse cultural memories with agricultural images" (Lai 44), the land is reimagined

from memories to give displaced people a place, “and with primitive wildness reconstructed, regression to the landscape evokes the nostalgia for a precolonial locality” (Lai 47). Cliff’s gardening and the place of it continue to see nature as a refuge, no longer the static Eden envisioned by colonizers as they cultivate plantation history, but nonetheless an idea of wilderness and nature that is unchanging. On the other hand, Lorna Goodison’s poetry envisions oppression and exploitation as she writes about rural immigrants planting flower gardens in Kingston, imagining Jamaican gardens in the heart of Germany, and reflecting on the plant origins and plantation cultivation. According to Mac Fenwick, by privileging Jamaican words and language for flowers over English pastoral poetic representations, Goodison establishes “a sense of place that subsists upon the ruins of the imperial agricultural past rather than ritualistically transforming or redeeming the present” (441). Goodison ritually traces the violent history of plantation crops, and the ways that African forced labour unwittingly destroyed native plants and people. Constantly calling attention to the ruins of the plantation and strategies of renaming, Goodison tries to imagine another kind of belonging that invokes the Caribbean’s violent history. Bringing the past to weigh on the present plantings, Goodison situates Jamaican gardens in complicated histories and reclaims and renames plants for Jamaicans: “the silk pulp of Chinese hibiscus, crushed black shoes, /and zen-like bleeds to ink for penniless school children” (39).

CONCLUSION

Mootoo, instead, subverts the role of the gardener and focuses on sensorial action. *Cereus* highlights that “natural materials are irreducible to symbolic values; they are actors” (Bennett, “Of Material Sympathies” 48). Whereas many discussion of Caribbean resistant garden writing

have focused on the “labor of identity –and place making” (Casteel 118), and using strategies like “connecting plants to cultural memories” (Lai 45), or reframing the symbolic significance of crops and flowers, Mootoo figures community survival and vitality. Landscape is not just reconstructed from imperialism to show the residue of colonial history and the “entrenchment and endurance” of resistance (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 11). Survival in the ruins of capitalism for Mootoo means recognizing the way imperialism separates spaces and beings, and by imaginatively portraying “knots of diverse intra-relating,” Mootoo pushes the boundaries of environmental discourse in the Caribbean (Haraway 60). Mootoo’s course of action to repair colonialism’s rupture is not a return to the landscape with the intent to cultivate unfertile areas, but rather to reconfigure who the cultivator is and diminish the role they play in how all of life interacts. By imagining gardening, *Cereus* demands that the Caribbean is sensed differently and encounters between human and animal life lead to transformations, community, and survival.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reassembling the Caribbean: Counter-Mapping, Walking and Gardening in Patrick

Chamoiseau's *Texaco*

“To take the straight path was not the best way of getting to places, and if the traces twisted and turned through the woods, you had to twist and turn with them. . . . You had to take the traces, scramble their order with the irrationality of a runaway.”- Patrick Chamoiseau, *Aton d'enfance*

(Bygone days of childhood)

Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco* (1992) weaves notebook entries, authorial notes, memories of the narrator, and reflections from an urban planner to tell the history of survival from the squatter's perspective. The novel opens as an urban planner—Christ, the “angel of destruction from the modernizing city council” (25)—enters *Texaco*, the shantytown/urban mangrove/quarter, and is brought to the ancestor and founder, Marie-Sophie Laborieux, to be told its history before he “rationalize[d] space, and conquer[ed] the pockets of insalubrity” (26). Marie-Sophie's story begins with her Father, Esternome, following his movement from out of the chains of the plantation to Saint-Pierre and eventually to Fort-de-France. Wandering between City and country, Esternome goes to City in search of opportunity as the slave plantations fell apart and France decreed the abolition of slavery. Not wanting the City to “use him up” and leave him “soulless” to “live in the wind of days without yesterday and tomorrow” (120), Esternome chooses, for a time, to maroon in the hills. There, with his lover Ninon, Esternome believes “life will make tall yams grow in our garden” (121). In the poetic excerpt included from Marie-Sophie's notebooks, repeating the magical we “Noutéka” like an incantation, the novel

sketches a nourishing garden and the seeds of Texaco. I will begin by tracing *Texaco*'s image of gardening, and then analyze the botanical imagery throughout the text. In doing so, I will demonstrate how the trope of creole gardening is not as clearly figurative as it first appears.

Esternome tells Marie-Sophie going to the hills was about “*doing*” (124). In the hills they grew “good crops, all tangled up with each other” (128). Esternome describes “creole gardening”:

Mark the borders of your plot with crushed grass; plant some ruddy immortelle on top. First, plant the providence of the breadfruit tree. Reduce oil shortage by planting avocado. Mind the shade and the watering. Watch for the moon: the moon which rises makes all things rise with her, the moon which goes down flattens everything...Put up barriers against salt winds. Where the soil shivers plant thickets with roots like claws: sweat pea, local pear, rose-apple, orange trees. From far away this seems all due to chance; in reality, Marie-Sophie, it is fate's beckoning. You've got to read the landscape (128-129).

Moving fluidly between metaphors and gardening techniques, Esternome sketches gardening as living with the landscape. Gardening becomes a form of bearing witness to multispecies habitation. Esternome emphasizes how the landscape and the community must be conceptualized and lived together. Rebelling against the dictum of extreme order and control, the gardens and the community, terraced onto the back of the hills, flourish with “green tenacity” (130). Ninon teaches Esternome to “watch the growth budding in the ground” and “to live through [winter] by standing still in the middle of the garden or by the cliff in front of a landscape” (136). Month by

month the planting is recounted. Esternome recalls the cycle of the plants and growth of the nurtured garden, tended well by working with the landscape rather than taming it, according to plantation agriculture. Thus, Marie-Sophie tells: “My Esternome barely moved then. Crazy about the garden...he planted his soul there...he planted with perseverance: losing himself in the way the land exonerated him from the failures in City” (137). Cultivating in the hills for the first time allows Esternome to find success and freedom in place, where the promises of the city had failed. Esternome’s counterlandscaping helps him to recover from the plantation and factory-driven alienation. Using anaphora, Esternome inscribes a group identity on to land.

The garden of Noutéka Hills recalls earlier references to the slave vegetable gardening and the slaves’ expertise in cultivating where the Beké “had never thought of scratching the ground” (45). Marie-Sophie’s account emphasizes that the slaves were not just cultivating for themselves to “avert famine” (45), but they had an incredible depth of skill and proficiency. She highlights the invention of medicines to cure scurvy from “horseradish roots, barbane, cochlearia,” to treating tetanus with vinegar (47). Displaced by slavery but not without the ability to grow roots, plant knowledge not only empowers slaves, but also emplaces them and their labor in a landscape that is continuously alienating.

Botanical imagery surrounds the descriptions of many characters. Marie-Sophie’s grandfather, “the man who was to die in the dungeon,” had lips that “spoke like the humming bird’s wings” (40). Her grandmother’s pregnancy was “like a fern in the rain” (42). Esternome’s Mentoh⁵⁹ “was an old blackman of earth, neither very strong nor very tall, a round rigid head set over a box turtle’s crumpled neck” (51). Esternome “worked and marched without fatigue like a moth to the light” (60). The land slaves’ movement towards freedom is described as remaining in

⁵⁹ Translator Linda Coverdale of Chamoiseau’s *Slave Old Man* defines a Mentoh as “magician, healer, and spiritual guide, and in the hell of slavery, the plantation [mentoh’s] offered a vital, if tenuous connection to all that had been lost during the Middle Passage” (139).

“formation, standing over mud as best they could, a bit like those waterlilies of the blind marshland, you had to hold on, hold on, and moor the bottom of your heart in the sand of deep freedom, without noble gestures, just like a dry seed arrives on the beautiful alluvial lands riding the rain” (81). These botanical similes highlight the ongoing negotiation of relation. The botanical references signal the ways in which the slaves and their descendants relate to the landscape. Akin to the image of the gardening, the organic characterizations reflect how the landscape is a part of them and they are a part of it. It works to territorialize them.

Texaco's depiction of the creole garden, botanical imagery, and natural knowledge enables Chamoiseau to, as Eric Prieto suggests, propose a “creolist attitude toward the environment” (“The Uses of Landscape” 240). The creole relationship to the land and its culture stand in opposition to the “destructive monoculture of plantations” (“The Uses of Landscape” 241). Esternome's garden, like Marie-Sophie's *Texaco* and the hutches' creole gardens echo Glissant's creole Garden. In *Tout-Monde* (1996), Glissant uses the creole garden as a symbol of creole independence:

look at the creole garden, you put all the crops on such a little lick of land, the avocados, the lemons, the yams, the sugarcane...plus thirty or forty other species on this bit of land that doesn't go more than fifty feet up the side of the hill, they protect each other. In the great Circle, everything is in everything else. (555 qtd. in Prieto “Edouard Glissant” 119)

Prieto suggests that the creole garden is a “potent metaphor of cultural diversity” (119), as well as a creolist attitude to the environment to live harmoniously with nature. Exalted and planted as the trope of creole culture in the Martinican landscape, the creole garden and herblore highlight

the virtues of adaptation and survival at the center of creoleness.⁶⁰ However, I would argue the garden cannot be so purely symbolized. Anthropologist Liisa Malkki is skeptical of botanical imagery because it participates in the discourse of exclusion as it is often used to imagine place as a form of birthright or inheritance, like in the genre of the *plaastroman*. Also, Malkki argues botanical belonging can pathologize “territorial displacement” (31).

Likewise, in Casid’s readings of eighteenth-century Jamaican plantation maps and accounts, she identifies the tensions in depicting the slave garden. On maps, masters set slave gardens aside for the “slave’s own cultivation,” and this property would pass “to descendants or other fellow slaves after death” (198). While the slave garden enabled slaves to generate botanical knowledge, it also “root[ed] the slave to the place” (198). Also, the slaves’ approach to gardening, the “fluid, natural lines, assemblage, intermixture said to characterize slave gardening” (201), and which is often set against imperialist plantations, Casid argues was in fact also an important part of British picturesque gardens. Instead of rebellious assemblage, Casid suggests the gardens could be read as colonial mimesis. Reading the maps and accounts, Casid finds a “disturbing contradiction” that the counterlandscaping and counterknowledge of the slave garden “formed at once a symbol of the ideal colony and the ground of symbolic action both colonial and countercolonial” (216). The provision grounds offered slaves the “seeds of resistance,” but the imperial representations highlight the mimetic province of intermixture (212).

On the one hand, glorifying the significance of the garden enables theorists to contend that counterlandscaping can lead to empowering identity construction and radical

⁶⁰ In *Caribbean Discourse* (1989), Glissant envisions his principle of Relation in contrast and alongside creolization. Creolization for Glissant did not imply, to the extent he wanted, the process of cultural dynamic shifting, flux and transformation. H. Adlai Murdoch, suggests that “relation and creolization comprised twin sites of [Glissant’s] discursive valorization of a composite culture whose principles drew on the region’s constant and creative encounters and its insistent patterns of intersection, transformation, and exchange” (186).

representational practices, but it also problematically participates in the rooting of a relationship to imperial landscaping that negatively portrays movement away from place, akin to the tension in diasporic studies that Casteel identifies. According to Casteel, the two poles of diasporic studies have been “movement and sedentarism,” with their accompanying “spatial counterparts,” city and country (4). Casteel shows the way that some diasporic writers, like Kincaid, skirt the exclusionary politics of rural spaces is by inflecting flexibility into “reimagining the garden” (111). In this chapter, I will explore how Chamoiseau productively plays with the representational tension between rooting and movement, by examining the ways the text yokes mapping, walking, and gardening together. Engaging in walking, gardens, and cartography, *Texaco* works to transform spatial knowledge and memory and connection to environmental oppressions, like lack of access to food and squatter living conditions. While many readings of *Texaco* have emphasized the significance of survival strategies from gleaning,⁶¹ to the tactics of the débrouillardise⁶² or movement⁶³ to reveal Chamoiseau’s conceptualization of the creole communal identity, my reading will contribute to defining the creolist attitude toward the environment and bring closer into view the intersection of the peripatetic mode, remapping strategies, and garden writing. This intersection is especially significant for designating the way Chamoiseau’s representation is connected with other decolonial gardening representations, and I will use it to further clarify the Martinican response to assimilation in departmentalization.

For Chamoiseau, walking and gardening counteract colonial and imperial order and knowledge. By illustrating the way Esternome and Marie-Sophie navigate from country to city

⁶¹ See Harrison, Sarah. “‘Anything could turn out to be something’: Gleaning Slum History in Patrick Chamoiseau’s *Texaco*” in *Waste Matters: Urban margins in contemporary literature*, 2016.

⁶² See Tarica, Estelle. “Patrick Chamoiseau’s Creole *Conteur* and the ethics of Survival.” *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 13.1 (2010): 39-56.

⁶³ See Radović, Stanka. “Creole Language and Space: Entertaining Patrick Chamoiseau’s *Texaco*.” *Nottingham French Studies* 56.2 (2017): 139-150, and “Squatters in the Cathedral of the Written Word, Patrick Chamoiseau’s *Texaco*.” *Locating the Destitute: Space and Identity in Caribbean Fiction*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press (New World Studies Series), 2014.

and city to country, through and around Saint-Pierre and Fort-de-France, from hutch to hutch within Quarters, from Upper to Lower Texaco, Chamoiseau inscribes in the landscape creole communities' existence and living conditions. Following the uneven paths moves the marginal and liminal experience to center stage and highlights the importance of this way of surviving. Walking allows Chamoiseau to not only make arguments about resources and protest against planners, but to illustrate the experience, which the Urban planner learns and recounts: "the roots of a new identity: multilingual, multiracial, multihistorical, open, sensible to the world's diversity" (220). While Chamoiseau highlights the connection of the creole experience to the world, the focus of the peripatetic method is on the local community's existence on the ground; the text maps movement and reveals in its characters detours and digressions the multitude of stories about the same place. Rebecca Sonlit suggests in her introduction to *Nonstop Metropolis, A New York City Atlas*, that the process of map making is born of footsteps and opens up how the "physical, economic, visual, and social landscapes can shape those stories, letting some bloom, grinding out others" (12). The interrelatedness of stories echoes Glissant who postulates in the "The Unforeseeable Diversity of the World" that the detours of storytelling indicate the openness of relationality and moves audiences toward seeing history and culture as the result of a constellation pattern of filiation, in Susan Friedman's words.⁶⁴ While Chamoiseau's formulation of créolité has been criticized for employing "nostalgic essentialism,"⁶⁵ *Texaco's* emphasis on movement complicates the expression of Caribbean identity and attachment to place.

⁶⁴ According to Murdoch, Glissant knotted his vision of relationality to "the Caribbean experience of fragmentation and disjuncture in a framework that would give voice to its corollaries of diversity and hybridity" (186).

⁶⁵ In "Shadowboxing in the Mangrove" (1997) Richard and Sally Price, use Richard Burton's term to criticize Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé, and Raphaël Confiant, *Éloge de la créolité* (1989). They argued that the manifesto peopled Martinique "with a reified set of categories drawn from crosscutting kinds of schemata (class, 'race,' national origin, etc.)," and suggested that, from a broader Caribbeanist perspective, Martinique in fact "look[ed] anything but diverse (10).

Texaco registers European and French historical events through the effects on the inhabitants of Martinique. Esternome and Marie-Sophie's history takes precedence. For instance, the text mentions very little about the motivations of countries or leaders in Europe during the World Wars, except for a scant reference to Hitler. Instead it illustrates the impacts on Martinique's industries and imports and exports. Working in the homes of the "mulatto-born" Mesdames and Mesdemoiselles of City, Marie-Sophie watches the Messieurs go mad as their businesses, warehouses, and distilleries fail. Suffering and survival are constant features of City, the unregistered aftershocks of war rarely told.

The interspersed notes from the Urban planner or from Marie-Sophie's notebook demonstrate the multivocality of history and chronicles the Urban planner's slow realization about the growth of *Texaco* and the limitations of City:

The Creole city had not planned on the influx of people from the hills. It had been structured by military necessities, shaped by the import-export business... The Creole city did not inhale the workhands useful to its expansion, it simply suffered (while resisting) the shockwave of an agricultural disaster. Faced with the Creole city, the Creole urban planner must forget The City. (234)

The planner's reflection is juxtaposed to Marie-Sophie's description of moving from house to house in the city. Marie-Sophie is first sequestered first the houses she worked by her sick and starving employers, and then by her lover Basile. Marie-Sophie is constantly in motion, and her story emphasizes the way that she survived, an art transmitted from her father. Her knowledge of eating mashed wild arrowroot and using herbal cures is contrasted with City inhabitants' intent

on forgetting and on their ineptitude at growing food. These experiences and Esternome's stories of "The Nouteka of the Hills" drive Marie-Sophie to build in Texaco. Texaco is remade so many times in so many ways with different individuals constantly dismantling and constantly fighting for its existence. Only through Marie-Sophie's persistence does Texaco gain recognition.

MAPPING, WALKING, GARDENING

Stanka Radović argues *Texaco's* narration is "inherently spatial...it is impossible to separate the story and space since geography itself appears to be narrative" ("Squatters in the Cathedral" 110). Working and traveling within and around the poor peripheries to the wealthy city centers Esternome identifies the dynamic relationship between the two locations (Radović "Creole Language" 148). *Texaco's* formal structure and narrative content, Radović suggests then, designate the significance of "creole culture into the heart of French officialdom" ("Creole Language" 141). I would argue with Radović that the layers and divergent narrative structure and the characters' movements work to reshape history, culture, and space and constitute a vision for Caribbean diversity past and future. The movements and the fragments form a pattern, a map that critiques colonialism's spatial power. In this section, I will begin by emphasizing that Chamoiseau's delineation of the Caribbean community is tied to their experience of the environment. I, then, suggest why mapping is significant to spatializing power, and how gardening can be an action against imperial mapping strategies. Finally, I turn to walking as a mode of witnessing and tethering to demonstrate that together walking and gardening, generate a counter-mapping tactic that can root and embody historical processes.

Chamoiseau's vision of creole culture, place, and identity is inseparable from his critique of environmental oppression. Canonical postcolonial critiques of colonial mapping such as

Edward Said's "imaginative geographies" and Fanon's "compartmentalized world" stress the way colonialism's geographic boundaries are also psychic boundaries. Said writes: "both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from 'ours'...The geographic boundaries accompany the social, ethnic, and cultural ones in expected ways" (*Orientalism* 54). Imperialism is "an act of geographical violence" in which knowledge and power control, space, being, and culture (*Nationalism*, Said 77). Yet, as Pablo Mukherjee has noted, while Said grounded his analysis of the culture of imperialism in the physical environment "the Foucauldian strain in his thinking quickly leads Said to...retreat into the world of textuality" (49). Thus, Mukherjee argues that the problem with mapping that Said invokes is not tied to the experience of "environmental oppression" (Mukherjee 47). As *Caribbean Literature and the Environment* attests, Caribbean writing has continuously insisted on the "inseparability of ecological mismanagement and legacies of imperialistic exploitation" (Huggan qtd. in Paravisini-Gerbert 184). Chamoiseau's framing of the creole experience is intertwined with the Caribbean's environmental transformation due to the plantation's system of resource extraction.

In the opening to *My Garden (Book)*, Kincaid recalls: "It was not until I was living in Dr. Woodworth's house...some years later that I came to understand the shape of the beds...my beds were bigger, their shapes more strange, more not the usual shape of beds in a proper garden...The garden I was making (and am still making and will always be making) resembled a map of the Caribbean and the sea that surrounds it" (7). By remapping the Caribbean in her garden, Kincaid seeks to undermine legacies of empire. Kincaid not only struggles against colonialist mapping techniques that define the Caribbean according to the "intellectual schema for commercial designs on territories," as David Howard suggests in his definition of the purpose of imperial mapping (Howard 143). But also against botanical gardens and carefully landscaped

English garden beds, that seek to replicate the colonial project. Imperial gardens, akin to their commercial counterpart, plantations and commercial farms, temporalize and spatialize power. Gardening, then for postcolonial subjects, like Kincaid necessarily involves remapping, reordering, and remembering. In order to reclaim space, in order to assert identity, belonging, and connection to place, there needs to be new patterns, new names, and new definitions of property. In making her Vermont garden a map of the Caribbean, Kincaid maps the ever transforming, relating, and approximating states of her Caribbean memory and identity.

Gardening is a counter-mapping strategy. As this dissertation has advanced, in the Caribbean and in South Africa, spatial knowledge and power are contested by imagining gardening as a form of spatial action. Postcolonial gardening often works against legacies of *visualizing* communities and uses a variety of techniques to emphasize complex ecologies of eating, growing, moving, and resource managing. In studies in the UK and Jamaica, urban development and geography scholars Chris Perkins and David Howard outline what some resistant community mapping techniques might look like and what they can do. Analyzing Chamoiseau's text in accordance with the strategies that Perkins and Howard note, helps to call attention to its resistant mapping practices. Howard argues remapping can highlight the "spatial distribution of socio-economic inequalities" (Howard 153). Analyzing cartograms (maps of a geographical areas that emphasize a particular kind of data) of Kingston, Jamaica, Howard shows how using census data about income and education reveals that "the social and residential landscape of urban Jamaica is a legacy of colonial land tenure, slavery, and unequal access to education and labour markets" (153). Revisualizing a city that is "well documented and mapped" can "revitalize debates on social justice" and underscore "ongoing disparities of living conditions and opportunities" (Howard 153). Similarly, examining community mapping techniques in five

UK case studies, Chris Perkins found that collaborative, local mapping enabled inhabitants to “reassert indigenous peoples’ rights, re-map lost place names, re publish the past for contemporary consumption, protect local wildlife in the face of development, conserve landscapes threatened by agribusiness, advance local claims to land, argue over resources, protest against planners, oppose military power, and reject surveillance” (127). From artistic renditions that are “carried out as part of performance art practice” (128) to parish map projects whose multivocality sometimes appears hidden, or Green Maps that “advance ecological protest”(136) by mapping where food is grown and sold, to cycling maps that reflect on community mobility, Perkins argues community mapping “articulates contested and complex notions of space” (128).

Walking

Though they are not often thought together, walking is a counter-mapping strategy. Although often cited as a mode to experience sublime reverie in English Romantic poetry, contemporary writers and artists use walking to challenge alienation and examine the variability of existence. Sonlit traces the legacy of walking and gardening existing in productive tension to eighteenth and nineteenth century walking in English gardens. Reading Jane Austen and English Romantic poets, Sonlit highlights that baroque gardens allowed walks to be “laid out as straight lines” (*Wanderlust* 87). The early tradition of garden walking Sonlit recounts highlights how spaces became invested with meaning, and how the walkers, succeeding William Wordsworth, “wanted the world in which they walked to be nothing but a larger garden” (*Wanderlust* 117). While walking and gardening before the First World War “refined and restricted possibilities,” Sonlit highlights how “against the speed and alienation of the industrial revolution...

countercultures and subcultures ...walk” (*Wanderlust* 267). Artists and writers walk in resistance to the “postindustrial, postmodern loss of space, time, and embodiment” (*Wanderlust* 267). By examining the history of walking from Jean-Jacques Rousseau through contemporary performance artists, Sonlit suggests that “walking shares with making and working that crucial element of engagement of the body and the mind with the world, of knowing the world through the body and body through the world” (*Wanderlust* 29). Sonlit insists landscapes are consumed and transformed through walking.

Portraying and recording walking responds to the contemporary sense of living in “vanishing and ruined landscapes” (Kennedy 172). Walking not only marks human presence in the footprint, but it also forces walkers to witness and experience the world. Palestinian author and activist Raja Shehadeh and German author and theorist W.G. Sebald, both portray walking to make the reader reconsider responsibility. Rosanne Kennedy points out that walking in Sebald’s *The Rings of Saturn* triggers for the narrator “a historical, ecological, or philosophical reflection” (176). As the narrator moves through the landscape, feelings and dreams are evoked, but also “histories of colonialism, interpretations of cultural figures and iconic works” (176). Kennedy describes Shehadeh in *Palestinian Walks* as using walking to testify to “the changes to the landscape and Palestinian livelihoods as a result of the intensive building of Israeli settlements” (182). Shehadeh uses walking to mark the vanishing Palestinian history in the landscape and “map [their] footprint in the West Bank” (184). Kennedy’s readings highlight how authors have portrayed walking in order to convey “a sense of the ruins of history...[and] the competing demands on conceptions of human futures in our contemporary moment” (187). By portraying walking as invoking multiple histories and as a way to mark specific human presences in the landscape, Kennedy shows how walking enables writers to resist temporal and spatial

constraints. The peripatetic mode allows walkers to experience fluctuations and unanticipated intersections. The peripatetic mode is not just when walking is mentioned, but when protagonists and narrators circulations are followed and the experience of their movement affects the narrative structure.

In both *My Garden (Book)*: and in *Among Flowers* (2005), Kincaid portrays herself walking, gardening and remapping. Remapping for Kincaid is always a practice of seeing and remembering the friction of global forces. According to Wendy Knepper and Robert Emmett, Kincaid's "new kind of globalism," "planetary awareness," or in Ursula Heise's term, "ecocosmopolitanism," allows Kincaid to show the ways that the garden as a space has been constructed through disparate knowledge, desire and power. Gardening and walking are never disconnected from the inequalities across the globe. In *Among Flowers*, walking in Nepal near the beginning of her trek, Kincaid states:

I was climbing again, going up and up and the going up seemed sudden, surprisingly new, for I had not expected it. For those first few hours, I was expecting the landscape to conform to the landscape with which I was familiar, gentle incline after gentle incline, culminating in a resolution of a spectacular arrangement of the final resting place of some geographical catastrophe. But this was not so. I walked up toward a ridge, and I thought that when reaching the ridge my whole being would come to something, the something that had made me there in the first place. But this was never to be so. The Himalaya destroys notions of distance and time, I thought then, plant-hunting destroys all sorts of notions, but this I have always known. (37).

Walking in the Himalayas, Kincaid recounts her expectations: to see and feel the familiar rolling hills of Vermont, to feel the sublime, to understand and know this place. Every time Kincaid reaches for these frames of knowledge she is thwarted, but by documenting her experience she recognizes how travelers try to make sense of distant places. The text maintains her distance here by using generalizations and repeating “something.” Kincaid is self-conscious of the objective of her travel, plant-hunting, “finding her idyll” only “if [she] can populate it with plants from the other side of the world” (*Among Flowers* 189). Vermont and the Himalayas are linked, as Knepper contends, through “the material relations of plants” (47). I would add that in portraying walking and gardening, Kincaid experiences the Caribbean imaginary’s contradictions and collaborations of the temporal and spatial boundaries. Kincaid’s reflection and search for meaning resembles Glissant’s “stereoscopic perspective” that everything is part of a larger web of relation” (Prieto, “Édouard Glissant” 116). Eric Prieto’s reading of Glissant’s *Tout-monde* identifies Glissant’s perspective as an uncanny realization of “analogous phenomena” or that “an object encountered in [another part of the world] is closely related to something they had thought specific to their homeland” (116). Kincaid’s peripatetic method of remapping clearly establishes the material and embodied relationship between walking, gardening and mapping; and, the way that she joins these together emphasizes global spatialities.

Walking, gardening, and mapping in *Texaco* does not follow Kincaid because Chamoiseau and Glissant’s perspectives of interconnectedness are different. Chamoiseau emphasizes that the slave trade constructs Caribbean societies “around the impossible memory” of “slavery’s malediction” (Poiana 174). In opposition to Glissant, Chamoiseau and the other

authors of the *Éloge de la créolité*,⁶⁶ define a “sense of being, rather than a historical process” (Price, R. 217). While *créolité* has been described as “reductionist,” according to J. Michael Dash (23), I contend and will show how, *Texaco*’s gardens and mapping through movement evoke the embodied experience of history in Kincaid’s texts, but rather than visualizing the openness of connections between everywhere and every moment, *Texaco* uses gardening and walking to articulate Creoleness as responding to environmental grievances and evidencing Martinican agency. I will follow the text’s chronology and chart and analyze Esternome’s movements before I turn to Marie-Sophie’s circulations.

MOVEMENT’S REMAPPING

As Marie-Sophie recounts the history of Martinique’s black slaves and mulattoes’ attempts to conquer City, she pictures Esternome and herself marching, roaming, navigating, climbing, crossing, following, wandering, drifting, and walking. The novel’s focus on continuous movement emphasizes the webs, networks, and diversity of stories that exist and form the fabric of former slaves and other marginalized inhabitants history in Martinique. In *Texaco*, walking and gardening are not only methods of survival they are ways to mark presence and “the coexistence of many stories in the same place, weaving and tangling, overlapping and undermining each other” (“Centers and Edges,” *Sonlit* 12). Esternome and Marie-Sophie’s walks are forms of witnessing. During one of the first descriptions of Esternome’s travels from the plantation to City, Marie-Sophie notes: “My papa looked at all of this with the faith of the innocent. Sweetmeat and the others just went on their way, eyes indifferent” (59). From the beginning the audience is altered to the fact that what will be relayed from Esternome, will be what is often invisible: “City from whose memory they were excluded” (80). Esternome climbs

⁶⁶ Translated in 1990 by Mohamed B. TalebKhya under the title “In Praise of Creoleness.”

the hill of Rue Monte-au-Ciel with “its thousands steps” to sit on the Roxelane bridge and watch the laundresses who, “spent the day beating linen, then hanging it while babbling like drunk birds. They only stopped to grill a bit of cod on logwood embers before crumbling it in the oiled avocado...All of them were fatherly women, slaves or free, whose feet and hands were wrinkled by water” (75). The laundresses are birds, former slaves, aged by their work. Esternome’s description emphasizes their survival. Botanical characterizations yoke inhabitation in the city to the Martinican landscape.

Esternome’s observations do not just testify to invisible stories, his movement is an embodied engagement with knowing the world and history. Marie-Sophie recalls watching her father repeat his movements following Mt. Pelee’s eruption:

sometimes caught him wandering around the hut, glimpsed the hesitation in his legs which he raised high like ducks do, his hand calming his face, his mouth open with asthma, I felt like I was seeing him standing in the middle of that disaster. He walked on like that, not seeing anything any more, so much had he seen...My esternome wandered like that searching for his Ninon...He had to climb ruins, walk in circles, often redouble his steps. (150)

Replicating his movements makes past traumas present. Esternome is not seeing, but instead is bearing witness in the circuitous movement; his repeated search is always unsuccessful. He is grounded yet uprooted in the back and forth motion, much like many of those seeking opportunity in the city. His body makes the trauma visible to Marie-Sophie. Whereas the garden passages emphasize seeing and observation as a way to mark the community in the landscape,

Chamoiseau inflects flexibility into the garden and remembering history by emphasizing movement and adaptation in the descriptions of walking.

However, by calling attention to Esternome's wandering in search of Ninon or following "aimlessly" (166) Adrienne Carmélite Lapidaille, Marie-Sophie's mother's sister, the text grinds against colonial grids of control and foregrounds detours. Esternome describes how he and his group of carpenters entered Saint-Pierre. They "moved along rocky ground" and "snaked between walls of stone," taking "narrow paths, crumbling into the sea, forcing them to hang on to the sides" (61). Inside the city "slaves pounce from ships" to "island homes" crossing and recrossing the bridge (62). Esternome demonstrates how life is traversed in the city. The inhabitants' lives are lived in detours, and their movements are difficult. His recollection of their movements testifies to the shared experience of hardship in the city and the city's purposeful rejection, but also the making of new routes. If the plantation produces a schema of profitability in which the layout of the plantation and plantation towns enable the transportation of commodities, as McKittrick suggests, then Esternome's wanderings remap and subvert the "normalizing mechanics of the plantation," which lead to black subjugation, "land exploitation," and death (11).

Marie-Sophie's story of her own City experience begins with her description of enclosure. Sickness and servitude keep her in her employers' homes. During her time at the house of Monsieur Alcibiade, who was "losing his mind to malaria," Marie-Sophie describes her experience of silence, solitude, and pain:

And I, sitting in a rocking chair in the middle of the living room, needle in hand, a cloth to mend resting on my knees...And then nothing. Not a word in my head. Nothing but a

kind of ether which filled my bones. As if, unable to pull myself out of there, I wanted to dissolve. (258).

To leave she had to be resolute: “My pace was decisive, because you had to be *decisive*, walk *decisively*, move forward *decisively* in order to leave the least hesitation in the dust” (277, emphasis mine). Through Marie-Sophie, Chamoiseau portrays the resolute determination the community needs in order to imagine plotting another worldview in which the community can reject “a system that profits from racial violence” (McKittrick 11). Plantation slavery produces confined spaces in both space and language, and Radović argues that the “liberatory voice of the storyteller breaks down the boundary of confined spaces and allows for discontinuous but persistent flights beyond the imposed limit” (“Creole Language” 147).

Inside the quarter movement parallels Esternome’s entrance to the city:

All these huts formed a trapdoor spider’s web in which we all lived in clusters. Before there was a community of people, there was one of huts carrying each other, tied through one another to the sliding land, each getting its bearings from the other according to laws from my poor Esternome’s Noutéka.

To walk through a lane (which would cross through lives, intimacies, dreams, fate) you had to shout Good day everyone, Evening ladies and gentlemen, and ask to go through, may I go through, and sometimes stop to take stock of the news of the world. (277)

The Quarter's layout is a web interconnecting the community in continuously open and changing paths. The depiction of the new paths links the past to the future. The hutches recall the garden of the Noutéka, whose shape in turn influences the construction of Texaco. But unlike the description of the garden, the text emphasizes how Marie-Sophie navigates the quarter. Sliding, crossing, and greeting, residents thrive or fail in their mutual dependence, and in a list that enacts an almost anaphoric incantation Marie-Sophie recalls the names of the lanes. Some of the lanes' names are:

The lane of heart falling down with flames...

The lane full of asbestos...

The lane where hunger whittle teeth...

The pious lane...

The lane where dawn's blackbirds learn...

The lane of forgotten mysteries where old blackman look like Carib warriors...

The lane or Amélie-thimble-thumb

The lane where the general councilman held his meetings...(279)

Each lane is named for its inhabitants. Similarities in appearance bridge the past and the present. The names foreground exposure to toxicity and the experience of scarcity. The reciting highlights the simultaneous experiences of opposite emotions in close proximity. They give a map to a place that was a "rough draft of City" and that existed in this way only for a moment (277). Listing and describing the lanes one after the other emphasizes the forever churning, weaving, tangling, overlapping, and undermining of stories and lives lived in the quarters. The

naming of lanes, according to how life is lived, imagines a system of knowledge outside of the plantation logic as the movement is not about the good produced nor the system that profits from black subjugation (McKittrick 10).

Marie-Sophie's experience of remapping and renaming transforms her ability to navigate City. Along with her short time love Arcadius, "the new man of [her] new misadventure," Marie-Sophie spends a day in City trying to track down visiting De Gaulle:

We spent the day chasing De Gaulle through City. We went down long detours to cross his path... We turned at Croix-Mission, by the rich folks cemetery where a rubberband girl danced Saint Vitus' dance for money. And-then we jumped over the cemetery wall to through the graves woken up by De Gaulle, the ancient warriors exhaling misty Lorraine crosses from their tombs; some old békés... Then we tumbled down Terres-Sainville's streets. (331).

Marie-Sophie is elastic "bouncing," "dancing," and "jumping" and in doing so City is unraveled and fragmented. The time following WWII is reframed from a Martinican squatter's perspective and European's version of this History is left out. Disorder impels Marie-Sophie's movements. Marie-Sophie's storytelling portrays the multiplicity of relationality in Martinique's quarters, and in how Marie-Sophie traverses them, reworks her and her community's belonging in Martinique. Belonging and community confidence is not a simple, forward trajectory. While the narrator, Oiseau de Cham, admits that he shaped Marie-Sophie's story, the inclusion of notebook entries and the self-conscious reflection mimic Marie-Sophie and Esternome's movements.

South African Jacob Dlamini's chapter, "Township in Sight," from his collection, *Native Nostalgia*, echoes similar remapping techniques and comparing Dlamini to Chamoiseau brings into focus how walking in *Texaco* and other texts, points to the "multiplicity of histories" inhabiting a singular location (Radović, "Squatters" 119). The governmental officials, like *Texaco*'s urban planner in the beginning, see and interpret the township from afar, but on the ground Dlamini demands is where "the human scale is brought into view"(45). The ground on which people live and walk may have been founded on official decrees, but the official labels cannot represent the relationships between neighbors. In "Township in Sight," Dlamini describes his experience of the Katelhong township in order to counter the governmental, bird's eye view of the township established on a grid as well as to recall, with nostalgia, experiences in townships that often have been framed with pain. Townships—unlike the quarters *Texaco* depicts and the "African slums of Johannesburg" (45)—Dlamini suggests, were conceived and officially "laid out...[as] scientific and modern" (46). The government gave the houses no names just numbers, but the inhabitants recast the numbers and the sections named by their landmarks and used the numbers in unexpected ways. One Uncle, Dlamini recalls, "took the business of house numbers so seriously, that his address became his nickname... 'Here comes Uncle 5-5,' my cousins and I would shout" (47). Dlamini pictures the sections of the township and provides details about how inhabitants lived and what form of transportation they took: "the neighbours whose front door faced ours were the Pedi-speaking Brother Lucas...the house behind ours, the one to which ours was attached, was a Sotho household" (53). He remembers traumatic and funny moments of witnessing his neighbors drunk or murdered. But he says his and his community's experience was more than "the occasional tragedy," it was a sidewalk ballet.

Walking through the township, Dlamini narrates with surprising beauty and bravado. He tells of Ndebele traders and families on their way to shopping or church “strutting their fashions up and down the streets” (56). As children he and the neighborhood kids participated in the ballet going to school or playing games recounting how one friend would kick the soccer ball at unsuspecting neighbors. By describing where the ball is kicked, Dlamini allows the reader to view the streets from the inhabitants’ perspective. Portraying the residents’ movement, Dlamini resignifies the place’s meaning in the past and present.

Dlamini’s description is attentively self-critical and self-reflective. He lays out explicitly what he is doing and its contradictions: “to think nostalgically about the streets on which I grew up is to think longingly of a lost world” (55). He also remarks on the ways that the township is shot through with multiple global relations, noting the presence of Barclay’s bank. This chapter, like the rest of the text, is a collection of “fragments,” in which Dlamini looks “back at a childhood spent under apartheid” (62). Walking, then and now, he witnesses visible and invisible problems from rats to HIV. Using the peripatetic method to move through the space of the township in memory and in the present, emphasizes the experience of flexibility in rigid landscapes and through renaming and rehistoricizing, he allows the community’s voice to be registered in History.

IDENTIFYING CHAMOISEAU’S ENVIRONMENTAL TACTICS

Marie-Sophie’s descriptions of the quarters and Dlamini’s ballet in the township both mark community presence in the landscape. Through renaming and using walking as mapping, they help to renegotiate their communities’ relationship with their surroundings. However, the extent to which each text designates the overlapping human and natural geographies is quite

different. While Dlamini emphasizes unexpected routes, his focus on movement does not simultaneously signal the entanglement of human and natural histories. For Dlamini when he sees the droppings of rats, it doesn't lead him to imagining the shared existence in the township, rather he ends the chapter stating his reaction to the rats: "I feel my nostalgia turn to disgust" (64). *Texaco* repeatedly focuses on companionship and adaptability between humans and nature. By examining Chamoiseau's writing in the context of his other novels and other Martinican environmental writing, in this section, I will show how Chamoiseau interweaves creole belonging with nature.

Throughout Chamoiseau's writing, humanity and nature are fused and the crisis of memory, identity and culture are inseparable from the plantation system. From *L' Esclave Vieil Homme Et Le Molosse* [*Slave Old Man*] (1997) to *Biblique des deriers gestes* [*Biblical of the Last Gestures*] (2002), Chamoiseau imagines how individuals and collectives in Martinique live with the environment. In *Biblique des deriers gestes*, the maker of words reimagines the life of Balthazar Bodule-Jules. Focusing on how the text narrates land, nature, and identity, Heidi Bojsen argues that Chamoiseau "challenges the Romantic legacy inherent in "territory," "landscape," and "independence" (213). Bojsen's reading spotlights moments in the text when seemingly romanticized panoramic views of the landscape, which might invoke ahistorical or sacred significances, are reframed to emphasize the historicity of place. She shows how the text emphasizes living with the landscape and hearing its testimony. The romantic point of view or "discovering gaze" is replaced with a "conscious putting into perspective" and "*to landscape* becomes a verb whose meaning must be negotiated and reformulated in *Relation* to the surroundings" (Bojsen 220). Similarly, *Slave Old Man* depicts the setting as a participant, and follows a slave as he flees the plantation tracked by a malicious dog. The forest to which the old

man escapes resounds with a chorus of Caribbean history. Walking through the forest, the old man, Nathan Germain, argues, becomes “magnetically linked to the natural world,” entirely open to establish relations with others and to enunciate creole collective identity with the environmental space (131).

In order to designate Chamoiseau’s particular form of environmental writing, Prieto juxtaposes Chamoiseau’s writing with writers throughout the tradition of anti-colonial thought in Martinique. Prieto charts Martinican cultural theory first in “Landscaping Identity” (2003) and then again in “The Uses of Landscape” (2005), and in each he juxtaposes Chamoiseau’s environmental writing to Césaire and Glissant. In his reading of *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (*Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* [1940]), Prieto highlights the symbolic nature of environmental imagery in Césaire: “the tree, roots plunging into the soil and branches aspiring into the sky, is usually taken to symbolize the ancestral link with the African past. The volcano, on the other hand, is a revolutionary image and reflects Césaire’s Marxist view of history and cultural change” (“Landscaping Identity” 143). Prieto argues, Césaire’s writing embraces the specificity of the French Antilles, but his depictions of the environment are “entirely subordinated to his argument about social and political justice;” the environmental imagery is “a rhetorical tool” (“The Uses of Landscape 237-238). On the other hand, Prieto suggests Glissant’s concepts like métissage and Antillanité feature cooperation between man and nature. Métissage, which was first elaborated in *Caribbean Discourse* and then elaborated in *La Lézarde*, Prieto suggests outlines more sustainable practices between humans and nature, such as building dykes and dams. Prieto aligns Chamoiseau and Glissant in that they both identify “poverty and alienation, a color-bound social hierarchy, economic and political dependence on

the French métropole” as the problems that afflict Caribbean society (“Landscaping identity” 145). However, Prieto argues that Chamoiseau views the genesis differently.

In *Texaco*, Prieto argues Chamoiseau uses matter of fact environmental discourse. Through the metaphor of the “urban mangrove,” *Texaco* highlights the significant roles creole neighborhoods have had in: “limiting the damage caused by sudden periods of massive urbanization, and perpetuating environmentally friendly practices of Martinique’s rural past” (“The Uses of Landscape 242). Mangrove forests maintain coastlines and give shelter to many different organisms, and thus Prieto argues Chamoiseau deploys this metaphor by depicting how rural residents have for generations staved off hunger, scarcity, and disease through the practice of subsistence farming. Therefore, one of the main features of Chamoiseau’s writing are the ways that he intertwines the environment, history, and creole culture.

Akin to Glissant, Chamoiseau’s writing brings to the forefront how nature and culture are inextricably linked and how that connection inscribes creole belonging. However, Chamoiseau emphasizes the importance of the knowledge, experience and practices of the Martinican past. Chamoiseau depicts creole herblore and gardening as seeds for the survival of creole culture. The turn towards the rural while formulating diasporic experience, however, might have the potential to restrict creole identity and its interdependent relationship with nature. Emphasizing the movement of the protagonists in *Texaco* and in many other texts, Chamoiseau signals how tradition infuses the present and makes way for future belonging. Esternome’s “Noutéka” are the seeds of *Texaco*. Only after the characters navigate from plantation to hill to plain and in and out of City, are *Texaco*’s gardens planted and replanted. Movement underscores the adaptive strategies that will empower creole cultures to thrive. Space is not rigidly set, but instead is the result of constantly being remade.

In J. Michael Dash's description of Chamoiseau's oeuvre, he suggests that Chamoiseau imagines resistance to colonial space as a form of constant change. In *Anton d'enfance (Bygone days of childhood)*, Dash argues Chamoiseau "reminds us...that island space, because of its visible limitations could easily be traversed by roads or systems or discourses that indiscriminately subsume everything under a universal sameness," and thus inhabitants "must create new traces, detours in this process of *drivage* and errancy" (142). Chamoiseau spotlights "maroons of the macadam" in his novels, and projects a liminal urban culture as paradigmatic for the modern Caribbean (Dash 147). Glissant in his earlier work like *The Fourth Century* tells the story of two families, the Longoués and Béluses, from different genesis, and uses the figure of the Maroon to juxtapose the figure of the slave. Glissant uses the figure of the Maroon to empower Martinicans with a new definition of Caribbean memory. Chamoiseau's writing calls attention to the spontaneity and adaptive potential that comes from using rural customs and folklore enroute. Even though the characters return to the forests they are not renewed by the wilderness ethic, rather Chamoiseau defines being with the environment as a continual process.

"ROOTED DRIFTINGS"

When Marie-Sophie asks her father about his childhood, he tells her about how the land slaves survive. The slave's vegetable gardens allowed them "to stand on their legs" when the Béké and the servants were close to famine (45). The gardens were so fertile the slaves sold their produce at the Mouillage market (81). Esternome expounds on the herbal knowledge of his father, how he had "invented the anti-scurvy punch, an abomination made of a white wine, horseradish roots, barbane, cochlearia cress picked before dawn" (46). Esternome's descriptions

do not just exalt specific knowledge or techniques, his recollections emphasize the form of relationship the slaves had with the land:

The land slaves had chosen the land. The land to survive on. The land to feed themselves with. The land to understand, and to inhabit. When the békés were brewing hectares of cane to export, well, sitting by their canaris, they were counting their yams...they were untying the leaves, deciphering the roots, spying on the last of the Caribs fighting the sea. (81).

Although the land slaves sold their produce, their goal was not to make a profit. In developing herbal remedies, the land slaves connect to the Carib past. Their expert knowledge of the environment is valorized throughout the novel, but Marie-Sophie underlines that the value of her inheritance of those customs is the orientation towards the environment: “The art of surviving, which my Esternome had transmitted to me in veiled words, allowed me to hang in there without too much damage” (238).

In *Texaco*, behind Marie-Sophie’s hutch is her little Creole garden (372). She describes how the inhabitants brought with them “carts of lemon trees, coconut trees, bunches of papaya tree, tufts of sugarcane, tatters of plantains, guavas, peppers, lichees, the blessed breadfruit, the avocado trees, and a mixture of this grass”(317). The list of the fruits highlights her inherited knowledge, noting that where they found to plant and build their hutches depended on the wind “like the Caribs” (318).

Published one year after *Texaco*, Edwidge Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones*, focuses on food and herblore to illustrate a community’s resilience through fascist dictator General

Trujillo's massacre of 12,000 Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. Different foods come to signify for the community. Parsley is used medicinally as well as to flavor food, but it is also stuffed down workers throats, and so comes to symbolize pain and abuse. Roybn Cope argues the descriptions of food in *The Farming of Bones* illustrate the constant struggle for food. While there is some portrayal of the Haitians cultivating crops of their slave ancestors, the novel delineates scarcity and often highlights the experience of hunger. Danticat depicts Haitians oppressed by the global food system using food knowledge, like drinking salted coffee to try to stave off hunger. Danticat stated in a 2007 interview that food is emptied of meaning for those who are starving (qtd. in Cope 319). While comparative connections can be drawn between Chamoiseau and Danticat's texts in utilizing the trope of subsistence gardening, Danticat focuses on portraying the problematic food-producing system and Chamoiseau's food imagery imagines a kind of relationality.

Thus, as much as Marie-Sophie's descriptions of Texaco highlight food knowledge, they also foreground constant rebuilding and flux. When Marie-Sophie visits the Mentoh of the Doum he tells her: "the hills planted us in rooted driftings" (293). Echoing Glissant's description of the creole garden in which the crops intermix and form a supportive circle, Marie-Sophie recalls how the hutches light house frames were crammed together: "each hutch, day after day, supported the other and so on" (319). But Texaco is constantly under siege from the petroleum company, sailors, and others. Their "hutches (rebuilt thirty-twelve times) resembled insane mosaics: all kinds of bits were added to all sorts of splinters" (335). Often finding themselves wiped off the slope, Marie-Sophie leading the community would rebuild, and in remaking their homes with new materials time and time again, they remapped their relations to their surroundings. While the novel ends with City recognizing the existence of Texaco and willing to

make Texaco more habitable, it is not Texaco as a place that is in focus, but rather the way of life that receives official certification. Brought into the heart of French officialdom is the creolizing drifting.

CONCLUSION

My argument has followed Prieto's and Dash's interpretations of Chamoiseau's work as stressing the theme of adaptability focusing specifically on the relationship between gardening, movement, and mapping. Dash emphasizes the way Chamoiseau imagines the urban maroon as finding "a way of knowing how to combine, scramble, and improvise" (143). Prieto argues by "crossing town and country" or incorporating and celebrating gardening strategies born of necessity, *Texaco* underscores "adaptive strategies that have enabled Creole culture to survive" (243). Yet, Prieto questions the ability of this environmental message to have weight in departmentalized Martinique. Departmentalization, Prieto outlines, has transformed the standard of living.⁶⁷ French investment and economic aid have eased problems of scarcity.

Throughout Renée Gosson's interview with Raphaël Confiant in *Caribbean Literature and the Environment*, Confiant emphasizes that Martinique is "a deindustrialized country, which is a garden that produces a fruit called a banana" entirely "dependent on the exterior for its food" (144-145). Martinique, as Gosson and Eric Faden visualize in their digital essay about Martinique, *Landscape and Memory*, plantation ruins and fields are sites of memory. Martinican space is disappearing as France lays concrete over these memories and ushers Martinique into passive participation in the French nation-state through only consumer participation in the global economy. It is the threat of assimilation that worries Confiant, and not just that that creole culture

⁶⁷ Josh Jelly-Scharpiro, in describing Martinique in 2017, writes: "Most people in *les Antilles*, by now, can recite the creolist's contentions about how their island's dependence on Paris has contributed to ills both economic and physic... Many more Martinicans, though, whether or not they know those truths, have come to rely on a distant state's cossetting hands, throughout their working lives and after—and know well, too, that no one on nearby islands has their comforts, or roads" (361).

will be erased. That Martinicans will become paralyzingly apathetic. When Confiant describes a scene after a damaging hurricane, in which he comes on two Martinicans playing tennis instead of trying to clean the destroyed housing, Confiant insists that the Martinicans are just waiting for someone else to clean up and take no interest in bettering the space of their lives (148). Survival is no longer the main environmental, economic, and political problem, rather Gosson and Confiant point to apathy and resignation.

I would argue that Chamoiseau's environmental vision remains relevant as a response to apathy because it emphasizes not only adaptability, but also flexible agency. Highlighting environmentally friendly creole practices like creole gardening valorizes multispecies living, as Haraway suggests about slave gardens. Imperial botanical gardens underscore the collection of imperial knowledge and institute controlled and unidirectional human associations with surroundings. Creole gardening and walking as continually revised map-making, manifests resistant agency at the root of Creoleness. Chamoiseau's utopia valorizes the ever-changing creole existence and strives to dream for real change of his community's place as it simultaneously records what would have remained silent.

CONCLUSION

My dissertation has examined how Caribbean and South African authors deconstruct imperialist environmental discourses that have interpellated geographies for development or conservation. Using the garden as a device to underscore the continuous process of place making, I argue authors imagine anti-colonial resistance in a constellation of embodied relationships engaging together for survival. While cultivated gardens have long been associated with apolitical escapes, my dissertation assumes postcolonial ecocriticism's stance that history, culture, and the environment are interwoven. In South Africa, legislation and discourses of family and conservation embedded some while evicting others, physically and imaginatively. The Caribbean is inscribed with scientific and travel discourses that place it outside of time making its biodiversity available for profit. Discourses in both regions conceal the mechanisms of the plantation and ownership. Resistance and the plantation, thus, emerge together.

Since the garden has long functioned as a figuration of hope, all of the narratives I explore in my dissertation imagine possible environmental consciousness, relationships, and environmentalisms, predicated on the ongoing work of the community. Gardening, for decolonial writers, is not just a way to imagine nature in harmony with humans; rather South African and Caribbean writers portray gardening as a figurative and material tactic. Each chapter in my dissertation examines how texts situate history and tell hopeful stories of ecological relating.

In my first chapter I argue, Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* figures the work of the community garden to reinscribe black labor and presence and envision environmental stewardship and community resilience. I attend to the ways that Head's text identifies the ubiquity of environmental knowledge against the South African "farmer nation" discourse that portrayed black south Africans as environmentally destructive. I call attention to the way that *A*

Question of Power's structure disrupts linear narratives of inheritance and ownership. Head's garden writing also seeks to overturn evaluations of waste and "surplus people" by joyfully welcoming overproduction in the garden. The Motabeng community garden and the structure of Head's novel invite black South Africans to participate in making and imagining the environment. *A Question of Power* envisions communal belonging, but without underscoring the significance of ownership, the text does not fully address the complicated terrain of dispossession. The problem of land distribution remains a significant issue in South Africa. A recent article in the *New York Times* by Selam Gebrekidan and Norimitsu Onishi, describes the move of township residents onto winery farms in the Stellenbosch region. White Afrikaners are still deploying narratives of familial stewardship against impoverished residents. While Head's text signals its incomplete work at the end, her community making garden discourse is not radical enough to interrupt the politics of reparations.

In my next chapter, I examine Nadine Gordimer's *Get a Life* in the context of the ongoing conversations about different versions of environmentalism in South Africa and their abilities to address environmental grievances. The subjectivities of those broadcasting ecological concerns limits what can be seen and understood about environmental issues. *Get a life* stages a reflection on the fragmented environmental movement in the protagonist's, Paul, childhood backyard garden. Paul's memories enclose the suburban garden perspective and omit the depiction of garden labor. In the garden, Paul concentrates his environmental vision from a distance. He imagines other African landscapes from space, and in doing so, makes it impossible for environmentalism, from his subject position, to see and empathize with different communities. Gordimer's garden unravels environmental discourses. While *Get a Life*, like the other texts in my dissertation, does not follow a linear narrative form, I question if Gordimer's

realism is also restrictive and compare her work to recent South African science fiction to interrogate the limits of hopeful stories of ecological belonging. While all of the texts exist as expressions of South African environmental struggles, I conclude that Lauren Beukes *Zoo City* and Jane Rosenthal's *Souvenir* more acutely attend to the entangled experiences of humans and animals, and so might have greater ability to bridge the divide between environmental justice and animal rights groups.

Calling attention to the significance of non-human agency deployed through odor, my reading of Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*, traces the way that Mootoo demystifies human and natural trauma in scientific discourses and reimagines where action emanates from in the garden. Following other Caribbean authors like Derek Walcott, Kincaid, and Glissant, Mootoo's garden evidences dynamic creative potential. By building affinities with flora and fauna through shared histories of violence, Mootoo ameliorates the plantation legacy of alienation. Comparing Mootoo's representation of the garden with Michael Pollan and other Dominica gardeners, I show the danger of propping up the gardener's role. Either supporting neoliberal individualism or maintaining the contentious relationship between nature and culture, these nonfiction garden writings fail to conceive of human-animal collaboration in surviving in the ruins of the plantation. Imbuing agency across every feature of the landscape allows Mootoo's text to reconceive Caribbean environmental interrelating on temporal, spatial, and emotive scales. Drawing on similarities and differences among other Caribbean authors as well as J.M. Coetzee, I delineate imaginative diverse relating and ecological assemblages moved by senses other than sight as central decolonial garden acts.

In my final chapter on Chamoiseau's *Texaco*, I highlight how the text uses creole gardening to reterritorialize the creole community and exalt adaptive creole assemblages. In the

opening to this chapter I detail how the garden Esternome creates in the hills bears witness to multispecies collaboration, and generating food security in the hills as well as recollecting the immense botanical knowledge deployed in growing and creating medicines, Chamoiseau evidences specific strategies used against the plantation's alienating systems. But the text also simultaneously questions this form of rooting by emphasizing movement. Using walking as a mode of remapping and witnessing, Chamoiseau's text seeks to infuse agency and action into a community, who have been stagnated and made apathetic by departmentalization. Chamoiseau deploys gardening and walking as interconnected strategies to embody the historical process, dismantle colonial schemas, and map various forms of agency and survival.

This project began with my observation of the abundance of gardens in postcolonial texts. I wanted to investigate the significance of these representations in regions where environmental histories are deeply fraught. Following other postcolonial eco-critics my goal was not to just bring attention to non-US versions of environmental attachment, belonging or activism, but rather to investigate the terrain of environmental imagining and place making as representations navigating the "discursive web of colonialism" (O'Brien). I examined the way authors unraveled concealed colonial discourses in science, botany, and imagining place. Using a postcolonial ecocritical approach has been significant because my goal has to been to study the way authors try to use the garden to imaginatively and materially perform "ecological recuperation" on plantation geographies ("Introduction," DeLoughrey et. al). Throughout each chapter I tried to track how authors mark presence, embeddedness, and thriving, against colonialism's double erasure.

Examining gardens not only seemed necessary and important to me because the figurative role that, for example, slave gardens perform in acting as the antithesis to the plantation, but also because the environmental issues that all of the authors are encountering still remain and are amplifying due to climate change. There is a sense of immediacy, to me, to understand these decolonial articulations because right now there is an impulse to turn to the garden and reflect and imagine global environmental change. Throughout a lot of garden scholarship whether it is from landscape architects or literary scholars, they suggest that the proximity and ease of access, makes the garden the ground for reshaping spatial arrangements. Authors are drawn to the garden because—in the same way Sandilands reflects on understanding climate change through her garden—“Gardens are microcosms of the complicated relationships that are the difficult world in which we are living” (n. pg). Gardens bear the potential to “ignite a fresh awareness, appreciation, and stewardship of plants that result in stronger, resilient, more connected communities” as states in the description of a Horticultural class, entitled “Gardens Will Save the World,” to be held during the summer of 2019 at University of Wisconsin-Madison. It is significant to examine decolonial expressions of gardening in a time of the heightened production of ethically charged garden discourses, especially because the ways in which decolonial garden writing is constantly seeking to unmask plantation legacies.

As a whole, my dissertation marks the significance of gardens to postcolonial environmental writing and clarifies the features of decolonial garden writing. Postcolonial scholars have noted the significance of gardens to specific texts. Most notably scholars of the Caribbean have commented on the role gardens play in texts from V.S. Naipaul to Lorna Goodison to Maryse Condé, and often they highlight the ways that the authors use gardens to encounter the hegemony of European literary descriptions that inscribe the environment or as

Sarah Casteel's text *Second Arrivals* elucidates, how authors use gardening to figure belonging. In my comparison, I have not only underscored the significance of these critics' readings, but have also outlined how decolonial garden writing is a counter-mapping strategy. It is a way of imagining diverse assemblages confronting colonial deterritorialization. Gardening is embodied spatial action. I have sought to show what gardens in these texts *do*. Garden's impel community action and playing on the double meaning of plotting, the presence of the garden also signals narrative disruption of capital's linear progression. In doing so, I am adding to the scholarship on the plantationocene, or the scholarship that suggests the plantation was the foundation of modern biological, economic and cultural structures, systems, processes, and suggests that only nonlinear stories can shift the politics of reparations to analyzing the "long and slow processes" which undermine community making (Thomas). I have sought to make a constellation of the ways postcolonial writers use gardening to express and envision how to live in and with the environment. Gardens in decolonial texts are where authors turn to engage with food justice, community building, and land redistribution.

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