

GODS, GENDER AND SEXUALITY:
REPRESENTATIONS OF VODOU AND SANTERÍA
IN HAITIAN AND CUBAN CULTURAL PRODUCTION

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the manner in which gender and sexuality are explored within the context of Vodou and Santería in a number of Haitian and Cuban novels and plays. Focusing on the body as the nodal point between the physical and spiritual planes, it examines women's negotiation of religious, social and political life in Haiti and Cuba as participants in these marginalised religious communities. The narratives these works of fiction comprise indicate the complex nature of such experiences and recognise the active participation of women in Caribbean society, challenging the way in which they have often been limited in, or omitted from, official discourse. By drawing on African-derived religious traditions in the Caribbean, these texts are inscribed within a worldview in which the physical and the spiritual, the living and the dead coexist, and one that allows divisions within and between concepts such as gender, sexuality, womanhood, space and nation to be transcended. In so doing, these authors write alternative and arguably more complete accounts of lived experience in Haiti and Cuba that serve as a source of knowledge regarding the complexities of daily life and provide a means through which the voice of the marginalised can be heard.

*To my parents, who encouraged me to begin this journey,
& DB, who has been instrumental to its completion*

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NOTE

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations into English are my own. The spelling of Haitian Kreyòl terms conforms to the official established norms of the language except when an accepted alternative spelling of a key term exists which is more commonly used in studies of Haiti and Haitian culture. Particularly prevalent examples of this are: *houngan* (official spelling, *oungan*), the Kreyòl term for a Vodou priest; *Macoutes* (official spelling, *Makout*), the name given to François Duvalier's militia; and Baron Samedi (official spelling, *Bawon Samdi*), one of the Vodou *lwa* (spirits).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

'[R]eligion' cannot be neatly separated from other practices of everyday life [...]. Nor can 'religion' be separated from the material circumstances in which specific instances of religious imagination and behavior arise and to which they respond. (Orsi 1997, 6-7)

African-derived religious traditions are an integral part of Caribbean culture and society, expressed in a multitude of fashions in everyday life, both in public and private. Vodou and Santería – the two religious traditions on which this thesis focuses – are inseparable from their respective Haitian and Cuban cultural contexts, and have remained historically, politically and culturally significant from the colonial period to the present day. Within this context, the notions of gender and sexuality are particularly significant, especially in light of the oft-repeated descriptions of these religious traditions as loci of resistance and sites of increased female participation and strength, issues which this thesis explores in detail with reference to a number of Haitian and Cuban literary and theatrical texts from the mid-twentieth century to the first decade of the twenty-first. In preparation for the analysis which follows, this introductory chapter will outline the central arguments advanced in the subsequent chapters before providing a summary of the pertinent historical and political contexts of these religious traditions along with the relevant tenets of each of them. Alongside this, it will explore the key concepts of gender and female participation, sexuality, patriarchy, resistance and power, before finally introducing the main themes and texts examined.

As Mayra Montero has illustrated across four of her novels (analysed in chapter two) and the scholars Murphy (1994) and Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert (2011) have

demonstrated in their respective publications, the African-derived religious traditions that are practised across the Caribbean constitute a framework which can be used to draw together dynamic and unique cultural contexts from across the region, transcending to a certain extent the linguistic and political divisions that have been forced upon it. Such a geographically diverse framework must be restricted for the purposes of this thesis, however, which focuses primarily on Haiti and Cuba, two nations in relatively close proximity that experienced colonialism under different European powers – key in their different linguistic heritages – from which they gained independence at the beginning and the end of the nineteenth century respectively. In both nations African-derived religious traditions have been – and continue to be – practised extensively, including in the Haitian and Cuban diasporas across the region and beyond.¹ Vodou and Santería – the two most practised among their respective populations and arguably the best known of these traditions – have been represented in various ways in cultural production and have been recognised as having had an influence on Haitian and Cuban histories, even if not particularly celebrated as such. Associated with notions of creolization, *mestizaje*, hybridity and post-colonial identity, Vodou and Santería are often deemed ‘other’ as marginalised traditions that continue to exist on the periphery of society due to the manner in which they are perceived both officially and popularly.² Nevertheless, as will be demonstrated below, these traditions have to a certain extent also been espoused by the state in a sanitised folkloric format in order to recognise the Creole and African cultural heritage of the Haitian and Cuban nations. Due to the position these traditions occupy, their incorporation into literature and theatre delineates a context in which authors can explore the complexities of the imposition of patriarchal hegemony and resistance against it, especially with regard to women’s participation and gender roles, female sexuality and agency.

¹ In addition to the practice of Santería and Vodou in North America, a pertinent example is that of Vodou in Cuba, studied in detail by James, Alarcón and Millet (2007 [1998]) in their volume *El vodú en Cuba*, and exemplified in Montero’s (1998) *Como un mensajero tuyo* (see chapter two of this thesis).

² These complex frameworks are examined below.

This thesis analyses a number of Cuban and Haitian novels and plays which serve as a vehicle for such a discussion. In each of the texts selected, African-derived religious traditions feature as a framework through which to explore various aspects of women's experience within the overarching male-oriented hierarchy in place in Cuban and Haitian society. Recognising the importance of myth and oral literature in the writing of a history that takes into account the lives and experiences of the marginalised, the works provide a narrative which foregrounds the complexities of lived experience as members of various non-dominant groups within wider society. These personal accounts exemplify the necessary incorporation of individual voices that counter and/or complicate those proffered as "fact" into the larger historical and social narratives, thereby providing a body of knowledge that has otherwise largely been written out of official discourse. As works of fiction drawing on a worldview in which the *orisha* and *lwa* (in Santería and Vodou respectively) have many avatars,³ they are therefore able to emphasise the multifaceted nature of womanhood, of sexual and gender identity, and the different ways groups on the periphery suffer and subvert violence and death. This then enables the writing of knowledge that has been etched onto the protagonists' bodies through their experiences, translating them into a widely accessible form without removing the personal or spiritual elements encapsulated therein.

Historical contexts and religious frameworks of Santería and Vodou

Over the course of Cuban and Haitian history, Santería and Vodou have been variously described in terms such as *brujería* (witchcraft) or pagan superstition, collections of animistic beliefs, folklore, and symbioses or syncretic religions based on folk Catholicism, West

³ The *orisha* are not gods or deities as understood in Western terms, but rather are spiritual 'archetypes' or 'personified natural forces' who interact with adherents (*orisha* are also referred to as *santos* in Cuba due to their association with the Catholic saints) (Matibag 1996, 46; Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 2011, 42). A similar description can be made of the *lwa*, the spirits that form the Vodou pantheon. It should be noted that the spelling and pluralisation of *orisha* is not fixed in scholarship discussing the religion; it is sometimes spelt *oricha* and also often pluralised with an 's' (*orishas/orichas*). In the interest of clarity, this analysis will employ *orisha* for both the singular and plural, remaining consistent with the Haitian Kreyòl *lwa* – its official Kreyòl spelling – which is not pluralised in this fashion.

African beliefs and other cultural influences each rendered in their respective historical and political contexts.⁴ Santeros and vodouisants, while rejecting such loaded and pejorative terms as witchcraft and superstition, do not subscribe to a single definition of their religious traditions; they remain highly personal belief systems, the purpose and value of which differ among adherents. As Brandon (1993, 11) and Michel (2006, 33), among others, have observed in relation to these two religious traditions, they comprise basic attitudes towards life which are expressed in various ways and contexts through each aspect of a person's daily existence, and are reflections of the distinct Afro-Cuban and Afro-Haitian contexts in which these expressions of belief, doctrine and ritual take place. Through interaction with the *orisha* or *lwa* and the spirits of ancestors, devotees seek to facilitate their negotiation of everyday life, at times petitioning for help in overcoming specific obstacles, for example, and at others propitiating the *orisha* and *lwa* for feast days or to keep a promise made.⁵ 'The goal of religious work is health, wealth, and love', Ayorinde (2004, 14) has noted in reference to Santería, this her translation into English of the phrase often repeated among santeros, *salud, amor, dinero*, which pithily encapsulates the everyday needs of adherents. A similar understanding exists among vodouisants who also seek to maintain or better their situation through their interactions with the *lwa* (Murray 1984, 195; Desmangles 1992, 5). In short, a close relationship is formed between santeros/vodouisants and the *orisha/lwa*, one which is integral to practitioners' daily lives.

Before looking at the historical importance and the tenets of Santería and Vodou in greater depth, it is important to consider the notion of syncretism with regard to African-derived

⁴ For further discussion see, for example, Brandon 1993, 1-8 and 79-98; Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 2011, 13-17; Desmangles 1992, 1-15; Bellegarde-Smith and Michel 2006, xvii-xxvii.

⁵ Feast days for the *orisha* and *lwa* usually coincide with those of their Catholic counterparts. On these days offerings are made to the *orisha* or *lwa* associated with a particular temple or community, or those with whom an adherent him/herself is associated. In this way, santeros and vodouisants celebrate the birthdays of their most important spirits as they would a member of their family's or one of their friends'. Offerings may also be given to particular *orisha* or *lwa* on their feast days as thanks for service rendered or in order to propitiate for services to be petitioned.

religious traditions in the Caribbean, as referenced in the definitions above. In the introduction to their monograph *Creole Religions of the Caribbean*, Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert (2011, 4-11) juxtapose the terms syncretism and creolization, underlining the multivalency accorded to these concepts which at times have been employed as synonyms.⁶ However, as numerous scholars have demonstrated, syncretism and creolization are polemical terms as they have been employed to convey notions of hierarchy, of tainting and/or whitening, and to suggest unequal binarial relationships between component elements of the syncretic or creolised framework. Brandon (1993, 7-8; 158) states, in particular reference to Afro-Cuban religious traditions, that syncretism is often perceived in a Eurocentric fashion as a conflict whereby one religion syncretises with another, the followers of which do not realise they are combining two religious traditions which then results in an impure religion that lacks in truth. The element of confusion inherent therein has been noted by Shaw and Stewart (1994, 4), and the Eurocentrism and impurity cited by Brandon gave rise to the categorisation of syncretic forms as ‘deviant’ (Droogers 1989, 14; 20). Moreover, as Barnett (1996, 14) observes, the descriptor ‘syncretic’ was only employed in Cuba to denote African-derived religious traditions despite other religious forms being products of this process. The hierarchy inherent in such a formulation whereby Catholicism is considered superior to the African-derived traditions was seemingly countered by Ortiz (1947, 103) in his theory of transculturation, in which he concluded that the Hispanic and the African cultures mutually influenced each other to engender a mixture of the two, likening it to two parents having a child. Métraux (1959, 324) perceived Vodou in much the same way, describing it as ‘African rites and Christian observances [...] mixe[d] together, in almost equal proportions’, though he continued to use the term syncretism. In this vein, other critics such as Bastide (1971, 153-62) have outlined various types of syncretism in the Americas, which have then

⁶ Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert also highlight the use by various scholars of the terms *mestizaje* and hybridity as synonyms of creolization and syncretism, a phenomenon which is discussed below.

been employed in subsequent works such as Desmangles' (1992) study of Vodou and Catholicism in Haiti.

As noted above, however, each of these definitions of syncretism has been formulated as based on a binarial framework; the syncretic religions, although continually dynamic, are a product of the admixture of two notionally "purer" sets of religious beliefs and practices. More recent scholarship has focused on the creolised nature of Santería and Vodou, therefore, with Cros Sandoval (2006, 140) describing Santería as a 'worldview' drawing together a variety of religious beliefs and practices in Cuba, and Bellegarde-Smith (2005a, 62) defining Vodou as an amalgam of traditions born out of 'a struggle between uneven forces'. Although a polemical term in its own right due to its racialised nature (expounded upon below), creolization does recognise the necessary "creole" nature of these religious traditions, that they are not just the sum of the parts from which they derive but the product of a unique set of historical, political and cultural processes within Cuba and Haiti. These theoretical extrapolations aside, it is clear that both African-derived and Catholic traditions are present in Santería and Vodou rites and practices. Important in this regard is the perception of Santería/Vodou and Catholicism by santeros and vodouisants as mutually dependent rather than contradictory religious systems.

One aspect of this process of creolization often highlighted is the association of the *orisha/lwa* with particular Catholic saints. A product of what Desmangles (1992, 10-11) has referred to as 'symbiosis by identity', debate remains regarding the exact processes through which such associations occurred. Some posit that these affiliations are the result of a desire to mask African deities with Catholic saints thus permitting their continued worship, while others have suggested that the Church permitted similarities to be drawn as a step in the process of proselytization (Brandon 1993, 69). Moreover, still others point to a process

likened to religious acculturation whereby saints known to devotees were incorporated into the pantheon and/or assigned as creole avatars (*caminos* in Santería) of the *orisha* or *lwa*; in short, a revision and transformation of ‘the religion of the masters’ (Apter 1991, 254).⁷ The points of convergence between the *orisha/lwa* and saints indicate that such associations foreground specific attributes of the manner in which the saint is represented that ‘correspond to the age, functions, or symbols’ of their counterparts (Bastien 1966, 65; see also Desmangles 1992). However, these creolised renderings of the saints are one example of another important aspect of Vodou, Santería and other African-derived religious traditions in the colonial and post-colonial Caribbean, that they are religions of resistance.⁸ As these critics have demonstrated, Santería and Vodou developed in contexts both of tolerance and disparagement of African-derived beliefs and practices and of imposition of the Catholic faith by the colonial powers, with the result that they were – and continue to be – placed in positions outside those occupied by the dominant culture. Marginalised thus but constituting a locus of strength for participants, these traditions were – and are – a site of resistance, as will now be explored.

In his discussion of resistance and opposition in Afro-Creole cultures, Burton (1997, 6-8) draws on de Certeau’s distinction between resistance and opposition and contends that an ‘(Afro-)Creole culture’ cannot truly reside outside of the dominant system since, by virtue of its creoleness, it reproduces that very dominant system if only in its underlying structures. As such, he concludes that Afro-Creole cultures – of which he uses Haitian Vodou as an example – ‘tend to be much more *cultures of opposition* than *cultures of resistance*’ (7, original emphasis). In spite of this, however, it must be recognised that, although from a wider

⁷ In addition to Apter, Desmangles and Brandon cited above, for further discussion of these processes in reference to Santería, see, for example, Murphy 2001; Ayorinde 2004; Cros Sandoval 2006; and with regard to Vodou, Price-Mars 1928; Métraux 1959; Bastide 1971; Laguerre 1989.

⁸ The terminology ‘religion of resistance’ has been used in numerous works in reference Santería and Vodou, for further discussion see: Apter 1991; Cros Sandoval 2006, 309-11; Brandon 1993, 88-92; Hurbon 1987, 158-59.

perspective these traditions may be challenging the dominant culture on its own ground (to use Burton's terminology), when considered on a smaller scale such as that of the community or individual, Santería and Vodou are sites which enable resistance by employing notions which do not form part of the dominant culture (as this thesis demonstrates), and, in certain historical or political contexts, are also forced to occupy a position outside of that culture.⁹

Much has been written regarding the origins of Vodou in the plantation and maroon communities prior to the Revolution. Bastien (1966), Laguerre (1989) and Desmangles (1992), among others, have all indicated that religious systems based on the African gods, rites and rituals which survived the Middle Passage developed in these communities and that, over time, they incorporated elements of Catholicism to become a multifaceted belief system that sustains its devotees in their earthly life and beyond.¹⁰ In addition to the continued practice of African rites and rituals by slaves and maroons in various 'cults', described by Laguerre (1989, 25) as a 'politics of survival', the notion of Vodou as a religion of resistance is encapsulated by the figures of Makandal before the Revolution and Boukman as part of it. These two figures, both Vodou priests, have been credited in popular belief and elsewhere with sowing the seeds of revolution. With regard to Makandal, whether a pre-revolutionary maroon leader as popularly described or merely a man bestowed with these qualities after his death as Geggus (2002, 75) contends, Vodou was and still is believed to have been central to the uprising he is purported to have been planning to lead. Boukman, for his part, is repeatedly cited as having led the Bois-Caïman ceremony in August 1791 on the eve of the initial uprising that is regarded as having ultimately led to independence in 1804. Although

⁹ This theme of African-derived religions as loci of resistance runs throughout this thesis. The possibility this affords Haitian Vodou was negated to a large degree in the context of François Duvalier's dictatorship by Papa Doc himself, when the practice of Vodou in Haiti was subsumed by the dominant culture and therefore could only occupy a position of opposition, as analysed in chapter five.

¹⁰ Geggus (2002) has questioned whether Vodou as such had indeed developed at this time. However, whether or not it was recognisable as Vodou per se does not alter the fact that over time the rites and rituals practised during slavery became the religious tradition that is now referred to as Haitian Vodou.

Geggus (2002, 82) once again questions the veracity of these events, what is important to note is that Boukman is *believed* to have officiated a Vodou ceremony at this point and that Vodou then ‘bound the members of the conspiracy and [...] served as a catalyst when the time for action came’ (Bastien 1966, 42).¹¹ The Haitian Revolution continues to be an integral part of Vodou ceremony and symbolism, as Murphy (1994, 12) notes, and the role of Vodou in the revolutionary struggle remains an important example of its status as a site of resistance.

The relations between Afro-Cuban and Afro-Haitian religious traditions and the state also exemplify the trend of the former being placed in a position of resistance and enabling resistance. While the *cabildos* (brotherhoods) – made up by slaves and freedmen in Cuba and from which the various Afro-Cuban religious traditions developed – were tolerated by the Church as part of its project of proselytisation, the African-derived religious practices associated with them were forced underground towards the end of the nineteenth century (Brandon 1993, 82-3). A period of Europeanization followed independence from Spanish rule in a bid to ‘de-Africanize Cuban culture’ (85), and although an effort to counter this by the literary and cultural *movimiento afrocubano* from the late 1920s through to 1940 had limited success from the standpoint of the visibility of Santería in cultural production, politically Afro-Cuban practices and the black population continued to be marginalised (Matibag 1996, 87; 93; Ayorinde 2004, 49-52; 67-69).¹² Initially, the populist revolution of 1959 saw those associated with these religious traditions stand to benefit from the social

¹¹ Notably, in the context of literature Alejo Carpentier draws on the centrality of Makandal and Boukman in accounts of the Haitian Revolution and the importance of Vodou therein in his 1949 novel *El reino de este mundo*.

¹² The *movimiento afrocubano* developed from the political ambition enshrined in the *Partido Independiente de Color*, and in spite of its shortcomings, Ortiz’s *afrocubanismo* at least allowed Santería to be legitimated in cultural production and express true *cubanidad*. For an overview of the presentation of Afro-Cubans in theatre see Turner’s (1994) book chapter, “El negro en el teatro cubano”, and for specific discussion of *teatro bufo*, especially during the second half of the nineteenth century, see Martiatu’s (2009) edited volume, *Bufo y nación: Interpelaciones desde el presente*.

Note: Inés María Martiatu usually only uses her first surname on her publications, but at times does also append it with her second, rendering her name Inés María Martiatu Terry. Throughout this thesis the name used is that found on the respective publication, and bibliographical references can be found under Martiatu and Martiatu Terry as appropriate.

programmes put in place and to a certain extent Afro-Cuban culture and religious traditions were espoused by the state (104-107). However, following the regime's declaration of support for Marxist-Leninism, Afro-Cuban religious traditions were once again subjected to restrictions, deemed counterrevolutionary – initiated members of any religious tradition were barred from the *Partido Comunista de Cuba* and the *Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas* –, and only officially sanctioned as secularised folkloric performances illustrating Cuba's Creole culture. Reinforcing the notion of African-derived religious traditions as sites of resistance, however, those adherents now considered as outside the dominant culture due to its prohibition of their religious practices increased in number despite the restrictions imposed, as a 1991 study by the *Departamento de Estudios Sociorreligiosos* concluded (Ayorinde 2004, 123). Furthermore, in light of these policies which served to 'exclude blacks from positions of authority, to silence discussions on racism, and to acknowledge only the process of assimilation' (Matibag 1996, 230), Santería and other Afro-Cuban traditions remained a repository for these African-derived practices, thus continuing their culture of resistance.

The relationship of Vodou with the Haitian state has also been one characterised by long-term marginalisation through the nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth centuries, before being appropriated by the state under François Duvalier. In spite of the central role Vodou was considered to have played in the Haitian Revolution, upon independence Catholicism was declared the official religion. Although the significant threat of recolonisation and/or economic isolation due to a European backlash provoked by declaring Vodou the state religion of the world's first black republic must be recognised, the act of declaring Haiti a Catholic state placed Vodou outside the state apparatus once again and therefore in a position of resistance (Laguerre 1989, 19; Bellegarde-Smith 2005a, 54). Indeed, Ramsey (2011, 51-52) argues that the placement of Vodou outside the law was in part due to its role in empowering the slaves during the Revolution and that it then offered an alternative power

hierarchy which threatened social – and later political – cohesion (see Ramsey 2011, 54-117). It should be noted that the Catholic Church refused to recognise Haiti as a Catholic nation until 1860; however, the 1860 Concordat reinstated Catholic hegemony and attempts were made to continue the work of Haiti's first three black presidents in suppressing the increasingly established practice of Vodou (Bellegarde-Smith 2005a, 55; Desmangles 1992, 43-45).¹³ Remaining marginalised, if tolerated at times, the election of François Duvalier as president in 1957 and the subsequent installation of his dictatorial regime saw Vodou subsumed by the state, thus negating any possibility of resistance. Although Papa Doc never elevated the legal status of Vodou, he was an *houngan* and cultivated the image that he 'was one with, was possessed by, was Baron Samedi', thereby incorporating Vodou into the Haitian state that he also personified (Johnson 2006, 438).¹⁴ Absorbing the networks of *ounfò* (Vodou temples) into the state apparatus to impose his rule, Vodou priests became members of Papa Doc's nationwide militia, officially known as *les Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale*, but more commonly referred to as the *Tonton Macoutes* (often shortened to *Macoutes*).¹⁵ Upon his death in 1971 François Duvalier's regime was continued by his nineteen-year-old son Jean-Claude, appointed by his father, who was regarded by Papa Doc's ministers as a playboy lacking the necessary experience to continue his father's project. Although Baby Doc seemed less fervent in his belief and practice of Vodou, its alignment with the state through the Macoutes and the performance of rituals by and for the Duvalier family continued nonetheless (Abbott 2011, 195-96).¹⁶ It was not until after the fall of the regime in February 1986 with the Duvaliers' exile to France that Vodou was accorded legal recognition as an

¹³ It should also be noted that Vodou was recognised by the state at times during this period, most notably between 1847 and 1858 under President Faustin Soulouque.

¹⁴ An *houngan* is a male Vodou priest; the term for a female priest is *manbo*. A *bòkò*, sometimes translated into English as 'sorcerer', is a Vodou priest who uses his powers for harmful purposes.

¹⁵ As noted above, François Duvalier's appropriation of Vodou and his embodiment of the state are explored in greater detail in chapter five of this thesis. For a detailed exposition of François and Jean-Claude Duvalier's use of the networks provided by the *ounfò*, see Laguerre 1989, 103-120.

¹⁶ Speaking to Riccardo Orizio (2007, 148-49) in 2001, Jean-Claude Duvalier reaffirmed the importance of Vodou during the Haitian Revolution. He also stated that he believes in Vodou, as well as the values of harmony and solidarity it entails.

official religion alongside Catholicism in the Haitian constitution of 1987. This followed a period of *dechoukaj* during which Vodou priests and temples were attacked due to their association with the state, provoking the foundation of the *Bodè Nasyonal* by *houngan* Max Beauvoir to counter the effects on Vodou of the Duvalier regimes.¹⁷ Despite now being legally recognised, Vodou does not necessarily remain in the position of opposition into which it was forced under the Duvaliers as a corollary of being enshrined in law, as Burton contends. Rather, as a religious tradition that continues to be marginalised in spite of adherents having been accorded the right to practice, it remains in a position of resistance on the periphery of society, with vodouisants struggling for legitimacy in the face of the increased influence of Protestantism alongside Catholicism on many aspects of official and cultural life.¹⁸ Moreover, Santería and Vodou also constitute a space from and in which to resist and subvert the dominant gender-based hierarchies that continue to exist in Haitian and Cuban society, as this thesis demonstrates.

As noted above, the *orisha* and *lwa* in Santería and Vodou are spiritual archetypes which have been associated with Catholic saints through a process of creolization. Both religious traditions function on a basis of reciprocal personal and communal relationships between

¹⁷ Having returned to Haiti in 1973 after studying and working abroad, Max Beauvoir was initiated as an *houngan* and founded the Peristyle de Mariani near Port-au-Prince. He was accorded the title *Ati Nasyonal* or ‘Chef Suprême’ of Haitian Vodou by the *Bodè Nasyonal*’s daughter organisation, *Konfederasyon Nasyonal Vodou Ayisyen*, in 2008 (for further biographical details see, for example, Max Beauvoir 2008, 197-199; for discussions of Beauvoir and national organisations to represent Vodou, see, among others, Cosentino 1993 and Merrill 1996). With regard to Cuban Santería, Babalao Antonio Castañeda, president of the *Asociación Cultural Yoruba de Cuba*, high priest of Santería and member of the Cuban national assembly, is considered to be a spokesperson for the religious tradition on the national stage.

¹⁸ See Richman (2012) for an examination of the influence of Protestantism in Haiti. Most recently, President Michel Martelly undertook on 6 May 2012 to ‘remettre « Haïti à Jésus de Nazareth »’ [*rededicate Haiti to Jesus of Nazareth*] at a Protestant conference in Delmas, Port-au-Prince. While no specific threat to the legal status of Vodou has been articulated by the President’s office, the language of some of those pastors quoted in *Le Nouvelliste*’s article ‘Le secteur protestant prend le président Martelly au mot’ on 6 August 2012 – a desire to ‘changer la mentalité des Haïtiens’ and ‘mettre un terme au règne des ténèbres, celui des démons’ [*change the Haitian mentality*] and ‘end the reign of darkness, the reign of the devils’] (Cincir 2012) – is reminiscent of that used by American televangelist Pat Robertson on his television channel The Christian Broadcasting Network after the 2010 earthquake when he spoke of Haiti having ‘swor[n] a pact to the devil’ and that they needed to ‘turn to God’. See McAlister’s (2012) ‘From Slave Revolt to a Blood Pact with Satan: The Evangelical Rewriting of Haitian History’ for an analysis of this depiction of the Bois-Caïman ceremony as ‘blood pact with Satan’.

adherents and the *orisha* and *lwa*: devotees offer sacrifices to the *orisha* and *lwa* to propitiate them and give them sustenance, and some practitioners are ‘horses’ who can be ‘mounted’ by their *orisha de cabecera* or *mèt tèt* (the primary *orisha* or *lwa* with whom they are associated) enabling the latter to manifest itself during ceremonies.¹⁹ The *orisha* and *lwa* also offer advice and help solve problems by manipulating the physical and spiritual worlds to provide knowledge and favour practitioners’ well-being. In Santería and Vodou there is no separation between the physical and spiritual planes; the two coexist with the *orisha* and *lwa*, the spiritual elements that inhabit a person’s body (in Vodou the *gwo bonanj* and the *ti bonanj*), and the spirits of ancestors moving between the two.²⁰ Divination by means of initiation, sacrifice and the interpretation of the will of the *orisha* and *lwa* is central to these traditions. In Santería, the latter is often achieved using three main processes of divination: *obi* or *biagué* (with four coconut shells), *dilogún* (with sixteen cowry shells) and *Ifá* (the expression of the voice of Olodumare through Orula, using divining chains or palm nuts and a *Tablero de Ifá* (divining board)). *Ifá*, the most complex, can only be performed by a *babalao* (male priest) or, more controversially, an *iyanífá* (female priest), though it must be noted that the initiation of *iyanífá* is rejected by a large proportion of the Cuban Santería community. This ‘communal ethic’, as Murphy (1994, 42) terms it, of both religious traditions is a key part of the ritual they comprise; not only is spirit possession the embodiment of an *orisha* or *lwa* by a devotee which then must be witnessed and interpreted by the community for it to be of benefit, the rituals and practices that form part of initiation and ceremony in Santería and Vodou require the involvement of members of the *ilé* or *ounfò*, and at times the wider religious community,

¹⁹ A santero or vodouisant is ‘mounted’ by a spirit when they become possessed. Possession in Santería and Vodou is usually expressed in terms of an *orisha* or *lwa* riding an initiate or ‘horse’. The sexual metaphor inherent in this terminology is discussed below and in chapter three.

²⁰ The *gwo bonanj* has been described as a person’s life force or the equivalent in Vodou of the Christian notion of a ‘soul’; the *ti bonanj* is the source of a person’s consciousness and individuality, which is displaced by the *lwa* during spirit possession.

as both active participants and witnesses.²¹ As will be demonstrated, this notion of community runs through each of the chapters that follow, aiding the articulation of the narratives the works of fiction comprise. Before discussing spirit possession and issues of gender within the Santería and Vodou communities in greater detail, it is important to outline the associations and interactions between the *orisha* and the *lwa* which can then be manifested when practitioners are mounted. The Santería and Vodou pantheons are formed of numerous divinities, each with several *caminos* or avatars, of which the most pertinent to the main texts analysed in this thesis will be exemplified below.

Santería: Ochún, Yemayá and Changó

The Supreme Being in Santería is Olorun/Olodumare/Olofi, who embodies the creator, the universal divine essence and creation itself (though it should be noted that a correlation with the tripartite Christian God has been described as somewhat facile) (Bolívar Aróstegui 1990, 66). Below the Supreme Being in the hierarchy are the other *orisha*, of whom this discussion will focus on Ochún, Yemayá and Changó as three of the most popular *orisha* invoked in literary works and those upon whom the relationships in the subsequent texts focus.

Ochún, identified with La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, is the *orisha* associated with fresh water, love, female sensuality and sexuality (Bolívar Aróstegui 1990, 116; Barnett 1997, 94-95). La Caridad del Cobre herself is the patron saint of Cuba (thereby aligning Ochún with the Cuban nation) and appears in folk tradition to save ‘los tres Juanes’ – variously described as one *mestizo*, one black slave and one Amerindian, or two Amerindians and a Cuban-born black man – from drowning, each of whom worked in the copper mine of El Cobre from where she derives her name (Matibag 1996, 27; Murphy 2001, 88; Cabrera 1980, 56). In

²¹ The *ilé* and *ounfò* are the respective terms in Santería and Vodou for the religious communities centred on a specific *casa de santo* or temple and headed by a *padrino* and/or *madrina* in Santería and an *houngan* and/or *manbo* in Vodou.

addition to representing the ‘Cuban everyman’ by appearing to the three ethnic groupings of the day, La Caridad del Cobre herself is depicted as *mulata*, thus representing ‘something of the racial and class dynamics of Cuban society’ (Murphy 2001, 88). In her different *caminos* Ochún displays a variety of characteristics often considered as virtues in women: flirtatious and coquettish, beautiful, sensuous and industrious (Barnet 1997, 94). As Ochún Ololodí, she has a serious nature and is known for her gift at divination – thereby associated with the *babalao* – which she no longer uses, however, in her *camino* as Panchágara she is a capricious seductress who seeks to ‘wrest men away from all women’ (Castellanos 2001, 35; Barnet 1997, 95). Her colour is yellow, like the vestments of La Caridad del Cobre, and in her dances she requests ‘oñí’ (honey), symbolic of her sweetness and ‘the amorous essence of life’ (95). The *patakí* – myths recounting the interactions and relationships between the *orisha* – tell of Ochún’s turbulent love affair with Changó during which he repeatedly humiliated her and when he moved away, she renounced her possessions and followed him;²² despite this, Changó never really loved her (Lachatañeré 1992, 50-52). Ochún has been described as one of the most venerated of the Cuban *orisha*, not only due to her identification with Cuba’s patron saint, but also for her ‘sensual grace and Creole mischievousness’ (Barnet 1997, 95).

Yemayá, associated with La Virgen de Regla and sister of Ochún, is the *orisha* of motherhood, the sea and salt water. In Lucumí tradition she is said to have helped her sister cross the ocean from Africa and is considered to be the mother figure of all the *orisha* (92-93).²³ Yemayá’s colours are navy blue and white, as are the vestments of her Catholic counterpart, who is a black Virgin, compared to Ochún and Caridad del Cobre who are *mulata*. She has numerous *caminos*, at times calm and sensual, at others angry and vengeful, and she raises her

²² There are various ways in which the word *patakí* is pluralised in scholarship: *patakís*, *patakíes*, *patakines* or simply *patakí* with the singular or plural understood from context. In order to remain consistent with other terms used in Santería such as *orisha*, *patakí* will be used for the singular and plural.

²³ The term Lucumí refers to traditions of Yoruba origin in Cuba, and is sometimes used as a name for the ritual language often used in Santería rituals and ceremonies. It was also used as a term to describe slaves of Yoruba origin.

children ‘with absolute motherly rigor’ (92). One *patakí* often referenced regarding Yemayá recounts that she commits incest with her son Changó, but in others she is said to be Changó’s wife (Lachatañeré 1992, 37-38; Barnet 1997, 93). Another pertinent *patakí* is that of Yemayá as Orula’s wife – Orula is the master of divination and all *babalao* are initiated as his sons –, which is often told to explain why women are traditionally excluded from using *Ifá*. Using his divining board while he was away to earn money through the *derechos* (fees) paid by those coming to consult *Ifá*, Yemayá earned a reputation for being gifted at divination. This then led to her being discovered by her husband who, furious that she had touched what was prohibited, pronounced ‘A woman cannot know more than I! In this house I am the only seer!’ (Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 2011, 52).

Changó is a warrior *orisha* who is master of fire, thunder, lightning and the sacred *batá* drums, and as such is considered to represent Afro-Cuban male virility (Bolívar Aróstegui 1990, 108; Cros Sandoval 2006, 235-36). However, his status as the epitome of the virile man might seem to be undermined by his most common association with Santa Bárbara since, on the surface, being identified with a chaste female Catholic martyr would dilute Changó’s macho image and nature.²⁴ Bascom (1972, 13-14) has described the identification of the two as ‘puzzling’, continuing to note a disparity in the way in which some of his informants saw Changó: while some viewed him as an *orisha* who changed sex or had distinct male and female manifestations, the majority rejected this idea, reiterating his manliness. However, one *patakí* describes Changó as having to disguise himself as a woman to escape Ogún, and Cros Sandoval (2006, 235-36) notes that this ‘gender issue’ has precedents in Nigeria. Notwithstanding, there are many similarities between the symbols and attributes of Changó and Santa Bárbara: they are both crowned, associated with conflict, fire and the colour red.²⁵

²⁴ As Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert (2011, 51) note, in other *caminos* Changó’s Catholic counterparts are Saint Patrick, Saint Mark and Saint George.

²⁵ See Cros Sandoval (2006, 223-236) for further discussion of Changó.

Whether the identification with Santa Bárbara does indeed undermine Changó's virility or not, this association, along with those *caminos* and *patakí* of Ochún and Yemayá that could be perceived as contradictory, emphasises an important characteristic of the *orisha* and of the *lwa* described by Castellanos (2001, 43) thus, 'Far from being incompatible categories, life and death, maleness and femaleness, illness and its cure ultimately meet and feed upon each other.' The different elements that make up the archetypes that are the Santería and Vodou divinities come together to form a complex, interdependent whole, the constituents of which cannot be viewed in isolation. By means of illustration, Moreno Vega (2000, 14) has likened the different *caminos* to the different roles an individual might fulfil – mother, daughter, grandmother, professional, santera –, all separate but which coexist, overlap and influence each other.

As *orisha* who in their different *caminos* interact with each other as family members, lovers, and at points adversaries, the relationships between Ochún, Yemayá and Changó enable a multifaceted discourse regarding womanhood and women's participation in society to be delineated when transposed to fictional works. By situating their narratives in the spiritual world which draws concepts such as sexuality, sensuality, death, vengefulness and motherhood together, authors can then tackle machismo – a central concern in these *patakí* in the form of Changó – in a way that recognises the complexities involved in these interactions in both religious and secular contexts.

Vodou: Ezili Freda, Ezili Dantò and Baron Samedi

The Vodou pantheon is divided into two different *nanchon* (nations), the Rada and the Kongo-Petwo, often referred to as simply Petwo (though some scholars, such as Desmangles (1992), render three *nanchon* by separating the Kongo and Petwo rites). While these divisions are not rigid and different avatars of the same *lwa* are worshipped in both (Fleurant

2006, 47), there are certain general characteristics of each that it would be pertinent to note briefly. The Rada are considered to reflect quite closely the *lwa* transported with the slaves and are described as *lwa dous* or sweet-tempered, while the Petwo comprise elements of the Kongo spirituality but have been creolised in Haiti and are *lwa cho*, often violent or forceful (Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 2011, 125). Ezili Freda, of the Rada rite, is Vodou's equivalent of Ochún, and similarly she is a beautiful light-skinned mulatta who is the *lwa* of love and sexuality. Ezili Dantò, the second most popular manifestation of this *lwa*, belongs to the Petwo rite, and like Santería's Yemayá is identified with motherhood, is black, a warrior and fighter, and, some say, a lesbian (Michel, Bellegarde-Smith and Racine-Toussaint 2006, 70; Conner 2005, 146-47). A third manifestation of Ezili, Ezili Je Wouj (Ezili Red Eyes), is Ezili Dantò's knife-wielding alter ego, 'a dangerous and offensive spirit who can cause harm to recalcitrant devotees' (Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 2011, 131; Desmangles 1992, 95).

Regarding their Catholic counterparts, Ezili Freda is associated with Our Lady of Sorrows, dressed in light blue with heart-shaped pendants surrounding her and a dagger in her hands. The knife is an important accoutrement of the Ezilis as a whole, and appears in both Ezili Freda and Ezili Dantò's *vèvè* (ritual drawings), while the heart is the other main component and represents the womb (143-44). Ezili Dantò is associated with a particular manifestation of Mater Salvatoris, a black Virgin known as Our Lady of Czestochowa, is said to be a single mother and a 'warrior for the poor and oppressed who fought [...] during the Haitian Revolution' (Brown 2010 [1991], 228; Desmangles 1992, 146). Her status as a woman who is central to Vodou spirituality has led to critics underlining the fact that Vodou 'speaks to the issue of women's equality and inequality', an observation based on the fact that women who are often placed in a subaltern position are represented positively in this religious tradition, itself often regarded as inferior (Michel, Bellegarde-Smith and Racine-Toussaint 2006, 71).

The child Ezili Dantò is depicted as carrying in the chromolithographs of her as a black virgin is her daughter Anaïs or Anaïse, while the scars on her cheek are most often described as wounds sustained during the fighting of the Haitian Revolution, although alternatively it is sometimes said they are the result of a fight with Ezili Freda over a lover or with Ezili Mapiang who wanted to take Anaïs (Brown 2010 [1991], 246; 256; Déita 1993, 272-74).

The equivalent of Changó in Vodou is the *lwa* Ogou Chango, an avatar of Ogou since the distinction still extant between the Yoruba Shango and Ogun – and therefore the Lucumí Changó and Ogún – has disappeared in Haiti (Brown 1997, 78). Ogou Chango is associated with the political arm of the military, though is much less commonly venerated in Haiti than another manifestation of Ogou, Ogou Feray, a warrior *lwa* considered a national hero (71; Déita 1993, 175-76; Desmangles 1992, 148).²⁶ Similar to the amorous relationships between Changó and both Ochún and Yemayá, Ogou is married to Ezili Freda and is Ezili Dantò's lover (Brown 2010 [1991], 248; 235). Moreover, Ogou's qualities as a warrior, coupled with his infidelity and drunkenness, illustrate his status as the archetypal male, though with regard to male sexual prowess and lewdness this position is taken by Gede (379-80).

The Gede are a group of Vodou spirits that are neither Rada nor Petwo but are described as a *fanmi* (family) and reside in the world of the dead (Brown 1997, 84-85). With Baron Samedi at their head and therefore the keeper of the cemetery, the Gede stand at the crossroads between the living and the dead and draw together the notions of sex, death and humour (368; 361). Appearing at the end of Vodou ceremonies, after the Rada and the Petwo, they mark the transition of the ceremony to a more raucous nature with their bawdy language and lascivious jokes. In addition to the cross, they are symbolised by a large wooden phallus,

²⁶ As shown in chapter two in reference to Mayra Montero's *Del rojo de su sombra*, Ogou Feray is an important *lwa* in the Haitian-Dominican Gagá tradition. In this novel his name is transcribed as Ogún Ferraille.

both in religious ceremony and in wider art (the Atis Rezistans sculptors on Grand Rue in Port-au-Prince depict their Gede sculptures, made from used car parts and other discarded items, with large wooden penises) (Desmangles 2010, 197).²⁷ The Gede are also often portrayed wearing sunglasses, an important symbol when considering the association between the Gede and the Duvaliers' Macoutes who were issued sunglasses as part of their uniform (see Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 2011, 128). Although the moniker of Tonton Macoute is taken from Haitian folklore, referring to the bogeymen who kidnapped naughty children at night and carried them away in their *makout* (straw satchels), the militia are symbolically linked to both Zaka (a peasant *lwa* dressed in denim) and the Gede, the latter due to their status as the omnipresent agents of the Duvalierist state, carrying out the orders of François Duvalier (Baron Samedi). Derived from Papa Doc's embodiment of the Baron, further symbolism between those participating in the Duvalier regime and the Gede can be seen in the similar way in which the two are organised since the Gede form a government comprising several ministers and numerous spirits, the latter of whom serve both the ministers and Baron Samedi (Déita 1990, 195). Furthermore, the inherent patriarchy of the Duvalierist state embodied by Papa Doc finds reflection in Baron Samedi also: as head of the *fanmi*, epitome of masculinity through his sexual prowess and the power he wields, the Baron's wife, Grann Brijit, is subordinate to him. For the Baron and Gede, Brown (2010 [1991], 380) suggests, fixed gender roles are fundamental and his 'domination of the realm of the dead reflects a time when male ancestors, as well as living males, held all the power in Haitian families.'

As intimately connected *lwa* who represent various forms of sexuality, motherhood and death, the popular Ezilis serve as a counterpart in the spiritual realm of the multiple forms of

²⁷ For further discussion of the Atis Rezistans collective see Smith (2012) and Cosentino's (1995) edited volume *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*.

womanhood that are explored in the texts analysed in this thesis. As complementary yet at times conflicting entities who are fiercely independent, they allow a wider view of female participation and agency in society to be represented and counter restrictive frameworks that seek to circumscribe the roles women fulfil, rendering them subordinate to men. Gede also conflates sex and death, though at the same time he embodies patriarchal authority. This latter association is essential to the explorations of the notions of sex and death in chapters five and six.

Women's participation and the gendered framework of spirit possession

Intrinsic to the idea that Santería and Vodou are loci of resistance is the notion that both are sites of increased participation for women. In reference to Vodou, Michel (2006, 38) writes that women are considered to be on an equal footing with men as female priests, *lwa* and vodouisants who participate fully in the religious community, a fact that constitutes an example of gender equality in a society to which, as N'Zengou-Tayo (1998) and the directors of *Poto Mitan: Haitian Women, Pillars of the Global Economy* Bergan and Schuller (2009) have noted, the full extent of women's contributions have not been recognised. A further example of this noted by Dayan (1995, 47) is that of Cécile Fatiman, the *manbo* who assisted Boukman at the Bois-Caïman ceremony but is not mentioned in standard histories. In contrast, in Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* Macandal is trained in Vodou practice by a *manbo*, thereby recognising in literary texts the important position female vodouisants held as part of the revolutionary struggle for which the praise is often reserved for men. Serving in part to rectify the deletion of women's participation from historical accounts, Carpentier's text then exemplifies the argument forwarded in this thesis that literature drawing on the contexts of African-derived religious traditions provides a context in which women's

participation can be chronicled and recognised.²⁸ Related to this, the ‘place of security for women’ that Vodou offers was underlined in the interviews Michel, Bellegarde-Smith and Racine-Toussaint (2006, 74) conducted with ten *manbo*, one of whom, Margaret Armand, described the religious tradition as ‘provid[ing] women with that extra edge for overcoming obstacles’ in a ‘world [that] is a man’s world’. She continued, ‘the outside world looks more at the *houngan* because he is a man, though on the inside, in Vodun, there is no special or different training that distinguish men from women, though women may be more intuitive’ (74-75). When asked about her impressions of the proportion of *manbo* to *houngan* during an interview with me in July 2010, Haitian-Canadian *manbo* Jacqueline Épingle suggested that while from her perspective there is relative parity in numbers, it might seem that there are more practising *manbo* since they may feel less inhibited to identify themselves as Vodou priests in public.²⁹

The context of Santería is a little thornier when it comes to evaluating equality between male and female practitioners, however. While the historically marginalised sectors of society, including women, have a greater opportunity for participation in Santería, there are particular practices and rituals from which santeras are traditionally excluded, notably playing the sacred *batá* drums, sacrificing four-legged animals and being initiated into *Ifá*. Despite this traditional prohibition, there are a small but increasing number of women being initiated as *iyanifá*, which Tato Quiñones – *babalao*, scholar of Afro-Cuban religious traditions and filmmaker – stated has split the Santería community, the majority of whom condemn it.³⁰ M.A. Clark (2005, 151-52; 66-70) has explored this issue in her study of the gender implications in Santería ritual practices, concluding that while divination through *Ifá* often

²⁸ The writing of women’s history and the male-centred nature of historiography are explored in chapter two.

²⁹ Interestingly, Michel, Bellegarde-Smith and Racine-Toussaint’s (2006, 76) interviews suggest that class would be a contributing factor, observing that the ‘*bourgeoises* were the ones who resisted public identification as *manbo*, unable or unwilling to take the risk.’

³⁰ This interview was conducted by me along with Arsenio Castillo Martiatu at Quiñones’ home in Miramar, Havana, in June 2009.

forms an important part of Santería practice in Cuba, as a tradition it is distinct from what she terms ‘Santería proper’ – that is, one based on *oriaté* who conduct divination using the *dilogún* – which does not require *Ifá* in order for a practitioner to undergo Orisha initiation. In so doing Clark attempts to dispel the ‘myth’ that the *babalao* are the ‘high priests’ of Santería, although she does recognise that *babalao*-centred communities continue to dominate in Cuba. Lázara Menéndez, however, has outlined a different perspective expressed in interviews she conducted with a number of santeras that is based on an understanding of power as drawn from both knowledge and a close interaction with the *orisha* rather than an overtly visible equitable position with male practitioners and *babalao*.³¹ In response to Menéndez’s questions about *iyanífá*, one interviewee declared that by being initiated alongside the *babalao* she would ‘perder poder’ (lose power), being unable to dance for her *orisha* and be mounted,³² a sentiment echoed by another who stated that being mounted by her *santo de cabecera* was the key to her spiritual experience of Santería. Menéndez therefore concluded that these notions of power and freedom of participation are based on the manner in which an individual conceptualises these ideas and that while for some the traditional prohibition of women being initiated into *Ifá* was an example of the patriarchy inherent in the framework of Santería, for others this allowed them to maintain a closer personal relationship with the *orisha* unfettered by the constraints placed on the *babalao* and *iyanífá*.

As noted above, the concept of spirit possession is an inherently gendered corporeal experience whereby a santero/a or vodouisant is penetrated by an *orisha* or *lwa* who then manifests him/herself through the body of the initiate. An in-depth analysis of the gendered and performative nature of this forms part of chapter three; however, at this point a few of the

³¹ Interview conducted with Menéndez at the University of Havana in July 2009.

³² This draws on the fact that *babalao*, having been initiated into *Ifá* and therefore having Orula as their *orisha de cabecera*, cannot be mounted since Orula only expresses himself through *Ifá* divination.

key concepts involved will be outlined by means of an introduction. Importantly, spirit possession is a bi-directional process centred on the body in which both entities – the initiate and the *orisha* or *lwa* – actively participate. In her study *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, Catherine Bell (2009 [1992], 197; 222; 1997, 164) demonstrates that although ritualization – the manner in which rituals are created, deployed and reproduced – constructs ‘certain types of power relationships effective within particular social organizations’ based on dominance and subjugation, in order for ritualization to be successful it must be ‘amenable to some degree of individual appropriation’. Furthermore, spirit possession is inherently performative, constituting a bodily performance whereby the human subject inhabiting the initiate’s body is displaced by the *orisha* or *lwa*. However, during this process of manifestation the participant entities never become – in M.A. Clark’s (2004, 7) terms – the ‘self-same subject’ and neither is the *orisha* or *lwa* merely represented. Schechner (1985, 110) has described the position of a performer as one of ‘not me, not not me’; here, spirit possession constitutes a performance centred on the body in which the spirit is not the initiate, but not not the initiate, while the initiate is not the spirit, but not not the spirit. The performativity inherent in possession therefore underlines the necessary reciprocal nature of the relationship between the *orisha* or *lwa* and the initiate, a power hierarchy that Drewal (1992, 182) has likened to that which exists between a mother and child. Drawing these notions of agency and performativity in ritual together with that of possession as a source of empowerment for those mounted, the body then becomes invested with power as the nodal point between the physical and spiritual from which both domains can be influenced. As will be explored in chapter three in reference to Eugenio Hernández Espinosa’s *María Antonia*, this power can both reinforce the norms involved in ritual performance and subvert them.

Possession by the *orisha* and *lwa* and the manner in which it is described are also important from the perspective of gender, both with regard to performance and the idea of physical

possession. Indeed, in much the same vein as Butler's (1988, 519) introduction to *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*, in which she states that 'gender is instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts* [...], through the stylization of the body' (original emphasis), Senelick (1992, ix) opens the introduction to his edited volume *Gender in Performance* with 'Gender *is* performance' (original emphasis). Like performance, gender is not a fixed concept; norms of behaviour with regard to gender are created and these 'operate by requiring the embodiment of certain ideals of femininity and masculinity' (Butler 1993, 231). However, by virtue of being a negotiation between these two poles, it is when the 'continuous act' of putting on gender, 'invariably under constraint [...], is mistaken for a natural or linguistic given [...that] power is relinquished to expand the cultural field bodily through subversive performances of various kinds' (Butler 1988, 531). Namely, it is when gender is no longer understood as performance but rather as the mere repetition of acts that the gendered subject loses the power of subversion and resistance.

This fluidity of gender and the notion that it is a performance are exemplified in spirit possession. In addition to the fact that many *orisha* and *lwa* have both male and female avatars or are considered androgynous and thus illustrate the fluidity of the concept of gender, the assigned sex of the *orisha* or *lwa* who mounts an adherent during spirit possession may or may not correlate with that of its 'horse'.³³ In this not uncommon instance, the gender performed is that aligned with the embodied spirit, not that of the initiate. In Santería, although the 'cultural genitals' which the embodied *orisha* are accorded may alter in light of whether the *caballo* is male or female – most notably, male priests mounted by female *orisha* will be dressed in trousers rather than clothing considered to be 'female' –, these point to the influence of societal norms upon concepts of gender and its performance, especially so given

³³ In reference to Santería, Hagedorn (2010, 149) contends that the *orisha* are not 'inherently male or female', but that the 'gendered [...] identities are projected onto [them] by their human adherents in an attempt to create and contain meaning.' This said, it must be recognised that *orisha* have been assigned a gender and while they may have both male and female *caminos*, the gender of each of these is generally considered to be fixed.

that such ‘ritual [...] cross-dressing’ continues to be present in the Yoruba ritual performance from which Santería is derived (M.A. Clark 2005, 101; Drewal 1992, 190).³⁴ As Castellanos Llanos (2006, 17) has observed, ‘en la cosmovisión de la santería no encontramos la división tajante e inescapable entre los dos sexos a la que estamos acostumbrados en la tradición judeo-cristiana’, an observation echoed by Conner (2005) with respect to Vodou.³⁵

The sexual metaphor that the phenomenon of spirit possession connotes also points to this process as a gendered interaction. In her wider analysis of ritual performance Drewal (1992, 185) employs the ‘binary oppositions of inside/outside’, but with reference to possession in particular, she describes it in female terms, as it is the woman who ‘contains during intercourse and pregnancy, just as she does the spirit of the deity at the onset of possession trance.’³⁶ This gendered metaphor is transferred to Santería and Vodou, but is employed in a different manner. In particular reference to Santería, although Hagedorn (2010, 147) states that both ‘coger’ and ‘montar’ are consistently used in reference to a *santero* being mounted by an *orisha*, especially by those who are also *batá* drummers, the most common of the two in my experience and in published literature is the latter; both imply penetration, but the latter also presumes male superiority in the act of sexual intercourse. Moreover, both Hagedorn and

³⁴ This, Clark (2005, 101) posits, is due to the ‘Western abhorrence of male-to-female cross-dressing’, and so ‘[t]he priest may be constructed as female both in terms of the possession event itself and in respect to the Orisha that has possessed him, but the appropriation of female clothing by male priests presents this situation in perhaps too strong and open a manner’. Further to this, though Clark asserts that, in her experience, possession of a male priest by a female *orisha* does not put into question his sexual identity, interviews I conducted in Cuba (in particular with Babalao Tato Quiñones and Tomás Fernández Robaina) suggest that while this may be the case from a theological perspective, in practice few, if any, heterosexual men are mounted by female *orisha*. This suggestion has been reiterated in print by Palmié (2002) and Fernández Robaina (2008), though both recognise the absence of empirical evidence to this end. Hagedorn (2010, 147), for her part, asserts that most *orisha* possessions are ‘same-sex’, since ‘the majority of female practitioners have female-associated head-ruling *orichas*, and the majority of male practitioners have male-associated head-ruling *orichas*’. Cabranes-Grant (2010, 127) has also indicated that possession of male adherents by female *orisha* is less common than the reverse. With regard to Vodou, Manbo Jacqueline Épingle answered my question in this respect by stating that from her perspective it seems that fewer men are mounted by female *lwa* than women by male *lwa* and that perhaps this is due to the questions some male vodouisants think would be posed regarding their sexuality if they were to be mounted by a female *lwa*.

³⁵ ‘the categorical and absolute division between the two sexes to which we are accustomed in the Judeo-Christian tradition is not found in the cosmovision of Santería’.

³⁶ Drewal’s use of the pronoun ‘she’ does not mean that men are not possession priests, merely that in the sexual metaphor the possession priest fulfils the female ‘possessed’ role.

M.A. Clark emphasise that regardless of the assigned gender of the *orisha* or the adherent, the process is framed as one of ‘an active force (divine) acting on a receptive force (human)’ (Hagedorn 2010, 147). This ‘natural attitude toward gender and sexual relations’ leads to the suggestion, proffered by Clark (2005, 98-99), that ‘all mediums are gendered female in that all must perform in a wifely manner in order to complete their transformation into embodied Orisha’, a process of ‘penetration and dominion of priestly bodies by their spirit husbands.’ While gender does remain a fluid concept within the context of spirit possession, then, being mounted and embodying the deity is symbolically a female-gendered process. However, it is important to reiterate that spirit possession is not an imposition on an initiate but rather a process based on reciprocity in which s/he actively participates as a subject and agent. Equally, as noted above, the fact that a male initiate is mounted does not seem to affect his claim to a masculine, or indeed macho, identity in itself, this is only a concern when the *orisha* or *lwa* is female since it is the fact that a male initiate has a female *orisha* or *lwa* as his *orisha de cabecera* or *mèt tèt* that provokes concern on his part rather than the process of being mounted by a spirit itself.

As has been emphasised throughout this introductory chapter, the negotiations of the ideas of syncretism and creolization, resistance and power, gender and gender roles, subjugation and agency in Santería and Vodou are complex. Although they are sites of resistance which offer the opportunity for increased participation to women in comparison to wider society, patriarchal frameworks still influence practitioners of both religious traditions. It is this position that this thesis uses as a point of departure, exploring the themes of women’s participation, corporeality and sexuality which run through the texts analysed and the manner in which the notion of resistance inherent in Santería and Vodou is employed or negated in each of these contexts. Alongside this, the analysis also recognises the use of these religious traditions and the gender-based conflicts between the *orisha* and *lwa* to impose restrictive

frameworks that seek to impose patriarchal notions of femininity, and the use of violence by both sexes as a means of countering this. However, as the narrative running through the thesis will demonstrate, the hybridity of these religious traditions that permit women to exercise multiple forms of sexuality and express their personal agency in spite of the constraints that may be placed on them then allows a discourse to be articulated that voices women's experiences in the wider contexts of Cuban and Haitian society, situating them squarely within historical discourse from which they have been all but deleted. It is to the nature of this hybridity that this introduction now turns.

Hybridity, Santería and Vodou

The analysis of literary texts in the following chapters explores a number of intersecting constructs regarding gender and sexuality which are both imposed and subverted in the contexts of Santería and Vodou and in wider Cuban and Haitian society. While leaving in-depth consideration of notions such as nation, historiography, gender roles and dictatorship to the relevant chapters, it is important to examine at this point the concepts of hybridity and the patriarchal public-private dichotomy as a basis which can then be drawn together with the discussion of the gendered nature of spirit possession outlined above.

Although creolization is a more satisfactory term than syncretism with which to describe the developmental process of African-derived religious traditions in the Caribbean, as indicated above, by the very nature of its application to various cultural contexts, creolization as a term continues to be polemical when discussing issues of cultural and racial heritage in the region. In the search to resolve this issue, a number of other notions have been employed and defined, including *mestizaje*, *créolité* and hybridity, none of which can fully capture, Torres-Saillant (2006, 42-44; 238-41) argues, the specificity of both the Caribbean as a whole and its constituent elements. Furthermore, the application of these ideas has not been uniform: at

times they are employed as synonyms while at others there is repeated conflict over which is the most suitable.

For Benítez-Rojo (1996, 26), *mestizaje*, in origin, ‘involves a positivistic and logocentric argument [...] that sees in the biological, economic, and cultural whitening of Caribbean society a series of successive steps toward “progress”’, similar to Brathwaite (1974, 11) who describes it as a process of acculturation and intercultural. Benítez-Rojo (1996, 26) offers a rereading of *mestizaje*, positing that it is ‘nothing more than a concentration of differences’ in which ‘the binary oppositions Europe/Indoamerica, Europe/Africa, and Europe/Asia’ are not resolved into a synthesis but rather continue to repeat the dichotomies inherent within them. This has been echoed by Martínez-Echazábal (1998, 33), who notes that in the twentieth century, *mestizaje* became a trope for nation in which cultures were synthesised on the basis of ‘the positive outcome of the contact and cooperation between civilizations’, but in which there was always a presupposition of “inferior” and “superior” cultures. Crucially, the connotations of race evident in the term *mestizaje* and the descriptions above have been cited by García Canclini (1995, 11 n1) as a drawback to its being used in a more expansive manner since he considers it problematic to use a term often applied to racial mixing to describe the intercultural exchanges that have occurred in the region.³⁷ In spite of the limitations of this reductive and oversimplified perspective, Benítez-Rojo (1996, 314) concludes that *mestizaje* continues to be relevant for understanding the Caribbean since it recognises the binary oppositions which have been employed when describing cultural heritage. Puri (2004, 63-64) argues in a similar vein with regard to creolization, writing that in the Caribbean it was conceptualised as the interaction between races, associated with terms such as Afro-Caribbean, Euro-West Indian, Afro-West Indian, black and white. When continuing to discuss Walcott

³⁷ García Canclini writes: ‘I prefer this last term [hybridization] because it includes diverse intercultural mixtures – not only the racial ones to which *mestizaje* tends to be limited – [...]’

as a contemporary writer, Puri (2004, 66) highlights the differences between older and more recent scholarship, writing, ‘Brathwaite’s creolization tends to emphasize the Afro-Creole, [whereas] Walcott emphasizes a multiracial, multicultural creolization.’

Intertwined with the emphasis on race was the desire to establish Afro-Creole culture as the norm through the framework of creolization (Puri 2004, 62). Aimé Césaire’s *négritude* movement sought to valorise blackness and restore the African dimension to Creole society (Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant 1990, 79). Focusing on Africa as an originary identity, *négritude* was the ‘antithèse affective sinon logique de cette insulte que l’homme blanc faisait à l’humanité’ of devaluing black people and ascribing them negative identities that lack in authenticity (Fanon 1991 [1961], 258; Ahluwalia 2001, 22-23).³⁸ Necessarily, however, it was constructed in a racial and cultural binary of black and white, Africa versus Europe. The Créoliste movement developed out of this, recognising that ‘African elsewhere rather than Caribbean here’ was not a satisfactory framework but recognising the importance of *négritude* in their conceptualisation of the Caribbean (Puri 2004, 237 n31; Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant 1990, 80). The Créolistes thus outlined an idea of *antillanité*, seeking a pan-Caribbean federation though tempering their viewpoint by a central tenet of Creole society: linguistic heritage (Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant 1990, 79). Francophone themselves, in their theoretical framework they privileged an idea of *créolité* that focused on other French-speaking territories, such as Réunion, the Seychelles and Mauritius. In so doing they constructed creolization squarely within French colonial history and ideology, a charge that Torres-Saillant has laid against scholars such as Benítez-Rojo and Glissant with regard to their respective linguistic contexts (Puri 2004, 35-36; Torres-Saillant 2006, 26).

³⁸ ‘antithesis of that insult which the white man had thrown at humanity’ (Fanon 1990 [1963], 171).

As a result of dissatisfaction with the terminology in use and problems with formerly employed notions such as Ortiz's transculturation that presumed homogeneity within the originating and resulting cultures (Malinowski 1947, x), the concept of hybridity came to the fore. Developing out of creolization, it focused on the increased heterogeneity evident in the Caribbean, but sought to avoid an association with previous theorisations of race and focus on cultural interactions. For Puri, hybridity is a more appropriate term due to this shift, as it seems to be for Martínez-Echazábal (1997, 124), although the latter does equate *lo mestizo* and the hybrid while rejecting the notion of 'mestizaje-as-whitening'. In light of diversification in the population of the Caribbean, such as the arrival of indentured Indian and Chinese labourers in addition to immigration from the Middle East among other places, it would seem that hybridity is a more suitable term to describe the contemporary situation since a far more heterogeneous society with a greater variety of influences additional to African, European and Afro-Creole has developed. However, it must be noted that hybridity does not come without many of the caveats placed on creolization. To this end, Puri underlines that the inequality among constituent elements of creolization emphasised by Brathwaite continues in a Caribbean theorised as 'hybrid'. Highlighting a shortfall in Walcott's discussion, she employs the metaphor of the 'vase shattered and reassembled' which, like the 'nation-as-mosaic', presents 'the national vision of hybridity [as] a more traditional composite' and 'posits in advance a unity and equality that has yet to be achieved' (Puri 2004, 69). A hybrid society does not mean that each constituent element of the construct is equally influential upon the whole, or indeed that each element exerts an influence on every other.

In contrast, however, the use of hybridity as a more plural construct is not universal. Though Gilroy (1993, 218) has defined his hybrid framework of 'the black Atlantic' as 'a web of diaspora identities and concerns', his work has been critiqued as utopian, Anglo-centric and 'rooted in a binary' (Martínez-Echazábal 1997, 119; 121). Expounding upon this, Martínez-

Echazábal describes ‘the black Atlantic’ and the ‘double consciousness’ Gilroy develops from Du Bois as binaries in themselves, the former ‘hybridity as synthesis’ and the latter ‘hybridity as symbiosis’ (117). By means of attempting to resolve this conflict within hybridity thus conceptualised, she goes on to outline a notion of the ‘polygeneous’ in an attempt ‘to move away from [...] the notion of two original or originating societies’ (118). García Canclini’s *Hybrid Cultures* is critiqued in a similar fashion in the foreword to the English language edition, where Rosaldo (1995, xv) suggests his use of the term hybridity ‘never resolves the tension between [the] conceptual polarities’ of it as the space between two zones of purity.

As this summary demonstrates therefore, creolization, *mestizaje*, transculturation and hybridity have all been predicated – to a greater or lesser degree – on binarial perspectives of political, racial and cultural interactions in the Caribbean. However, although hybridity is still a polemical term, it nevertheless draws together these multiple influences and therefore appears to offer a more expedient framework with which to frame the literary analyses that follow while indicating, in Benítez-Rojo’s (1996, 314) terms, the ‘complex cultural spectrum’ of the Caribbean.

As a final point with regard to societal frameworks and African-derived religious traditions in Cuba and Haiti, it is important to recognise as part of this introduction the public/private dichotomy expressed in the abovementioned conflict between these marginalised traditions and state-sponsored Catholicism, along with the concomitant gender issues that such a formulation entails. Practices such as Santería and Vodou have long been placed conceptually within the private sphere in the Caribbean due to their proscription and marginalisation, considered in opposition to Catholicism or Protestantism as official religion and therefore denoted as ‘private’. The classification of certain religious traditions as ‘private’ in a wider patriarchal construct that associates the public with masculinity and the private

with femininity has conceptually gendered Afro-Cuban and Afro-Haitian traditions such as Santería and Vodou as feminine. As such, in spite of Santería and Vodou constituting loci of feminine strength in comparison to wider society, due to the historical marginalisation of the religious traditions within state hegemony, female practitioners are conceptually further marginalised when viewed within a conflation of the male-dominated binary and the public/private dichotomy since they are both women and santeras/vodouisants. This hierarchy is reinforced in traditions such as Santería, which traditionally precludes women from participation in certain roles, and other Afro-Cuban religious traditions like the all-male Sociedad Abakuá, the latter completely excluding women from its membership and enshrining misogyny within its foundation myth, that of Sikán.³⁹ However, as chapters two, three and four demonstrate, the movement of Santería and Vodou between the private and public spaces by means of the female body in literature focusing on Cuba and Haiti has challenged this dichotomy. Moreover, by coupling this challenge with the depiction of these religious traditions as sites in which women can indeed gain agency through the female body, other patriarchal notions extant in Cuban and Haitian society regarding historiography, female sexuality and agency – each incorporating a male-dominated power hierarchy within them – are also destabilised and/or deconstructed. When drawn together with the concept of power, the plurality inherent within Santería and Vodou with regard to gender and sexuality, the position of the religious traditions as neither wholly public or private, the ability of the body to move between spaces within the traditions, and the fact that women are able to destabilise frameworks that seek to restrict them in these same areas, places practitioners in a position from which subversion and resistance are possible.

Understandably, these themes are key concerns in much of Caribbean literature, which is therefore a vast field that is difficult to negotiate. For historical and political reasons

³⁹ The Sociedad Abakuá and the myth of Sikán are discussed in both chapters two and three.

indicated above, cultural production from Cuba and Haiti are particularly rich examples, and the texts chosen here – ranging from 1964 to 2010 – show both the range of perspectives with which these issues have been treated and the continuity of their consideration. Each text speaks to particular dilemmas, but importantly they are noteworthy in the context of this thesis from both political and literary viewpoints.

Chapter two focuses on four novels by the Cuban-born author Mayra Montero and explores the alternative pan-Caribbean concept of nation that can be delineated in the context of African-derived religious traditions across the four texts. Through *La trenza de la hermosa luna* (1987), *Del rojo de su sombra* (1992), *Tú, la oscuridad* (1995) and *Como un mensajero tuyo* (1998), Montero deconstructs the traditional binary framework upon which ideas of nationhood have been predicated and breaks with the patriarchal notions of historiography that have defined much of Caribbean history.⁴⁰ *La trenza* and *Tú, la oscuridad* are both set in Haiti under the Duvalier dictatorships; the former narrates Jean Leroy's return to Haiti to help his friend Papá Marcel, the local *houngan*, during the final days of Baby Doc's regime and juxtaposes it with Jean Leroy's recollection of the past under Papa Doc, and the latter follows an American herpetologist and his Haitian guide in their search for the *grenouille de sang*, which is intertwined with Vodou and an alternative explanation for the disappearance of reptiles on a global scale. *Del rojo* details the rise of Zulé to lead her *gagá* in the Colonia Engracia *batey* in La Romana, Dominican Republic, culminating in her murder, while *Como un mensajero* recounts the life story of Aída Petirena Cheng as transcribed by her daughter Enriqueta, focusing on Aída's romance with Italian opera singer Enrico Caruso framed within a hybrid context of Afro-Cuban religious traditions. As an alternative to the concept of nation based on individual nation-states and official historiography as presented by those in power,

⁴⁰ Each text will henceforth be referred to as *La trenza*, *Del rojo*, *Tú, la oscuridad* and *Como un mensajero* respectively.

Montero offers gendered historical narratives firmly located within Vodou, Santería and associated religious traditions, writing a history that incorporates oral accounts alongside official published histories. Bound together by virtue of these belief systems, these texts see Montero construct an idea of nation that transcends the borders of Haiti, Cuba and the Haitian cane-cutter community in the Dominican Republic to encompass the Caribbean as a whole.

In chapter three the discussion turns to Cuban theatre and Eugenio Hernández Espinosa's seminal work *María Antonia*. Written in 1964 and first performed in 1967, the play has been staged numerous times in Cuba and abroad, with Hernández Espinosa returning to direct this his most famous work in April 2011 at the Teatro Mella in Havana. *María Antonia* sees the eponymous protagonist – daughter of Ochún – tell her story at the point at which she has been claimed by Ikú (death), depicting her problematic relationship with both Santería and the religious community that practise it. Drawing on the *patakí* describing the interactions between Ochún, Yemayá and Changó, the play shows María Antonia's violent rejection of societal and religious impositions placed on her – exemplified by her poisoning Julián, the lover who has rejected her – and culminates in María Antonia's own murder at the hands of Carlos, a lover she has herself spurned. Focusing on the subversion of patriarchal frameworks both in Santería and in wider Cuban society, this chapter explores the representation of these constructs in the play and the complexities inherent in María Antonia and her *madrina*'s negotiation of them.⁴¹ In order to achieve this, it uses performance theory with regard to spirit possession and gender to examine the protagonist's limited success in her destabilisation of male-oriented societal norms. Although María Antonia's death indicates the punitive nature of Santería in this context, the corporeal and often gendered nature of ritual performance in Santería demonstrates that in some respects she is able to maintain a position of resistance and

⁴¹ An individual who practises Santería as part of an *ilé* has a spiritual godparent or godparents, who lead the *ilé*. A godmother is a *madrina* and a godfather, a *padrino*.

her actions in both religious and secular contexts therefore permit her to gain a certain amount of agency therein. The analysis also underlines the continued relevance of *María Antonia* in a Cuban cultural context in which restrictive notions regarding specific gender roles remain prevalent, complementing the play with Georgina Herrera's (2004) text *Conversación con María Antonia (cuarenta años después)* which points to María Antonia as the first of many María Antonias who enact the role on Havana's streets.

The patriarchal framework surrounding female sexuality reinforced and destabilised in *María Antonia* is further undermined and subverted in Kettly Mars' (2008) novel *Fado*, the main text analysed in chapter four. Set in Port-au-Prince in a hybrid context of Haitian Vodou interwoven with Portuguese fado, the body of the female protagonist is inhabited by two discrete subjectivities, Anaïse and Frida, the former a *bourgeoise* who works in advertising and whose husband has left her for his pregnant mistress, the latter a prostitute at a brothel in the city slum. Having been raped as a teenager and forced to have two botched abortions, Anaïse/Frida traverses the discrete spaces of uptown Pétionville and the *bas ville* in a quest to reconstitute her sense of self by conflating, in the context of Vodou spirituality, the dualities she embodies: the spurned wife and the whore, the bourgeois professional and the denizen of the city slum. In so doing, she challenges the restrictive binaries that have defined her in such a fashion, continually interacting with the multiple subjectivities she comprises made possible through her association with the *lwa* Ezili – specifically the avatars Ezili Freda and Ezili Dantò – and the tripartite twin *lwa*, the *marasa twa*. Within the wider context of Vodou spirituality presented in the novel, the female body facilitates the interrogation of the socio-political, spiritual and psychological planes, and the exploration of the multifaceted nature of female sexuality.

Chapter five offers a counterpoint to the theme of African-derived religious traditions as sites of resistance and the deconstruction of patriarchal frameworks by female protagonists that runs through the preceding chapters by examining the alignment of Vodou with destructive masculinity and the state. Focusing primarily on the example of François Duvalier's dictatorship between 1957 and 1971 during which he conflated nation, state and Vodou into a single entity embodied by himself, this chapter explores three main fictional renditions of the regime: Marie Vieux-Chauvet's (1968) *Folie* (third novella in her Haitian trilogy *Amour, Colère et Folie*), Franck Fouché's (1974) *Général Baron-la-Croix, ou Le silence masqué* and Kettly Mars' (2010a) *Saisons sauvages*.⁴² Chauvet's *Amour, Colère et Folie*, written in Port-au-Prince in 1967 and published in France the following year, was withdrawn from distribution shortly after publication after fears were expressed for the author and her family's safety, leading to Chauvet's exile in New York where she died in 1973.⁴³ In *Folie*, the reader follows the story of René, a young poet, who is trapped by the Macoutes in a shack with three other poets for several days before he runs out into the street and throws a Molotov cocktail in a final stand against authority – the figures of whom he perceives as devils –, which leads to his arrest and execution. *Général Baron-la-Croix* was written by playwright Franck Fouché shortly after his exile to Canada, drawing on themes evident in his earlier *Bouqui au paradis*, in particular its incorporation of Vodou and Haitian folklore. The play sees the installation of le Chef's dictatorial regime by means of the help he receives from the Gede *lwa* Baron-la-Croix, directly parodying Papa Doc and his policies and presenting him as an individual obsessed with keeping a grip on power at any cost. Mars' *Saisons sauvages* is set in Port-au-

⁴² Note: Marie Vieux-Chauvet is most often referred to in scholarship by her second surname, Chauvet; in the interests of clarity this study will follow suit, though bibliographical references are found under Vieux-Chauvet.

⁴³ Differing accounts have been given of the trilogy's withdrawal from sale: Dayan (1991, 228) writes that the rights had been bought up by Chauvet's husband in response to 'her offense of exposing the violations women experienced both inside "le domicile conjugal" and outside', an account reiterated by Scharfman (1996, 230). The 2005 edition includes a note from Chauvet's children seeking to put the record straight, in which they refute the 'sensationalist' claim that her family sought to silence her, stating that Chauvet herself halted the distribution of the work and her husband bought and destroyed any copies already on sale, while those not yet on the shelves were then redistributed in 1980, selling out in 2000 (Vieux-Chauvet 2005 [1968], 5). This second version of events is that put forward by Réjouis (2009, xxii) in the preface to the English translation published in 2009 as *Love, Anger, Madness*.

Prince in the period around the 1964 massacre of opponents and their families by the Tonton Macoutes in Jérémie, south-western Haiti, which became known as the *vêpres jérémiennes* (lit. the Jérémie Vespers). The novel opens with Nirvah Leroy petitioning the head of the Macoutes, Raoul Vincent, for the release of her husband, a request that is never fulfilled but which leads to a long-term sexual relationship as he manipulates her from his position of power. Over the course of the narrative Nirvah's agency is eroded; the novel closes with Raoul's fall from grace and Nirvah's attempted escape with her family across the border to the Dominican Republic. When reading these three texts together a narrative comes to the fore in which a gendered dichotomy is imposed on Haitian society by means of terror, this a framework predicated on the patriarchal binary resisted by means of African-derived religious traditions in previous chapters which then genders those who participate in the Duvalierist state apparatus as masculine and places those who do not in a position of opposition, rendering them feminine. As René, le Chef and Raoul Vincent all demonstrate, such a dichotomy also emasculates male individuals who are placed in opposition, while the subsumption of Vodou by the state through François Duvalier negates the possibility of resistance.

The final chapter then draws chapters two to five together in a discussion of death and sexuality, contesting European theorisations of death through the manner in which the two are conceptualised in Santería and Vodou. Based on the perception of death as a transition rather than an individual's complete destruction, it explores the manner in which death is portrayed in each of the texts analysed. It then focuses on prostitution, motherhood, rape and sacrifice as four contexts in which the gender-based conflict running throughout the thesis is centred, examining the manner in which each of these interacts with death and thereby illustrating that in spite of the imposition of physical death, their formulation as intertwined concepts indicate possibility for women rather than annihilation on both the physical and spiritual planes.

In the conclusion, the main themes running through the thesis and summarised at the end of each chapter come together in a discussion which points to areas for further research. Looking to literature from the North American diasporas, this section considers the importance of spiritual frameworks and the body as bridging the divide between the Caribbean and the diaspora, linking selected diasporic texts with those already analysed and indicating avenues for potential further enquiry.

CHAPTER TWO

GODS, GENDER AND NATION IN FOUR NOVELS BY MAYRA MONTERO¹

En mis libros [...] hay una propuesta básica: el Caribe como un todo, como una unidad. No son sólo islas separadas, son un conjunto de sensibilidades, tradiciones y casi una manera de ser. (Montero, 1994)²

The concept of nation in the context of the Caribbean has been defined and re-defined since the colonial era to the present day. This chapter will engage with this concept, drawing on the discussion of creolization and hybridity in chapter one and negotiating the notions of nationhood and the global-village, (trans)nationalism, and ultimately historiography, in order to outline a framework with which to interrogate four of Mayra Montero's novels, *La trenza de la hermosa luna*, *Del rojo de su sombra*, *Tú, la oscuridad* and *Como un mensajero tuyo*. It will then continue to analyse how, by means of a gendered framework within the context of African-derived religious traditions in Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the narrative that runs through these texts delineates a pan-Caribbean notion of nation that respects individual nation-states while recognising the links that can be drawn between the islands of the Caribbean. As such, on the one hand, these texts can be seen in light of the work of postcolonial theorists from the Caribbean like Fanon, Glissant and Benítez-Rojo, all of whom have sought to emphasise ties across the region. However, on the other, they can also be seen as contributing to the discourse exploring the idea "unity in diversity" in the Caribbean that has been foregrounded in publications such as Hennessy's (1992) edited volume on

¹ An abridged version of this chapter has been accepted for publication as "Gods, Gender and Nation: Building an alternative concept of nation in four novels by Mayra Montero" in a special issue of the *Journal of Haitian Studies* featuring papers presented at the "Caribbean Unbound V: Vodou & Créolité" conference held at Franklin College, Lugano, Switzerland, in April 2011.

² 'In my books [...] there is a fundamental proposition: the Caribbean as a whole, as a single entity. They are not only separate islands, they are an ensemble of feelings, traditions and almost a way of being.' Spanish original cited in Espinosa Domínguez (2000, 209).

intellectuals in the twentieth-century Hispanic and Francophone Caribbean. This unity is engendered through recognising difference rather than attempting to remove it, as Hall argues in his definition of the concept of articulation (Grossberg 1986, 53; Kramer 1998, 264).

The lengthy struggles for independence and processes of decolonisation in the Caribbean provoked an in-depth discussion of the ideas surrounding nation in this region. Colonised Caribbean peoples formulated this concept in opposition to the coloniser who had, until independence, retained all the power.³ Due to the different stages at which these former colonies gained independence, this process has not been uniform across the region and to suggest otherwise would be to reduce the Caribbean to an homogeneous and ahistorical entity. Without wishing to negate the importance of these particularities, ideas surrounding nation and nationhood in the region have been conceptualised along with and in reference to the notions of an independent state and sovereignty. Upon gaining independence, these nation-states – termed as such in light of a subsequent reconceptualisation of nation itself – were delineated as they had been by the colonial administration rather than through other notions such as race and ethnicity or linguistic heritage.⁴ In his discussion of intellectual history in the Caribbean, Trouillot (1992, 29) has engaged with this reconceptualisation of nation and distinguishes between nation and state in reference to Benedict Anderson, underlining the fact that ‘nation is not a political fiction but a fiction in politics, culture-history projected against the background of state power.’ The reference to state power then invites a discussion of nationalism itself. Puri (2004, 10), also in reference to Anderson, states, ‘nationalism is better

³ It is imperative to bear in mind that nations in the Caribbean gained independence at very different points over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The context in which Haiti began its struggle for independence at the end of the eighteenth century was very different to that of Cuba at the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the many nations in the Anglophone Caribbean did not become independent until the latter half of the twentieth century.

⁴ This is not to say nation-states defined in such terms would have been viable alternatives or that they would have gained independence had the struggle been conceptualised in such a fashion. Engaging with the coloniser within the confines of the dominant discourse and thus defining nation-states in reference to colonial administrative boundaries was the most expedient manner in which to gain independence. With hindsight, it could be said that the approach of throwing off the colonial yoke would need to take precedence, as without it a discussion regarding identity and nation would continue to be defined in colonial terms.

understood not as an ideology like fascism or liberalism, but rather as a “framework” for political activity, and a structure of feeling’. As such, nationalism therefore looks to the creation of a nation-state as the seat of power, as Liu (1994, 38) has underlined in her discussion of Chatterjee’s 1985 work, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*: ‘nationalism as a European discourse of domination is appropriated by Third World nations for self-empowerment in the struggle for independence.’

In their analyses of the reformulation of the idea of nation, Trouillot (1992), Puri (2004) and Liu (1994) distinguish between nation and state, linking state to political power and recognising that nation is a far more subjective and fluid concept. To this end, Trouillot (1992, 29) and Puri (2004, 20) turn to Anderson’s notion of the nation as ‘imagined community’, with its subjective nature, and Liu (1994, 37) terms it an ‘historical construct rather than a manifestation of some unchanging essence’. Therefore, while nationalism is a European discourse of domination appropriated by the colonised – nuanced as it may have become in the process of its appropriation to oppose colonial powers which then resulted in the single entity of the nation-state –, the concept of nation is based on the people it represents. In his essay *Sur la culture nationale*, Fanon (1991 [1961], 259) draws on the League of Arab States to exemplify a national culture that is not confined by the borders of nation-states but rather transcends such divisions in its aim ‘de lancer une nouvelle culture arabe, une nouvelle civilisation arabe.’⁵ While he does not wish to reduce nation to such a utopian homogeneity, Anderson (2006, 7) nonetheless echoes this idea of the nation as the people in his introduction to *Imagined Communities*, describing it as community which, ‘regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, [...] is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.’ Bhabha (1994, 142), for his part, uses ‘that

⁵ ‘to create a new Arab culture and a new Arab civilization’ (Translation by Constance Farrington in Fanon 1990 [1963], 172. All further translations are taken from this edition).

progressive metaphor of modern social cohesion – *the many as one* –’ as the point of departure for his discussion of nation, though this reduces the people once again to a single entity, ‘historical events or parts of a patriotic body politic.’ Initially identifying nation with state through his definition of the people as a ‘complex rhetorical strategy of social reference’ and ‘historical “objects”’ in the past and ‘subjects’ in the present, Bhabha (2004, 145; 152) later tackles this conceptual link by looking to Fanon’s exploration of the ‘space of the nation’ which did not immediately align the two notions. In disassociating nation from the state, the vertical, hierarchical binary relationship whereby the state exercises power over the nation as a single people is negated, thus allowing nation to recognise difference within the people it comprises. In so doing, nation is defined as an ‘imagined community’ that shares elements of collective identity, though not reduced to an homogeneous whole.

As demonstrated in chapter one, there has been considerable debate among scholars regarding the definition and use of the terms *mestizaje*, creolization and hybridity, with numerous academics including Benítez-Rojo, Brathwaite, Gilroy, Puri and Martínez-Echazábal critiquing the problematic nature of each of these interwoven concepts. It is a more heterogeneous understanding of hybridity, such as that proposed by Martínez-Echazábal (1997, 118), that reflects the fluid and personal nature of hybridity in the Caribbean depicted in Montero’s novels. As the analysis of these texts will show, the author’s exploration of racial and cultural hybridity across the Caribbean becomes increasingly complex as the narrative progresses, drawing together the religious traditions of Cuban Santería, Abakuá, Cuban-Chinese Sanfancón, Haitian, Dominican and Cuban Vodou, Haitian-Dominican Gagá, and Indo-Guadeloupean religious practices.⁶ Before exploring this in further detail, however,

⁶ Note: when referring to the socioreligious practice of Gagá the spelling conventions followed with Santería and Vodou (an initial capital letter and not italicised) will be followed, when used as a term for the group itself it will be rendered as ‘gagá’. This is in keeping with the use of similar terms in Santería and Vodou such as *casa de santo* and *ounfò*.

it is necessary to first outline the central tenets of Gagá and then to consider the inextricably linked notions of hybridity and nation, interrogating each in light of the other.

In her study of the Gagá tradition, Rosenberg (1979, 23; 35) describes the socioreligious practice as descended from Haitian *rará* bands that process during the Christian Holy Week, stating that it is founded in the *bateyes* of the Dominican Republic.⁷ Organised in a similar way to the *sosyete* in Haitian Vodou (communities affiliated with an *ounfò*, spelt as *société* by Montero), the hierarchy of the *gagá* offers the practitioners an opportunity to occupy a position of prestige and provides them with a social identity, both of which are denied them as *braceros* at the lowest level of Dominican society (Fernández Olmos 1997, 275; Rosenberg 1979, 203).⁸ The *houngan* or *manbo* who leads the *gagá* is respectively its *dueño* or *dueña*, and under his/her authority there are a variety of roles fulfilled by the members of the *société*, of which the most pertinent to this discussion are: president, head of the armed forces, various ministers, elders, queens and a female chorus (69). As in Vodou, spirit possession forms a central part of the tradition, and particularly important spirits in Gagá are the Gede – the *dueño/a* is affiliated with Gede Nibo – and the *lwa petwo* (73-75). Like the *rará* bands, the principal festivity celebrated by the *gagá* takes place during Holy Week, the stages of which form the narrative framework of *Del rojo* (Fernández Olmos 1997, 274).

Turning to hybridity and nation, at the beginning of his book *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (2000 [1994], 3-4) muses on African-American artist and academic Renée Green's comments regarding the stairwell between the two floors of her art exhibit "Sites of Genealogy" as constituting a liminal space, a deconstructive pathway between the binary divisions of upper

⁷ The term *bateyes* refers to the small communities where the sugar cane cutters live in cramped and usually unsanitary conditions (Rosenberg 1979, 35).

⁸ Stuart Hall (1991a) has observed that the communities founded around the sugarcane industry that subscribe to this cult have been divorced from their historical and physical environments: they do not belong to the Haitian community, neither physically nor spiritually, while at the same time they are rejected from Dominican society, 'where the poorest citizen wouldn't be seen dead cutting cane with a machete.'

and lower, black and white. Using her commentary as a point of departure, Bhabha continues to outline his idea of a 'third space' with regard to hybrid cultural space, denoting it 'an interstitial passage between fixed identifications [which] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy'. He defines it as a 'contradictory and ambivalent space' which is 'unrepresentable in itself' (37). This is problematic as a framework with which to represent hybridity, however, as Davies (1996, 188) concludes when applying it to an Hispanic context; she writes that this "Third space" could be considered not just the space of non-syncretic hybridity but also the space of misrecognition', highlighting the lack of reference points for those who find themselves therein. Though Bhabha (2000 [1994], 4) posits that '[t]he hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities', the space between them is necessarily defined in reference to the binary by which it is enclosed. In the context of hybridity, therefore, there continues to be restrictions on what can be represented in the 'third space' as this space must be circumscribed in order for the framework to function, thus connoting an unequal relationship between the three points of the construct.

Bhabha's notion of the third space is also problematic when applied to the hybridity inherent in African-derived religious traditions in the Caribbean. As emphasised in chapter one, the body of the initiate in Santería and Vodou is the site of interaction between the physical and spiritual, the public and private, and is also the space in which fixed binarial notions of sex and identity – male/female, self/other – can be challenged. Within the hybrid construct of these African-derived religious practices therefore, the body constitutes the 'third space' between these poles. However, in reference to traditions such as Santería and Vodou, spirit possession necessarily involves another agent, the *orisha* or *lwa*, who does not fit into nor can be circumscribed by the public/private binary as it intervenes directly in the interstitial space.

This idea will be developed in greater detail below, but a pertinent example is that of Aída, the protagonist of *Como un mensajero*. Racially and culturally hybrid – she is of Lucumí, Chinese and Spanish descent and interacts with each of these elements of the Cuban cultural context –, her body can be said to be representative of nation in reference to both Anderson's (2006) notion of various interacting communities and the concept of a 'third space'. However, this construct by which the body is circumscribed is transcended by the *orishas*, allowing Aída's body to function as a conduit through which the physical and spiritual planes intersect in addition to a site where the public and private meet, thereby deconstructing Bhabha's three-point framework by means of the direct intervention of a further defining agent.

Although the body of the initiate does indeed constitute the space from which the abovementioned binarial notions can be deconstructed and challenged, it should be noted in reference to ideas of maleness and femaleness that such a challenge is not always regarded as positive by practitioners of the African-derived religious traditions Montero depicts. The anecdotal assertions voiced by Palmié and Fernández Robaina regarding the low number of heterosexual men mounted by female *orisha* due to the influence of societal norms regarding masculinity were cited in chapter one, along with similar observations regarding Vodou. Notably, this particular issue is not raised in Montero's texts since all her male characters who undergo spirit possession are mounted by male-gendered *orisha* or *lwa*, while the vast majority of female characters are mounted by spirits of the same sex also (one exception is Zulé, who as *dueña* of her *gagá* is associated with the male Gede Nibo). However, the exclusively male *Sociedad Abakuá* – a tradition briefly explored in *Tú, la oscuridad* and *Como un mensajero* – not only precludes membership to women due to its founding myth regarding Sikán (considered in greater detail below), but also excommunicates members who are *rayado* (marked) on their backs with a piece of chalk held between the toes of their

assailant since this renders the *ñáñigo* dead, emasculating him by turning him into a woman (Cabrera 1970, 205). Such an event, Cabrera writes, is ‘la mayor desgracia, lo más trágico que puede ocurrirle a un abakuá.’⁹ In *Tú, la oscuridad*, Thierry recalls an instance of one important *ñáñigo* in his *sociedad* being “killed” in this manner, which sees Thierry entrusted with the task of murdering the attacker in revenge, this the only possible course of action within the rules governing the brotherhood (Sosa Rodríguez 1982, 173). In terms reminiscent of Cabrera’s observation, Thierry recounts that the assailant ‘cogió una tiza [...] con los dedos de los pies [...] y allí mismo le rayó la espalda. La espalda de un Ireme es sagrada y él lo destruyó, lo hizo muerto, lo convirtió en mujer’ (237).¹⁰

Returning to Bhabha, in light of Davies’ conclusion regarding misrecognition within the ‘third space’, the alternative to a recognised hybridity within this space would be that the undesignated merely becomes an homogenised alternative to the binary restricting it.¹¹ One such example of this is the erstwhile racial framework of black, white and other. Therefore, if nation can be hybrid and is comprised of various individuals and communities which interact with each other within the space of the nation (physical or otherwise), it would seem that to accept this three-point framework whereby the third space is either unequal to the poles or homogeneous within itself may render problematic the idea that nation recognises the differences between the people and collectivities it comprises.

The importance of recognising these differences is emphasised by Grewal and Kaplan (1994, 11) in the introduction to their edited volume *Scattered Hegemonies*, in which they employ

⁹ ‘the worst disgrace, the most tragic thing that can happen to an *abakuá*.’

¹⁰ ‘he took a piece of chalk in his toes [...] and drew a line on his back. The back of an Ireme is sacred, and he destroyed him, killed him, turned him into a woman’ (Translation by Edith Grossman, in Montero 1997, 179. All further translations of *Tú, la oscuridad* are taken from this edition). Interestingly, as Roberto Zurbano underlined in an interview with me in July 2009, the exclusion of women from the *sociedad* did not prevent Cabrera herself from being permitted to conduct research with the *Abakuá*, which she published in 1958 as *La Sociedad Secreta Abakuá: narrada por viejos adeptos*.

¹¹ Montero’s narrative also undermines this notion, as will be demonstrated below.

the concept of the nation comprising many constituent parts – the shattered vase reconstructed metaphor – to critique Abou-El-Haj’s ‘global-local’ formulation, writing that ‘Global-local as a monolithic formation may also erase the existence of multiple expressions of “local” identities and concerns and multiple globalities.’ The homogenisation witnessed in such a framework reflects the critiques of Bhabha’s ‘third space’, whereby the plurality of global and local would be reduced to a binary that would then homogenise these different identities into two single entities and negate the heterogeneity of the global-local situated between them, as Puri (2004, 9) observes. Denoting this space the ‘global village’, Puri asserts that the heterogeneity inherent in the multiple local identities and multiple globalities it comprises is a necessary element of hybridity. When considered in terms of nation, these interactions between the groups through travel and displacement signal a concept of nation that goes beyond that circumscribed by national borders, and such movements between nation-states allow individuals and groups to function in multiple locations.¹² The result, she concludes, is that the hybrid framework within which a particular group functions may be influenced and become more complex. For Kaplan (1996, 9), ‘the question of travel here signifies the possibilities of multiple figures and tropes of displacement that might lead us to more complex and accurate maps of cultural production.’ Moreover, just as there are multiple local identities and multiple globalities, there are multiple hybridities, as Puri (2004, 41) illustrates: ‘The real question has never been “hybridity or not?” but rather “which hybridity?”’ Travel and displacement therefore inform the concept of nation as its constituent groups are in a continual position of definition and redefinition in reference to each other, a framework evident in Montero’s texts when one considers the multiple spaces with which her characters interact. As is demonstrated below in further detail, there is a plurality of hybrid religious traditions in which Montero’s characters participate that have developed and interacted

¹² Kaplan (1996, 3) defines travel and displacement thus: ‘Travel is very much a modern concept, signifying both commercial and leisure movement in an era of expanding Western capitalism, while displacement refers us to the more mass migrations that modernity has engendered.’ Importantly, she asserts, these notions are not in opposition but rather are juxtaposed, one informing the other.

through both the displacement of people – slavery, economic hardship, political persecution and/or coercion – and travel. Serving as the connections between these practices, these characters move between different religious environments as individuals, thus becoming increasingly more hybrid themselves. In *Como un mensajero*, Aída interacts with the Santería, Abakuá, Palo Monte, Sanfancón and Vodou traditions, while Thierry in *Tú, la oscuridad* is a vodouisant and *ñáñigo*, in addition to being involved with Ganesha and her Indo-Guadeloupean religious traditions. Within the context of Gagá and both Haitian and Dominican Vodou in *Del rojo*, Zulé traverses national borders and her participation in each of the traditions allows her repeated movement between the spiritual and physical planes.¹³ These different practices which themselves transcend national borders do not become conflated into a single hybridity, however, and the characters, their participation in the religious traditions and their experiences of and within these traditions continually evolve throughout the novels.

This discussion of nation and hybridity has focused on the plurality possible within each that then allows for a fluid, personal framework to be delineated in which the idea of nation can be defined. As a final point of interrogation, it is necessary to examine the concept and processes of historiography. Fanon (1991 [1961], 292-93) declared in 1959, ‘la culture est d’abord expression d’une nation’ just as the nation is necessarily the ‘condition de la culture’,¹⁴ and Hall (1991b, 589) contended more than thirty years later that cultural identity is ‘produced out of those historical experiences, those cultural traditions, [...] those peoples and histories which remain unwritten’. In his discussion of Mintz, Trouillot (1992, 31) writes, ‘heterogeneity cannot be grasped without history (as knowledge) because heterogeneity is the

¹³ In addition to leading her *gagá*, as part of her spiritual work Zulé interacts with the Dominican Vodou priest Houngan Señor, with Lino el Haitiano and Mambo Galeona Troncoso who are Dominicans who officiate within the Gagá tradition, and makes the journey to Similá Bolosse’s *ounfò* near Lac Peligre in Haiti upon the petition of a Dominican client whose wife has been taken there and turned into a *zonbi*.

¹⁴ ‘culture is first the expression of a nation’ just as the nation is necessarily the ‘condition of culture’ (Fanon 1990 [1963], 196-97).

product of history (as process).’ The idea of heterogeneity has been theorised above as a necessary element of Caribbean hybridity and nation. It follows, therefore, that historiography is a necessary consideration.

Edouard Glissant, in his collection of essays *Le discours antillais*, ‘proposed that it was the task of novelists to produce what were in essence works of history, as well as works about the particularities of historical consciousness in the Caribbean’ (Dubois 2006, 219). Of course it must be noted, as does Dubois, that Glissant was writing in late 1970s in reference to the process of historiography in the French Caribbean. Yet the fact that his collection refers to the Caribbean as a whole (in translation it is entitled *Caribbean Discourse*) is indicative of the wider applications of his work. The conceptual link Glissant (1997 [1981], 221-79) makes between ‘history’ and ‘story’ in his essay *Histoire, Histoires (History-Histories-Stories)* summarises the debate that continues among Caribbean historians to the present day: what constitutes history?¹⁵ Following on from Dubois, Silvestrini (2006, 231) highlights that, ‘In the literature of the “postcolonial” Caribbean, history is [...] a terrain for negotiation and transformation of new national spaces. Thus, as Caribbean historians at a crossroad, we are forced to question our conceptions of time and space as we probe also our own historical consciousness.’ For her part, Mohammed (2003, 120) outlines the ‘redefinition of “history”’ in the Caribbean ‘to include aspects of life previously seen as non-historical’ such as family relations, domesticity and sexuality. Moreover, this debate has not only been addressed by those writing about history and historiography in the wider Caribbean as the preceding references might suggest, but rather is equally important within the ‘local’ context (as opposed to the ‘global’). In preparation for the fiftieth anniversary of the Cuban Revolution in 2009 *La Gaceta de Cuba* issued a call for ‘reflexiones acerca de la historia, las disciplinas

¹⁵ The translation (offered by J. Michael Dash in Glissant 1989, 61) emphasises the linguistic interplay that exists in French (as well as Spanish and Kreyòl) between the separate Anglophone concepts of ‘history’ and ‘story’, since ‘histoire’ means both history and story, as does ‘historia’ in Spanish and ‘istwa’ in Kreyòl.

que la estudian y las problemáticas que éstas afrontan en el país y en el mundo actual’, to which the journal received such an overwhelming response it decided to publish a series of articles across its six issues that year in a section entitled ‘Pasado para un futuro: historiografía cubana’ (Rodríguez 2009, 2).¹⁶ In the first issue, Oscar Zanetti Lecuona (2009, 7-8; 10) explored ‘los usos y la utilidad de la historia’, pointing to the importance of historical discourse in the construction of identity and nation while emphasising that those who write history often dictate what is remembered and commemorated, concluding that it is only through employing a process of historiography which incorporates the voices ‘de los dirigidos, [...] de los vencidos, de las mujeres [...], de los esclavos’ alongside those already included that accepted history will be supplanted by ‘un discurso histórico [...] útil y atractivo’.¹⁷ The conclusion of Alejandro de la Fuente’s (2009, 32; 34) analysis of ‘[r]aza, política y nación en la historiografía cubana contemporánea’ echoed Glissant’s call by indicating the important contributions of contemporary Cuban musical and visual artists (including cinema) to the debate of race, historiography and the constituent elements of nation, while Olga Portuondo Zúñiga (2009, 39) emphasised the necessity to formulate Cuban historical discourse in a way that moves beyond ‘la visión machista y la persistencia del criterio liberal-burgués’ to include ‘el aporte africano’ and to recognise the contribution of women to this narrative.¹⁸

As these historians have underlined, historiography in the Caribbean has developed in repeated reference to the Eurocentric ideas of identity such as race and geopolitical markers, replicating the ‘natural hierarchy’ placed at the centre of nation-building which privileged the masculine and defined nation, racial identity, linguistic preference and religion in similar

¹⁶ ‘reflections on history, the disciplines that study it and the problems that these face in contemporary Cuba and the wider world’; ‘Past for a future: Cuban historiography’.

¹⁷ ‘the uses and utility of history’; ‘of the subjugated, [...] of the vanquished, of women [...], of slaves’; ‘a useful and attractive historical discourse’.

¹⁸ ‘[r]ace, politics and nation in contemporary Cuban historiography’; ‘the machismo and persistence of the liberal-bourgeois critic’ to include ‘the African contribution’.

terms to those employed by the coloniser. One key aspect of the necessary reformulation, as Brereton (1998, 144) underlines, is the inclusion of oral history in order to retrieve the ‘life stories of women (and men) as they themselves conceptualize and tell them’. Focusing first on the importance of orality and belief in the construction of history, this is particularly pertinent in reference to Makandal, Boukman, the Bois-Caïman ceremony and Vodou during the Haitian Revolution, as highlighted in chapter one. In spite of the aforementioned questions that have been raised by Geggus regarding the veracity of accounts detailing the two *houngan*’s involvement, Makandal and Boukman both figure prominently in popular belief regarding the Revolution, and along with the ceremony at Bois-Caïman have been incorporated into vodou tradition and symbolism. Additionally, accounts of all three have been and continue to be passed down in oral and written history (Murphy 1994, 12; Geggus 2002, 91). The perceived role of Vodou in the Haitian Revolution has been instrumental in Haitian historical discourse and national consciousness since independence, this despite the continued political and social marginalisation of the religious tradition that has followed.

Returning to Brereton (1998) and oral literature, she, among others such as Benítez-Rojo (2003) and López (2004), has highlighted the importance of women in the transmission of oral history from the period of slavery on colonial plantations to the present day. However, and in reference to the binaries addressed above, it is important to note that ‘engendering the narrative’ does not merely involve writing a female perspective of history. In her critique of Caribbean feminist historiography and theory Mohammed (2003, 111) observes, ‘The popular and public understanding of gender is that it refers to woman, and that to make something gender-sensitive, whether it is history or sociology, you simply “add women and stir”.’ However, as she rightly states, this is not satisfactory. ‘Engendering’ involves the recognition of both masculinity and femininity and of sexual difference, the co-existence of which must be recognised as well as the fact that they need not be binary opposites (Mohammed 2003,

109). Trinh T. Minh-ha (1991 [1983], 120) negotiates this issue of binary oppositionality in her essay “*L’innécriture: Un-writing/Inmost writing*”, stating, ‘The choice of a direction opposite to the one rejected remains a reaction within the same frame of references.’ Consequently, a female narrative positioned in opposition to a previous male narrative continues to be predicated on the latter, thus merely offering the antithesis of that which has preceded it rather than a real alternative.

It is in light of this discussion of nation, hybridity and historiography that Montero’s four novels will be analysed, focusing on her use of African-derived religious traditions as the context in which to outline her alternative concept of nation. These religious practices in the Caribbean go beyond the ‘third space’ that Bhabha outlines and transcend the framework of public-private in which they are constructed. Hybrid by definition, they constitute a framework that allows the interrogation of smaller groups within the religious framework, and each religious tradition functions both on a local and global level (to use Abou-El-Haj’s terms). Rejecting an interpretation in such binary terms, African-derived religious traditions both permit and promote travel within and between different belief systems. Furthermore, while Montero’s narrative promotes a female discourse, it also nuances the male one, writing oral culture (associated with the private) into the scribal tradition and bringing the spiritual (associated with orality and thus the feminine) into the public sphere. The body of the initiate constitutes the interstitial space in this public-private framework, which is then transcended by the *orisha* and *lwa*. Although Fernández Olmos (1997, 273) has written that, ‘Of all her novels *Del rojo de su sombra* most clearly affirms Montero’s transnational and trans-Caribbean reputation’, the following analysis suggests that it is by reading these four novels together through the lens of African-derived religious traditions that the clearest opportunity is offered of a pan-Caribbean interpretation of the concept of nation.

Myth and the gendering of historiography

Beginning with the processes of historiography, Montero's texts each interrogate the manner in which historical accounts have been written and question the validity of the interpretation of events they offer by situating them in the context of myth. By setting myth against historiography in this manner, she validates the former as a legitimate source with which to write the historical narrative running through her novels. As Cordies Jackson (2005, 48) observes in reference to Carpentier's works, the context of myth allows the constraints of linear time to be overcome, which then contributes to authors and their protagonists being positioned as those who control the representation of time rather than it being the master each individual must serve. Writing history as a concept in the creation of which an individual participates and is able to nuance then permits the details that are important to those writing to be foregrounded in a manner linear historical narrative may prevent. As Hall (1991b, 589) concludes in his essay *Myths of Caribbean Identity*, 'identity is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed' and one key source for cultural identity is 'those people and histories which remain unwritten'. By using myth as a means through which to position these 'unwritten histories' within historical discourse, Montero then enables her protagonists to participate in the histories they fashion from their physical and spiritual experiences, both of which are central to their worldview. As such, 'the renewed sense of self-re-creation' that is formulated in these texts through the use of myth and its various rewritings then sees women become the agents in the narratives that Montero's gendered historiography transcribes (Fernández Olmos 1997, 281). It is within this context of myth – itself associated with the feminine as established in chapter one and explored in further detail below with regard to orality – as able to interrogate of exclusivist, male-oriented historiography that this discussion is framed.

At the beginning of each of Montero's novels the reader is informed of the final event that has precipitated the writing of the text, underlining both the abovementioned deconstruction of linear time and that it is not the event itself that is most important but rather the way it is being recounted. The preface of *Del rojo* and the commentary on the book jacket suggest that Zulé has died, a fact reinforced by the news related in the first chapter of the vow Similá has taken to kill her and the animal blood in which he has bathed in order to ensure it, while Victor's death is foretold by his wife Martha who tells her husband that he will die 'quemado en un avión, en un cuarto de hotel, hasta en un bote, mira, tan cerquita del agua...' on the second page of *Tú, la oscuridad* (14).¹⁹ In *Como un mensajero* Aída's testimony, transcribed and verified through further research by her daughter Enriqueta and which as a whole constitutes the text of the novel, is given to an unknown messenger in the book's first chapter, and in *La trenza* it is Jean Leroy's return to Gonaives in the final days of Jean-Claude Duvalier's dictatorship after having spent twenty years abroad – depicted in the novel's opening lines – that allows the retelling and further exploration of events prior to his departure along with his initiation into Vodou.²⁰ Second, this juxtaposition of past and present is a feature of all four novels, thereby allowing both timeframes to influence the interpretation of the other. In some instances the movement between past and present is marked by chapter breaks, clearly indicating to the reader a shift in focus; at others it is through narrative tropes such as dreams or mental recollections written directly into the prose. The most recent text of the four, *Como un mensajero*, is doubly removed from the present, as it comprises the testimonies of Aída and the other sources interviewed as recounted to a younger Enriqueta,

¹⁹ 'burn[t] [...] in an aeroplane, a hotel room, even on a boat, you know, [...] right on the water' (Montero 1998, 4. All further translations from this edition). In *Tú, la oscuridad* Victor dies in a shipwreck, burned by his experience in Haiti and also symbolically by the blood-red grenouille du sang that is claimed by Agwé Tarayo, one of the *lwa* of the sea. As Thierry himself says, 'Bendito sea Agwé Tarayo. [...] El agua apaga la candela' (102) [*Blessed be Agwé Tarayo. [...] The water puts out the flame*' (72)].

²⁰ The events that occur within the context of Vodou in the novel serve as a parallel to the political transition of Haiti from dictatorship, with Jean Leroy's initiation enabling him to replace Papá Marcel as the local *houngan* upon the death of the latter soon after Baby Doc flees the country. Notably Papá Marcel is not killed as part of the *dechoukaj*, that is, the uprising against Vodou priests following the fall of the regime due to their association – actual or symbolic – with the dictatorial state apparatus, but rather dies during the transition. The association of Vodou with the dictatorial state and literary representations thereof are explored in chapter five.

which in the narrative present is exchanged for a series of fifty-two photographs pertaining to the life of her father, Enrico Caruso.

The interrogation of historiography continues in the manner in which Montero explicitly deconstructs previous official accounts, redefining history both in Mohammed's (2003, 120) terms of including traditionally non-historical considerations such as family relations and sexuality and in her incorporation of oral testimony. The plurality of voices Montero offers points to the heterogeneous nature of her historical account, and thus the heterogeneity necessary for the hybrid nation she outlines. In the preface to *Del rojo*, Montero frames her novel with the statement that 'Esta novela narra los hechos verídicos ocurridos hace pocos años en algún punto de La Romana', refuting the Dominican police report which closed the case as 'un simple «crimen pasional»' and criticising the police as representatives of the state for reducing this event to a single sentence (10).²¹ Montero places herself in direct conflict with the state, demonstrating how the 'simple crime of passion' is in fact an entire narrative. Her dedication to 'José Francisco Alegría y Soraya Aracena que me guiaron hasta Similá' refers to a primary source for her narrative, lending credence to her claim these events really occurred.²² Furthermore, it illustrates the conflict between official written history and orality embodied by this novel, emphasising the importance of oral testimony to the writing of a satisfactory history. This resistance to the official account not only places female oral testimony at the centre of this challenge to official history and historiography, it also echoes

²¹ 'This novel narrates real events that occurred a few years ago in La Romana'; 'a simple "crime of passion"' (Translation by Edith Grossman in Montero 2002, xiii-xiv. All further translations of *Del rojo* are taken from this edition).

²² 'José Alegría and Soraya Aracena who led me to Similá' (v). The anthropologists José Francisco Alegría-Pons and Soraya Aracena conducted research among the Gagá *societés* in the east of the Dominican Republic during the 1980s. In his 1993 publication, *Gagá y vudú en la República Dominicana: ensayos antropológicos*, Alegría-Pons refers to Haitian *houngan* Similá Jeremié as a principal participant of Aracena's and his, who lived in the Colonia Tumba batey and was *dueño* of its *gagá*. Several of the details Alegría-Pons (1993 1; 59-62) includes in his introduction and chapter on Similá Jeremié's *gagá* can be seen in *Del rojo*. Most notably, this is in the names of the characters Similá Bolosse and Jérémie Candé, as well as the fact that Similá becomes *dueño* of the *gagá* at the Colonia Tumba batey. However, other details also get transferred to other characters, such as Similá's Dominican wife and Haitian-Dominican family, reflected in that of Zulé's uncle (which later becomes Zulé's step-family when her father marries Anacaona following his brother's death).

Rodríguez Coronel's (1997, 204) statement in reference to the body of legends, *patakí* and songs that comprise the body of oral texts in Santería, 'Quien tiene la memoria, tiene el poder'.²³ Montero, by writing an account that centres on Gagá and the myths, songs and prayers which constitute this religious tradition – that is, on the orality inherent within it –, directly challenges the hegemonic discourse of the state embodied in the police report. She therefore mounts her own battle – reminiscent of that between Zulé and Similá, himself representative of the state –, whereby her narrative rises against and supplants the official historical account.

In *Tú, la oscuridad*, the author's narrative, interspersed with news clippings, reinterprets the decline of certain amphibian populations – specifically the Haitian *grenouille de sang* – through the context of Vodou. Building on Montero's (2001, 197) own references to the close relationship between African-derived religious traditions in the Caribbean and the environment, Paravisini-Gebert (2003, 460) states that *Tú, la oscuridad* is not only 'the quest for the elusive and rare frog' but rather becomes 'a voyage into a heart of darkness [...], where the forces of politics, neo-colonialism and violence threaten the very environment that makes spirituality possible.'²⁴ Juxtaposing her narrative with the reports of extinct species, Montero both foregrounds the effect of environmental destruction on the belief system of Vodou and reformulates these disappearances, which scientific studies have linked in some cases to climate change and the fungal infection chytridiomycosis, as a result of the *lwa* – specifically Agwé Tarayo, master of the sea – calling them back to the depths and therefore

²³ 'Whoever is able to remember retains the upper hand'. For a discussion of African-derived religious traditions as loci for resistance, see the introductory chapter to this thesis.

²⁴ The effects of deforestation and pollution on the environment in Haiti have been well documented. With regard to Vodou, tree-felling in Haiti has a particular impact since trees serve as the dwellings of different *lwa*; the *mapou* (ceiba) is particularly sacred, representing the link between the physical and spiritual worlds. As Selden (1954, 68) and Ramsey (2011, 346 n.117), among others, have highlighted, one aspect of the 'anti-superstition campaigns' waged against Vodou was the felling of mapou trees.

their ancestral home.²⁵ The account Montero offers in *Como un mensajero* of Enrico Caruso's short disappearance in Havana in 1920 also revises that printed in the contemporary press, situating it within a narrative which reinterprets both the account of Radames and Aïda in Verdi's opera *Aïda* and several Santería *pataki* that focus on the relationships between Yemayá, Ochún and Changó.²⁶ In so doing, rather than refuting these generally accepted reports, Montero points to an alternative explanation of these events based on the beliefs of those within the specific community.

As part of this critique of the processes of historiography, Montero's incorporation of oral testimony into the narratives challenges the precedence of patriarchal notions of history. The link between women, the transmission of oral history and *oraliterature* has been investigated and theorised by numerous scholars from a range of disciplines.²⁷ Carolyn Cooper's (1993, 7-9) *Noises in the Blood* examines gender in what she terms 'oral and oral/scribal texts' that comprise Jamaican popular culture, underlining the 'hierarchical gender relations between (white) men and (black) women [which] are reproduced in the patriarchal discourse of master texts conspiring to exclude secondaried female "minor" forms from the (scribal) literary canon.' In her analysis of women's writing in the Caribbean, Mühleisen (1996, 170) points to women's 'strong ties in oral culture as preservers and perpetuators of indigenous traditions'

²⁵ Several scientific studies have been carried out into the decline of amphibian populations around the globe. Those focusing on climate change include: Pounds, A., M. Fogden, and J. Campbell. (1999), Kiesecker, J. M., A. R. Blaustein, and L. K. Belden. (2001) and Carey, C., and M. A. Alexander. (2003). Those investigating the fungus chytridiomycosis include: Berger, L., et al. (1998) and Lips, K., et al. (2006).

²⁶ The article "Bomb Explodes at Caruso Performance; Six Injured in Havana Opera Panic" that appeared in The New York Times on 14 June 1920, the day following the bomb, states that Caruso was 'rushed [...] in his costume for the second act to the Hotel Sevilla in Mme. Navarrete's automobile, which was waiting at the stage door'. For an appraisal of the different accounts of the event, see Jorge Marbán's (2005) article, *Historia, intertextualidad y mitología afro-sino-cubana en Como un mensajero tuyo de Mayra Montero*.

²⁷ Bridget Brereton, Eudine Barriteau and Patricia Mohammed discuss gender and orality in the context of the Caribbean across their works and edited volumes, while the Havana-based publication, *Oralidad: anuario para el rescate de la tradición oral en América Latina y el Caribe* (published by UNESCO La Habana), has brought together scholarship focusing on orality from across the region since 1988. Discussions of orality, oral literature and the scribal tradition have variously coined terms such as 'orature' and 'oraliterature' to underline the dual heritage and process of interaction between the oral and scribal that have informed works in this genre, a necessary shift in terminology as Ong (1982) has exemplified. For further discussion see: Ong (1982), Wilentz (1992), Arndt (1998) and Anim-Addo (1996).

and ‘the traditional exclusion of women from the domains of public power’, but then concludes that Caribbean women have challenged the resultant ‘oral-literate divide’ by writing oral culture into their work. Montero’s texts present the same challenge, moving away from these patriarchal lines by placing the focus on writing oral culture, especially testimony. *Del rojo* comprises the account of Zulé’s life from her perspective, rejecting the reductive police report and valorising her role as a powerful *manbo* whose rapid ascension to the role ‘no se había visto en Societé alguna’ (45).²⁸ Choucouné’s story in *La trenza*, though mediated by Jean Leroy, rewrites the protagonist of Oswald Durand’s poem of the same name, giving her the voice she is denied in the poem to recount it herself.²⁹ It is important to note, however, that the accounts transcribed are not solely those of women; to do so would merely offer a counterpoint to these patriarchal notions rather than challenge them. *Tú, la oscuridad* is one example: the narrative provided as an alternative to the news clippings is that of Thierry Adrien, Haitian guide to Victor Griggs, the American herpetologist searching for the *grenouille de sang*. Montero’s critique of notions of historiography really comes to the fore in *Como un mensajero* since the entire novel comprises the account of Aída Petrirena Cheng as transcribed by her daughter, intercalated with other oral testimonies from witnesses – both men and women – which corroborate and complement Aída’s story. This methodological approach, similar to that of an historical account, emphasises the importance Montero places on the process of recording history. However, rather than conceptually locating the narrative back inside patriarchal notions of historiography through this approach, its content and oral nature and the context within which it takes place further indicate that Caribbean women will be situated in history through a recognition of heterogeneity, not the creation of a binary where gendered narratives are placed in counterpoint with each other.

²⁸ ‘was unlike anything ever seen in any Societé’ (30).

²⁹ For the text of the poem in its original Kreyòl, see Durand (1992, 49-50).

The structure of the novels also highlights the centrality of orality to the texts, particularly the non-sequential manner in which the narratives are constructed. In addition to Zulé's death being stated at the outset of *Del rojo*, the fact that other key events such as Zulé's *coronación* and her rejection of Similá's offer of an alliance (which would allow drug shipments to pass through Colonia Engracia) are noted with further pertinent details related in a subsequent chapter emphasises the importance Montero places on the telling and recording of events as well as that of the events themselves. The non-linear progression of the narrative also gives the impression that it is collated from a number of oral accounts – both Zulé's story and those of the *lwa* –, thus focusing on the centrality of oral tradition and transcription to the novel (Montero states in the Author's Note that she had more than one informant, the names of some of whom she has altered to protect their identity). Furthermore, as explored below, this also inscribes the narrative into the oral literary traditions which are central to African-derived belief systems in the Caribbean, intertwining the myths of the *lwa* and the characters' experiences and demonstrating how they cannot be divorced from one another, but rather constitute a single, polyphonic account. In *La trenza*, the narrator recalls many of the previous events from the narrative present, although the death of Choucoune's son is recounted in chapter four by an omniscient narrator, possibly by Jean Leroy based on others' accounts after the event, and only returned to in chapter eight, at which point it is placed chronologically in the narrative. Similarly, *Tú, la oscuridad* moves between time periods, narrating the progress of Thierry and Victor as one theme and the events in Thierry's life leading up to his meeting Victor as another. With regard to *Como un mensajero*, it is Aída's chronological account that is intercalated with further interviews from informants collected over the eight months during which the testimony is transcribed. Offering an alternative to the account of Caruso's disappearance which appeared in the New York Times, Montero demonstrates once again the centrality of oral testimony to her project and incorporates both the *patakí* and Aída's account into this historiographical text.

Montero's presentation of oral testimony and literature in this manner not only allows her to interrogate the traditional methods of historiography, it also places her narratives in a literary tradition that is intrinsically related to African-derived religious traditions in the Caribbean. Much scholarship focusing on the oral nature of African-derived religious practices in Cuba maintains that the *patakí* are related from *padrino* or *madrina* to initiate orally. However, it must be borne in mind that the scribal also forms a part of the transmission of *patakí* and traditions within Santería, as González Mariño (2004, 130) notes in her article *Oralidad y escritura: dualidades en la mitología de la Regla de Ocha-Ifá*. Though González Mariño (2004, 131) underlines the importance of memorising the *patakí*, since '*memoria expresa, entre otros matices, sabiduría y autoridad*',³⁰ there are those, such as Babalao Tato Quiñones, who have no qualms in referring to written sources during *consultas*.³¹ Furthermore, volumes such as Lydia Cabrera's (1954) *El monte* and Rómulo Lachatañeré's (1992 [1938]) *¡¡Oh, mío Yemayá!!*, which have indeed transcribed numerous *patakí*, have also been incorporated into some of the numerous *manuales* that are available describing the myths and rituals of Afro-Cuban religious practices for practitioners and non-practitioners alike (Diantéill and Swearingen 2003, 280-87). Yet, as Diantéill and Swearingen (2003) argue, written *libretas* were also used as sources by Cabrera herself – although she did not always reference them –, this in spite of her claim at the outset of works like *El monte* that she transcribed the *patakí* and other traditions in Santería from oral sources. Cabrera's work therefore demonstrates that informal written texts for practitioners of Afro-Cuban religious traditions existed as early as the end of the nineteenth century (280). Thus, a clear and longstanding link between oral and written texts within these traditions exists, which is reiterated in Montero's transcription of the *patakí*, myths of the *lwa* and oral testimony. In her texts, the author incorporates and

³⁰ 'memory is an indicator of wisdom and authority, amongst other qualities'.

³¹ Interview with Quiñones in June 2009, which he then demonstrated during the subsequent *consulta*.

rewrites various myths pertaining to the belief systems she represents, the most pertinent of which will be outlined at this point in reference to chapter one in preparation for the remainder of the discussion.

As mentioned above, the reinterpretation of the classic Verdi opera *Aïda* is central to *Como un mensajero*. Caruso was in Havana in June 1920 in order to perform the opera, and it was during one of the performances that the bomb exploded and Caruso disappeared as printed in the New York Times. Serving as the event that precipitated his meeting with Aïda Petirena Cheng and thus the events recounted in the rest of the novel, Montero therefore not only rewrites the published account of Caruso's disappearance but also conflates the classic European opera with the Afro-Cuban *patakí* and uses this as the basis for her rewriting.³² *Como un mensajero* is structured in twelve chapters whose Italian titles are taken from the libretto of the opera (Paravisini-Gebert 2008, 150), and the tale of Radames and Aïda is replayed through Caruso and Aïda's relationship which itself reflects the relationships between Changó, Yemayá and Ochún (explored later in this chapter). Firstly, focusing on Yemayá, 'la conga Mariate' – an *iyalocha* (fully initiated female priest) who helps Aïda's *padrino*, the *babalao* Calazán, in Matanzas – describes the love between Changó and Yemayá as follows:³³

³² The marriage of (ostensibly) European music traditions with Afro-Caribbean religious traditions is an important element of Kettly Mars' *Fado*, which is analysed in chapter four. In this instance it is the intertwining of Portuguese fado with Haitian Vodou that forms the musical backdrop to the text and permits the intersection of discrete spaces within the novel.

³³ Cros Sandoval (2006, 99) describes the difference between the newly and fully initiated thus, 'There are several categories of priests and priestesses in Santería. The new, or recent initiates, are called *iyawós* and are at the lowest level. The *babalochas* (males) and *iyalochas* (females) are above them. They are people who have been initiated for more than a year and have full priesthood credentials.'

Changó no sabía que su verdadera madre era Yemayá. Sin saber que era su madre, quiso que fuera su mujer. «*Omó mi*», dijo Changó, y Yemayá le ofreció el pecho, donde Changó, reconociéndola, se echó a llorar.³⁴ (99)

This is a different sequence of events to those recounted in the related *patakí* referenced in chapter one of this thesis, in which Yemayá is said to fall in love with her son Changó, fully aware of the fact this would be incest. Although Changó resists as he does in the *patakí* la conga Mariate relates, in the end he concedes since he was ‘convencido de que más se mortifica Yemayá con estos extravíos’ of rubbing her private parts on the hard, improvised bed and calling out to Changó that she would give him ‘un placer jamás concebido’. Climbing down to embrace her, Changó and Yemayá ‘se poseen contra natura’ for a long time (Lachatañeré 1992 [1938], 38).³⁵

Secondly, Oshún is described by la conga Mariate thus:

Oshún tampoco sabía que Changó era su sobrino [...]. No lo sabía y quiso ser su mujer, por eso terminó tan mal, llorando también sobre una piedra.³⁶ (100)

This *patakí* is similar to that mentioned in the introduction, in which Changó and Oshún maintain a sexual relationship although the former repeatedly refuses to reciprocate Oshún’s declarations of love, resulting in her following him when he moves away in spite of him frequently humiliating her (Lachatañeré 1992 [1938], 50-51). A well-known *patakí*, it is central to the narrative in the key text analysed in chapter three, Hernández Espinosa’s *María Antonia*, in which the playwright underlines the coexistence between the *orisha* and

³⁴ ‘Changó didn’t know his real mother was Yemayá. He didn’t know she was his mother, he wanted her to be his wife. “*Omó mi*,” said Changó, and Yemayá offered him her breast, then Changó recognized her and began to cry’ (Translation by Edith Grossman in Montero 2000, 75. All further translations of *Como un mensajero* are taken from this edition).

³⁵ ‘convinced that Yemayá was shaming herself more by this impropriety’; ‘un-heard of pleasure’; ‘[g]oing against nature, possess each other’ (Lachatañeré 2005, 60-62).

³⁶ ‘Oshún didn’t know that Changó was her nephew [...]. She didn’t know and wanted to be his wife, that’s why she came to such a bad end. She cried over a stone too’ (75).

santeros/as, using the story of Ochún and Changó to explore the interactions between María Antonia and Julián. The latter, an archetypal macho figure who is a boxer, treats María Antonia in the same way as Changó does Ochún, allowing her to go to prison for a crime he commits but adamant that he cannot be restricted by entering into a monogamous relationship with her. Drawing on elements of Ochún's character expressed in her other *caminos* such as her associations with death and her vengeful nature, Hernández Espinosa writes an alternative *patakí* which changes the Ochún depicted from a solely submissive individual as this specific myth describes her and sees María Antonia destabilise the patriarchal construct that requires her to act in the manner in which Julián and the wider Santería community attempt to dictate.³⁷

Turning to Montero's *Del rojo*, the myths of Ezili are retold through the life of the novel's protagonist, Zulé. Characteristic of her *mèt tèt*, she is described as 'llorosa y puta como la metresa Freda, sumisa y grande como la Virgen de Erzulie' (96).³⁸ Two avatars of the same *lwa*, 'la metresa Freda' corresponds to Ezili Freda of the Rada rite in Haitian Vodou, and 'la Virgen de Erzulie' to Ezili Dantò of the Petwo rite, the attributes of both of whom have been outlined in chapter one (James, Alarcón and Millet 2007 [1998], 170-71; Alegría-Pons 1993, 66).³⁹ The relationship between Ezili and Ogún Ferraille is also important as it mirrors that between Zulé and her *gagá*. Married to Ezili, Ogún Ferraille is one of the three *lwa*

³⁷ Hernández Espinosa has described his work as one of a creative artist for whom Afro-Cuban spirituality provides the freedom to invent *patakí* and construct alternative stories to those recounted by practitioners. The two examples he gives are *Odebí el cazador*, an invented story, and *Obá y Shangó*, in which he draws on what he terms the fundamental characteristics of these two *orisha*. With regard to *María Antonia*, he notes in an anecdote that his incorporation of Santería practice into the play led to at least one santera describing him as 'un descarado, un atrevido' [*'shameless, impudent'*] (Vasserot 1998, 46). Another well-known rewriting of *patakí* is Excilia Saldaña's (1987) collection of short stories *Kele Kele*, of two of which – *Obba* and *Los reyes del relámpago y el trueno* – Vadillo (2002, 99-106) has analysed the feminist qualities.

³⁸ 'weeping and whorish like Metresa Freda, submissive and great like the Virgin of Erzulie' (78).

³⁹ Deive (1988, 185) describes *Metré Silí* (synonymous with Montero's 'metresa Freda') as a passionate *lwa* with much renown in the Dominican Republic, whose 'mayor defecto consiste en coquetear con los hombres' [*'greatest flaw lies in her flirting with men'*].

propitiated during Holy Week, along with Ti Jean Petró and Erzulie Zeux Rouges,⁴⁰ whose presence in the physical world over the period is represented by the *bukán*, a metal stake that serves as a ceremonial fire fed with rum and gasoline, described as ‘la verga de Ogún Ferraille’ (Rosenberg 1979, 74; *Del rojo* 54).⁴¹ This relationship is therefore reflected in the spiritual marriage that exists between Zulé as *dueña* and her *gagá*, and also symbolically within the text as the *bukán* has to be “extinguished” once the *gagá* returns on Easter Sunday, which is the day Zulé is killed (176). In addition to this, throughout the narrative not only are Zulé and Similá depicted as physical representations of the *lwa* they serve, but their interactions reflect those of Ezili and Toro Belecou. Métraux (1959, 118-19) states that Toro Belecou belongs to a family of *lwa* called the ‘loa-taureaux’ (bull *lwa*), which includes Taureau-trois-graines (Bull with three testicles) and Ezili-taureau; the latter is an avatar of Ezili, which for Fernández Olmos (1997, 279) reinforces the fitting nature of Zulé as a counterpart to Similá, her lover and rival. Montero combines the other two *lwa* mentioned by Métraux in Similá however, depicting him as physically representing Toro Belecou when, having been cured of his savannah sores by Zulé’s poultices and ardent passion, he leaves Colonia Engracia with the cottony tufts from the pods of the nearby ceiba that had been pulled apart by the parrots nesting in it clinging to his face, transforming it in to ‘la cara exacta del misterio más temido y rencoroso del Panteón: [...] la misma cara de Toro Belecou’ (95).⁴² Seeing himself in the mirror, Similá intones the song Métraux (1959, 119) has transcribed as that used to greet Taureau-trois-graines when he mounts his initiates, thereby juxtaposing the two within the body of Similá.⁴³ This is reinforced by the anatomical oddity of having three

⁴⁰ Montero follows the spelling used by Rosenberg for the names of these *lwa*. Following current spelling norms in Kreyòl, Ti Jean Petro is Ti Jan Petwo, Erzulie Zeux Rouges is Ezili Je Wouj and Ogún Ferraille is Ogou Feray.

⁴¹ ‘Ogún Ferraille’s prick’ (38).

⁴² [‘the mirror image of] the most feared and rancorous mystery in the Panthon: [...] the face of Bull Belecou’ (77). As highlighted above, the fact it is a ceiba reinforces the presence of the *lwa* at this point since it serves as a conduit between the physical and spiritual worlds.

⁴³ Fernández Olmos (1997, 279) has described Taureau-trois-graines as an alternative name for Toro Belecou rather than a separate *lwa* as Métraux suggests.

testicles that the latter and Taureau-trois-graines share. However, as Vadillo (2002, 97-98) underlines, Montero rewrites the myth surrounding Ezili, Toro Belecou and Belié Belcán, in which Ezili had propitiated Belié Belcán in order to kill Toro Belecou, or at least bring her his blood (see *Del rojo*, 171). In *Del rojo*, Belié Belcán is transformed into Carfú (representative of the crossroads and the link between the physical and spiritual planes), who instead of killing Toro Belecou as in the myth, kills Ezili. Vadillo suggests that in so doing, Jérémie Candé/Carfú closes the path for Zulé/Ezili, thereby opening it for her *gagá* by preventing the possible alliance that he fears will be agreed between the *dueña* and her rival, against which the *societé*'s previous *dueño* – Zulé's husband and Jérémie Candé's father – had warned. This closing of Zulé's path has been described by Fernández Olmos (1997, 280) as the *manbo*'s liberation, allowing her to serve as the conduit 'through which man ascends and gods descend', with the same result of ensuring the continued existence and independence of her *societé*. This rewriting of the myth must also be considered in light of the relationship between Ezili and Ogún Ferraille, with whom Belié Belcán is affiliated as they are both avatars of Ogún (Alegría-Pons 1993, 118; Deive 1988, 238). Mounted by Carfú, Jérémie Candé begins to threaten Similá, which the latter dismisses and orders Zulé to remove him from the battlefield. Refusing at first, she tells Similá, 'Jérémie es mi Primer Mayor. No lo puedo sacar de aquí' (168).⁴⁴ Naming him as her 'First Elder' in the hierarchy of the *gagá* is significant since this rank associated with Ogún Ferraille, which then also links Jérémie Candé's subsequent murder of Zulé to Ogún Ferraille's anger provoked by Ezili giving her lover preference over him and to his role as uncompromising general of the group of warrior *lwa* who are considered to have fought in the Haitian Revolution against the oppression of the French (Rosenberg 1979, 76; Brown 2010 [1991], 114; 95-96). Seen in such terms, Jérémie Candé/Ogún Ferraille, although angry at Zulé's/Ezili's rejection of him, is also acting in the interests of the *gagá* in order to prevent the *societé*'s subjugation by Similá.

⁴⁴ 'Jérémie is my First Elder. I can't take him out of here' (146).

The myth of Sikán and the foundation of the Sociedad Abakuá are rewritten in *Tú, la oscuridad*. In her discussion of this, Vadillo (2002, 165-168) highlights how Montero's rewriting reorganises and combines the different versions of the myth that can be found in Cuba and the consequences of this reinterpretation for the character of Camerún, excommunicated from the *sociedad* for breaking its rules. In his 1982 study *Los ñañigos*, Sosa Rodríguez (1982, 191-215) transcribes the three main versions of the myth of Sikán – corresponding to the three warring nations of *Efor*, *Efik* and *Oru* that were to form the *sociedad* – which recounts the founding of the Sociedad Abakuá. Although certain details change between the versions, in each of them a fish which embodies the voice of Tanze – the supreme being – is captured in the gourd of river water Sikán has collected, the voice is subsequently lost when the fish dies and the male leaders declare that Sikán must be sacrificed in order for it to be recovered (among the *Efik* this is her punishment for breaking her promise not to reveal the secret of Tanze). In spite of Sikán's sacrifice at the hands of the male elders and the associated rituals that took place involving her blood and body parts, the voice of Tanze does not return until she is replaced by a goat, which then gives Ekué (the sacred drum) its voice.⁴⁵ In contrast to each of these versions, Montero does not replace Sikán with the goat in her writing of the myth but rather Sikán fulfils this role herself. In altering it thus, Montero reorients the myth to foreground Sikán's role in allowing the Tanze to be heard and peace to be declared between the three nations, thereby tempering the victim's negative characteristics as a traitor who broke her vow not to repeat the secret of Tanze as recounted by the *Efik* and by Quiñones (Vadillo 2002, 166).⁴⁶ Although Montero reformulates the myth and so removes

⁴⁵ It should be noted that in the version Quiñones (1994, 25-31) transcribes, Sikán is not sacrificed in order to recover the voice of Tanze but rather as punishment for having exposed its secret. Quiñones' informant does, however, emphasise that different versions of the myth exist.

⁴⁶ Vadillo concludes that this 'propone que el signo femenino cese de ser juzgado desde una visión totalmente destructora y machista' [*suggests that the sign of femininity ceases to be considered from a solely destructive and machista point of view*] (166). Interestingly, however, Thierry – who is recounting the myth to Victor – states that a woman may find the secret, but must die as Sikán did if she does. While women may have been

the completely negative image of women therein portrayed, the inferior status of women and their preclusion from membership continues, with Thierry explicitly stating that women who discover the secret must die as Sikán did (*Tú, la oscuridad* 170).

Montero's rewriting of these myths thus both creates a bridge between the existing form of historiography – largely exclusivist and paternalistic – and religious myth, and contests this manner of writing history. These myths, traditionally passed down within each religious tradition orally, have been and continue to be transcribed, forming a body of work based on orality that, as noted above, has been termed *oraliterature*.⁴⁷ Thus, in building this conceptual bridge, Montero adds a further dimension to Caribbean historiography, not only incorporating oral testimony into the body of historical texts as outlined above but also validating *oraliterature* as legitimate historical account. However, contesting it through the recognition her rewritings offer of the position that these religious traditions and especially female practitioners occupy in Caribbean society, Montero also indicates that the incorporation of myth into historical discourse is necessary in order to permit the expression of those positioned on the margins of society the voice they warrant in Caribbean history. In so doing, her works answer to a certain degree the abovementioned call to recognise the particularities of historical consciousness in the Caribbean, and she does so within novels that can be considered works of history (Dubois 2006, 219).

In this fashion, Montero offers alternative interpretations of the *pataki* and myths of the *lwa*, conflating several into one and also incorporating the events she depicts in her novels.

liberated from this completely negative image, therefore, they are still regarded as inferior by the society and precluded membership.

⁴⁷ In an Hispanic context, Roberto Zurbano used the term *oraliteratura* during an interview with me in Havana in June 2009, saying, '[H]ay varias literaturas dentro de la santería. En primer lugar el mundo de la literatura de la santería tiene que ver con lo que se ha dado en llamar la literatura oral, la oralidad o la oraliteratura que es cómo se dice ahora' [*There are several literatures within Santería. Firstly, the literary world of Santería has to do with what has been given to be called oral literature, orality or oraliterature, as it is now named*].

Importantly, the result is a literary compilation that celebrates the heterogeneous nature of the Caribbean and re-emphasises it through the hybrid nature of her historical narrative, but which also encapsulates the complex nature of the discourse regarding gender and patriarchy both within these religious traditions and wider Caribbean society. Having explored the heterogeneity inherent in the historiographical aspect of Montero's novels, this discussion will now explore the alternative concept of nation these texts present.

Nation, hybridity and the body

As demonstrated above, in these four novels Montero synthesises a variety of sources and discourses in her presentation of an overarching narrative. It should be noted, however, that within this it is possible to delineate a female narrative counterpointed with a male discourse, as simplistic as such a construct may be: in *Como un mensajero*, Caruso, as Anglade de Aguerrevere (2005, 77) rightfully describes, represents 'la cultura europea, lo viejo, lo caduco y lo decadente', as opposed to Aída, 'la nueva, la mestiza, la que sobrevivirá el paso del tiempo';⁴⁸ Similá Bolosse, embodiment of the destructive nature of the Duvalier dictatorships in *Del rojo* by dint of being a Tonton Macoute, is counterpointed with Zulé, *manbo* who works for the good of her *gagá* and dies to save it.⁴⁹ In *La trenza* this is slightly more nuanced though still present: the accounts of Papá Rigaud and Papá Marcel, who serve as local counterparts of François and Jean-Claude Duvalier respectively, are placed in opposition to Choucouné's, which are then mediated by the male narrator Jean Leroy. However, such a binary framework is not a satisfactory trope through which to read these novels nor to

⁴⁸ 'European culture, that which is old, outdated and decadent,' as opposed to 'what is new, mixed, that will survive the passage of time'.

⁴⁹ The relationship between the Duvalier dictatorships and the Macoutes is explored in chapter five. Although *Del rojo* is set just after the end of the Baby Doc regime, the novel suggests that Similá, a long-serving member of the Macoutes who is also linked to the trafficking of Haitian *braceros*, was involved with the regime of Papa Doc as well as that of Baby Doc. The passage of time in *Del rojo* is inexact when the number of years is tallied with regard to the necessary periods of initiation and the relative age of the characters. However, the textual references that are present and the assertion that Similá has always been involved with the Macoutes, as well as that fact that his son Tarzán Similá is depicted as continuing his legacy just as Baby Doc did that of his father, would suggest a link, if only symbolic, between Similá and both the François and Jean-Claude Duvalier regimes.

represent wider Caribbean society as this analysis argues Montero does. In each of the novels it is clear that these opposites are problematised: the testimonies which complement Aída's in *Como un mensajero* are provided by men and women alike, while Zulé's servitor and oldest initiate, Jérémie Candé, is integral to her narrative in *Del rojo*, and Galeona, 'vieja mambo vengativa' who works *con las dos manos*, is allied with Similá and his narrative that is representative of the oppression of the patriarchal dictatorship (98).⁵⁰ For his part, Papá Marcel in *La trenza*, while representative of Baby Doc, does not blindly continue the work of his father and seeks to better the community and resist 'el mandamás de Port au Prince' and the Macoutes in spite of his links to the dictatorial regime.⁵¹

The discussion of *mestizaje* in chapter one and summarised above outlines the manner in which binary oppositions are synthesised within a framework that has been used overwhelmingly in the discussion of miscegenation, but which has also been applied to the cultures associated with such interactions. As will now be demonstrated, in these four texts by Montero the reader sees the depiction of the racial and cultural hybridity of the Caribbean in each novel become ever more complex, culminating in the narrator of *Como un mensajero*, Enriqueta Cheng.

It has already been mentioned that Choucouné in *La trenza* has as her namesake the *marabout* of Oswald Durand's poem, *Choucouné*. Representative of *mestizaje* as a woman of European and African descent, she is 'a dark skin mulatto woman with straight hair, considered the perfect mix of African and European beauty' (N'Zengou-Tayo 1998, 133). The Choucouné of Montero's text is regarded in much the same light by its narrator Jean Leroy, who after twenty years of absence is still enraptured by her beauty and recognises the power she holds

⁵⁰ 'vengeful, hard-hearted old mambo' (80). An *houngan* or *manbo* who works 'with both hands' is one that uses Vodou for both positive outcomes (the right hand) and harmful purposes (the left hand).

⁵¹ 'the big boss in Port-au-Prince'. The term 'mandamás de Port au Prince' is repeated throughout the novel, appearing on pages 73, 120, 167 and 188. It is also used in *Del rojo*, p.125.

over him. As an adolescent, she enthralled the boys of the neighbourhood, and later the relationships maintained with her now dead husband Hubert Gourgue, Papá Marcel, Jean Leroy and the old *ropavejero* were based on their perception of her as the epitome of beauty by virtue of being *mulata*. In addition, the presence and influence of the Dominican Republic in Haiti is embodied by Papá Marcel's live-in companion and assistant, Nicolasina Tiburcio, who then becomes Jean Leroy's companion when he replaces Papá Marcel as the *houngan* of Gonaives at the novel's close.

Del rojo moves beyond this synthesis inherent in *mestizaje* to illustrate creolization in the Caribbean, with a greater focus on the interaction of different cultural influences in a specific locale. In Coridón's – which later becomes Zulé's – *société*, Anacaona, a Dominican woman who moves to the *batey* upon marrying Zulé's uncle, represents both the Dominican Republic and the Taíno past of the island of Hispaniola,⁵² and María Caracoles, again through her name, is a direct link with both Catholicism and other African-derived belief systems that use cowrie shells in the process of divination through *Ifá* (such as Santería and Candomblé). Jérémie Candé is the son of Coridón and a Chinese ship's maid, underlining the important presence and influence of the Chinese in the Caribbean.⁵³ Though these different influences evident in the practice of Gagá could be interpreted in light of notion of *mestizaje*/hybridity as symbiosis, the interactions and tensions that exist between each of these elements within Gagá point to a process of continued cultural creolization exemplified by Montero's rewriting of the myth surrounding Ezili, Toro Belecou and Belié Belcán. This cultural creolization is further demonstrated by Ganesha, the Indo-Guadeloupean partner of American herpetologist Jasper Wilbur in *Tú, la oscuridad*, whose prayers to the Hindu deity Mariamman are integrated into

⁵² Anacaona was the last chief of the Taínos on the island of Hispaniola, executed by the Spanish during the early years of colonial rule.

⁵³ The topic of the Chinese in the Caribbean is further developed below.

Thierry's prayers to Agwé Tarayo as the ship sinks, returning the *grenouille de sang* to the depths (119; 239).

These influences come together in the mother and daughter in *Como un mensajero*, Aída and Enriqueta. Aída is a 'chinita amulatada' of Lucumí, Spanish and Chinese descent on the part of her mother, a hybrid nuanced further by Enriqueta's Italian father (209).⁵⁴ Together, they exemplify the hybridity of the Caribbean and Montero's alternative concept of nation, not as a composite of a shattered vase reassembled but as culturally hybrid individuals who interact and negotiate with different communities. In spite of their hybrid ethnicity, both Aída and Enriqueta state that 'lo chino era lo primero que veían las personas' (30).⁵⁵ Hu-DeHart (1999, 108-110) outlines the ambiguous position the Chinese occupied in the construction of race in nineteenth-century Cuba, where they had the legal status of "white" but were often considered to be 'de color'. Aída and Enriqueta themselves both note this ambiguity, as their almond eyes and straight hair coupled with the body of a *mulata* was considered attractive by many (174-75). As such, mother and daughter inhabit what could be deemed a 'third space', a notion to which this discussion will return and critique in light of Montero's other texts below.

Aída interacts with the Chinese community in Havana, regularly visiting her Chinese *padrino* Yuan Pei Fu, devotee of Sanfancón. This deity, though Chinese in origin – called Guan Gong and venerated by an all-male society – has been associated with Changó in Afro-Cuban religious traditions and thus also with Santa Bárbara (Pérez Fernández and Rodríguez González 2008, 143; Scherer 1998, 9). Though Aída and her mother turn to Yuan Pei Fu for help and guidance at times, they are more intimately involved with Santería. Aída has

⁵⁴ 'Chinese mulatta' (170).

⁵⁵ 'my Chinese part was the first thing that people saw' (16).

Yemayá as her *orisha de cabecera* and, as has been outlined above, a close interaction exists between the *pataki* regarding Yemayá and Changó and the development of Aída's relationship with Enrico Caruso. Furthermore, she regularly visits her *padrino* Calazán, who intervenes and propitiates the *orisha* on her behalf to prevent her death and that of her lover. In the process of collating the interviews that are interspersed within her mother's testimony, Enriqueta also interacts with these different communities, visiting the house where the *paisanos* live many years after her grandfather's death and others who knew Aída around the time of the bomb.⁵⁶ Some were close friends who often visited Aída and her mother, like María Vigil and Amable Casanova, others were professionals whom she met on her travels to Matanzas and Santa Clara with Caruso, such as Dr Benito Terry. Enriqueta also interviews one of the suspects of the bombing, a pharmacist from El Cerro. The narrative that results is a written account of these meetings and interactions which draws together a series of communities – religious, ethnic, professional, personal –. Some communities have a larger presence than others, some a greater influence, but together they constitute an account that can be classed in Anderson's terms as one of a nation.

Yet as Anderson underlines, a nation so conceived, though heterogeneous, does not deny the existence of tensions and exploitations that may prevail between its constituent communities. The increasingly hybrid communities depicted across these texts do indeed have tensions that exist both within and between them. Within Zulé's *société* in *Del rojo*, there exists a racial othering of that which does not belong to the overwhelmingly Haitian community of the Colonia Engracia *batey*. As a Dominican woman marrying into the community, Anacaona suffered 'el desprecio inconfesable de las mujeres haitianas, que la vieron llegar a sus

⁵⁶ *Paisanos* is the term used in the novel to refer to the members of the Chinese Sanfancón community in Havana.

dominios jurándose un amarre para ella y para toda su intratable parentela' (23).⁵⁷ Dominicans are generally rejected due to the manner in which they regard the Haitians, with disdain for the blackness the Haitians represent and therefore the Dominicans' perceived superiority (22). For Anacaona, it is only 'al nacerle el primer hijo, que le salió retinto y mohíno como Jean-Claude, [que] la gente terminó por olvidar de dónde había venido' (23).⁵⁸ However, the tension between the two groups is never fully resolved as Anacaona repeatedly describes behaviour of which she does not approve in disparaging racialised terms, telling Zulé she looked like a Haitian when she walked to the fields without covering her upper body, or describing Coridón's *société* as 'esa recua de congos' upon learning of the promise made by Papa Luc to allow his daughter to be initiated (89; 30).⁵⁹

Interestingly, Jérémié Candé constitutes what seems to be an unusual case for the Chinese in the Dominican Republic. Wen-Chu Chen's (2008, 30) study of Chinese Dominicans echoes that of Hu-DeHart's in Cuba, whereby Chinese 'have been included in contemporary notions of *la raza blanca*'. Moreover, comparing the two studies would suggest there to be a greater acceptance in the Dominican Republic for interracial relationships and their progeny than in Cuba. It would follow that from a merely phenotypical point of view Jérémié Candé could in fact be accepted into Dominican society by virtue of his being perceived as "whiter" than the necessarily "black" Haitians of the *batey*. However, Wen-Chu Chen (2008, 31) concludes that 'Chinese Dominicans may be able to contest traditional racial notions of Dominicaness through culture, language, and citizenship.' Rejected by his Chinese mother, Jérémié Candé is raised in the cane-cutting community and the Gagá tradition, thus his acceptance as a Dominican would be precluded since from a social, economic and cultural position he

⁵⁷ 'the unconfessable contempt of the Haitian women, who saw her come into their domain and swore they would put an amarre on her and all her hateful relatives' (8).

⁵⁸ 'when her first child was born and came out as black as Jean-Claude, [that] people eventually forgot where she had come from' (8).

⁵⁹ 'that pack of Congos' (15).

occupies the space reserved for Haitians. Yet Jérémie Candé is also considered as other within the *société*, never really gaining acceptance despite participating in the community, cutting cane and fulfilling his socioreligious role. He is neither Dominican nor Haitian, and although Zulé encourages his actions and sexual fantasies, she terms them ‘cosas de chino’ in disgust and flatly refuses the formal relationship with him proposed by her husband and his father, Coridón, as a last wish before the *houngan* died (108). As such, though Anacaona, as a Dominican and therefore linked to whiteness, manages to become accepted in the *société*, Jérémie Candé continues to occupy a liminal space as continually “other”, not fully accepted by any community.

When these four novels are read together, the interaction of religious communities permits the articulation of a challenge to Bhabha’s notion of the third space with regard to the concept of hybridity and nation. As outlined above and in chapter one, African-derived religious traditions in Cuba and Haiti occupy a space between the private and public spheres. These are traversed by the body of the initiate which constitutes the third space between these two poles since it is the site of interaction between the spiritual and physical, the private and the public. One example of this is the ritual painting of the body. In *Tú, la oscuridad*, Thierry states that, upon initiation into the Sociedad Abakuá, ‘me desnudaron para que un hombre me dibujara el cuerpo, rayas en la piel del cráneo, rayas en mis brazos y en mis piernas’ (170).⁶⁰ Cabrera (1969, 161) describes this ritual of ‘painting’ neophytes as a process during which the initiate is ‘marked’ with the following symbols, ‘una cruz en la frente, en las manos y antebrazos, en el pecho y en la espalda; y en cada pie, en el empeine, subiendo por las piernas hasta los muslos’, thereby purifying their bodies.⁶¹ Furthermore, in reference to Yuan Pei Fu and the cult of Sanfancón in *Como un mensajero*, Amable Casanova tells Enriqueta, ‘A tu madre la

⁶⁰ ‘they took off my clothes so a man could paint my body, lines on my skull, lines on my arms and legs’ (124).

⁶¹ ‘a cross on the forehead, on the hands and the forearms, on the chest and the back; and on each foot – on the instep –, climbing the leg as far as the calves’.

pintaron, a lo mejor lo hizo ese chino tan místico que fue su verdadero padre' (220).⁶² As such, the body is symbolically marked in a way that reinforces its status as the conduit through which the physical and spiritual interact.

Moreover, the body of the initiate exemplifies the symbiotic relationship between the *orisha* / *lwa* and initiates whereby the former mount their devotees. This relationship cannot be circumscribed by the public-private framework as it necessarily creates a fourth space that transcends the public and private spheres as well as the body of the initiate. By means of illustration, this discussion will now focus on the relationships between Aída, Yemayá, Caruso and Changó in *Como un mensajero*.

Upon reflection on her escape with Caruso, Aída describes herself as, 'el caballo de una potencia que me dominaba, un animal que iba corriendo porque su jinete quiso. Mi jinete siempre fue Yemayá, y ella mandaba sobre mí, mandó en aquella hora como mandó en las que vinieron luego' (183-84).⁶³ When Aída is mounted by Yemayá, as occurs several times during the ceremony performed by Calazán at the lagoon to cleanse Caruso and prevent his impending death, her body functions in both the public and the private spheres. In the public sphere, her being ridden by the *orisha* serves the community itself, allowing Yemayá's devotees to greet her and permitting this visible relationship between Yemayá and the Santería community. Necessarily a public action, as Murphy (1994, 110) underlines, this interaction is only made possible 'by the actions of the community and *in* the actions of the community' (original emphasis). However, as the narrative shows, Yemayá also acts in the interests of her love for Changó, mounting Aída and giving her the strength to run into the

⁶² 'Your mother was painted, who knows, probably that mystical Chinaman who was her real father painted her too' (179).

⁶³ 'the horse of a power that controlled me, an animal galloping because her rider wanted her to. My rider was always Yemayá: she ruled me, she ruled over me then just like she ruled over all the moments that came later' (147).

lagoon and stop Caruso from drowning. For Aída, this then functions in her private sphere, prolonging the amount of time she can maintain her relationship with her lover.

Furthermore, Aída's physical relationship with Yemayá gives her strength to withstand hardship. Kidnapped, beaten and left in a cave to die, Aída is pregnant with Caruso's daughter and she notes that either Yemayá Asesu or Yemayá Achabá, 'mensajera de Olokún y [...] secretaria de Olofi' respectively, keeps her and her unborn daughter alive: 'No sé cual de las dos fue la que se quedó conmigo, batallando con todo lo que había a mi alrededor [...]. Todavía me pregunto cómo no me comieron y cómo no entraron en mi vientre para comerte a ti' (235).⁶⁴ The invocation of these two *camino*s of Yemayá is significant: Yemayá Achabá would seek to protect Aída and Caruso's child since she was Changó's lover, while also being gifted in divination as the wife of Orula and therefore able to interpret the future importance of this child; Yemayá Asesu resides in turbid and dirty water, and would therefore serve as a protector in the dark and dank environment in which Aída was abandoned (Cabrera 1980, 29-30). The manifestation of Yemayá through Aída's body here both serves in the private and public spheres, enabling Aída to continue carrying her daughter, thereby also allowing the daughter of Yemayá and Changó to be born in the physical world. This daughter will later transcribe Aída's testimony, thus allowing both Aída and Caruso's and Yemayá and Changó's stories to be written into the abovementioned discourse of nation.

The role of Zulé in *Del rojo* as the conduit through which the physical and spiritual planes interact has already been outlined above. Upon her death, Zulé's liberation is achieved as she rises to be in communion with Ezili: killed physically by the machete of Jérémie Candé/Carfú, she becomes, in the words of Deren, 'impaled eternally upon the cosmic cross-roads where

⁶⁴ 'messenger of Olokún and [...] minister of Olofi'; 'I don't know which one stayed with me, fighting off everything that was around me [...]. I still ask myself why they didn't eat me, why they didn't come into my belly and eat you' (191).

the world of men and [...] divinity meet' (Fernández Olmos 1997, 280). Other characters in the novel also personify this communion of the physical and spiritual through the body by the reconstitution of names used to refer to them. Jérémie Candé becomes Carfú Candé, and Similá Bolosse is referred to as Similá Belecou and Toro Bolosse, in addition to the latter sharing some of the physical attributes of Toro Belecou and Toro-Trois-Graines. The absence of a complete distinction between the physical and spiritual planes in these belief systems, with the intervention of the *orishas* and *lwa* through the body of the initiate, therefore supports the assertion that they cannot be circumscribed by Bhabha's three-point framework, adding a fourth dimension to this construct.

This picture is further complicated when the concept of apostasy is considered, a notion that does not apply in reference to these religious traditions. As numerous scholars have underlined, it is possible for individuals to participate and be initiated into several Afro-Cuban religious traditions at the same time without contradictions arising between them, although restrictions do apply.⁶⁵ Martiatu has described it thus, 'una persona puede ser santero, puede ser espiritista, palero, abakuá...y puede estar iniciado también dentro de la santería en alguna especialización, por ejemplo los tambores.'⁶⁶ Furthermore, an initiate may also attend mass and/or venerate the *orisha* in a Catholic church, while baptism as a Catholic has traditionally been considered as a necessary prerequisite for initiation into Santería, though this requirement has become less rigid (see Menéndez 2002, 225-31). In addition to Martiatu's observation, this concept of simultaneously belonging to different religious traditions is

⁶⁵ The term 'apostasía' was used by Inés María Martiatu during an interview with me in June 2009 in Havana, and is one that she employs in her 1992 article "El caribe: teatro sagrado, teatro de dioses" (99, published as Inés María Martiatu Terry). While I have not seen the term used in published literature by other authors regarding African-derived religious traditions in the Caribbean, the concept of simultaneously belonging to different religious traditions (except Protestantism) in Cuba and Haiti is a recurrent theme in interviews I have conducted with practitioners and academic researchers, and has been noted in numerous scholarly works (see, among others, Ayorinde (2004), Fernández Robaina (2008 [1994]), Miller (2000) and Michel (2006)).

⁶⁶ 'a person can be santero, can be *espiritista*, *palero*, *abakuá*...and can also be initiated into a particular specialisation within Santería, for example, as a drummer' (Interview conducted in June 2009).

exemplified by Manbo Mireille Aïn – Vodou priest in Cyvadier, Haiti – who was first initiated into Brazilian Candomblé before joining the Mizongo tradition and then becoming a *manbo* with her own *peristil*. In one of a number of conversations with me spread over several days in July 2009, Aïn recalled that the only problematic issue she had encountered in this regard was manifested when she was mounted by the Brazilian *orixá* Ogum during a Vodou ceremony, which unsettled some of the vodouisants present as they were unable to interact with the *orixá* as they would the *lwa* Ogou. Across Montero’s texts there are individuals who are members of or have recourse to different religious traditions, a situation that is not unusual in the Caribbean. In *La trenza*, the *ounfò* the Haitians have in Frederiksted, Saint Croix, where Jean Leroy is working, is used by those following the Mayombe tradition (also known as Palo or Palo Monte) (32). Upon his return to Haiti, Jean Leroy starts to work for Papá Marcel and his initiation ceremony is outlined in the journey he takes to Terre Neuve, preparing him for his imminent installation as the new *houngan* of Gonaives. In a similar fashion, Thierry Adrien is both a vodouisant, to a certain extent at least, and an initiated member of the Sociedad Abakuá, also incorporating Ganesha’s prayer to Mariamman into his prayer to Agwé Tarayo as the ferry on which he is travelling sinks.⁶⁷ Further, the character of Jean Leroy reappears briefly in *Tú, la oscuridad*, linked with the Abakuá, while Catholicism and Santería are referenced in *Del rojo* as has been emphasised above. In *Como un mensajero* Calazán is a *babalao*, *ñáñigo* and *palero*, while recognising the power of Yuan Pei Fu and Sanfancón. The fact that la conga Mariate uses the French-Creolised form of address, ‘*misiú*’, in reference to Caruso underlines the presence of descendants of French-Creole communities in the area, symbolically incorporating them into the narrative and

⁶⁷ In her opening speech at the KOSANBA IX Colloquium in Mirebalais, Haiti, on 13 July 2009, Prof. Claudine Michel outlined four general categories to describe the extent to which Haitians are involved in Vodou, and thus can be referred to as vodouisant. She described them as follows:

1. A *manbo*, *houngan* or initiate who engages with Vodou on a personal level every day.
2. People who practise Vodou, but not every day.
3. People who believe in *lwa* but don’t practise or have other religious beliefs and/or convictions.
4. Those who say they have nothing to do with Vodou but still feel something when they see the image of a *lwa* or hear the beat of a drum.

forging a link – if only linguistically – to the Vodou rites and practices in the area.⁶⁸ This network of religious communities that interact with each other forms the basis of the alternative concept of nation which can be delineated when reading these texts together. The interconnected nature of each of these traditions, while remaining discrete religious practices, can be analysed within Anderson's framework of connected communities that forms a nation. Moreover, the web it creates both surrounds and connects with each element of the three-point construct – the private, the public and the body of the initiate – while constituting the context for the fourth point which transcends each of these, the *orisha* and *lwa* themselves.

Finally, this discussion will turn to the notion of displacement and travel between these different communities as it is through movement between the different spaces – physical, spiritual and conceptual – that these traditions are tied together.

The characters in each of these texts spend much of their time moving between different spaces. Each of the novels involves a long journey of sorts. Jean Leroy physically travels around the Caribbean for twenty years working on a *goleta* (schooner), in direct contact with the ocean and thus the *lwa* that reside in it. This serves as preparation for the journey that constitutes his initiation into Vodou that he makes upon his return. Mirroring the physical trials of Papá Marcel's own initiation, the journey Jean Leroy undertakes permits him to spend time in isolation and pass the necessary tests to cement his relationship with the *lwa*. For Jean Leroy, this takes place during the fall of the Baby Doc regime and the *dechoukaj* which saw many Vodou priests killed and their temples ransacked due to the links between Vodou and the Duvalierist state, as the character of Similá Bolosse in *Del rojo* demonstrates.⁶⁹ In spite of the attempts Papá Marcel made to distance himself from the

⁶⁸ For an in-depth discussion of Vodou in Cuba, see James, Alarcón and Millet's (2007 [1998]) *El vodú en Cuba*.

⁶⁹ The period of *dechoukaj* also provided an opportunity for attacks on Vodou by those opposed to the religious tradition itself, a fact Montero highlights in the closing pages of *La trenza* (see Hurbon 2001, 122 and Ramsey

policies of Jean-Claude Duvalier, the crowd still perceives him as a participant in the state apparatus and calls for Jean Leroy to hand him over. Papá Marcel dies soon after Jean-Claude fled, and Jean Leroy's initiation into Vodou allows him to make the conceptual journey from the old Haiti of the dictatorship to the new Haiti (with which the writing and publication of Montero's novel is contemporary).⁷⁰ The physical space does not change: Choucouné maintains her relationship with the *ropavejero*, the *ounfò* and sea blue house are still the same, Nicolasina Tiburcio continues to be called 'mujer' as she was by Papá Marcel. However, having travelled between the different communities that make up the nation by means of Vodou, Jean Leroy can conceptually make the transition from the Haiti of Baby Doc to the post-Duvalier period.

In *Del rojo* the movement of the community from one space to another is a necessary element of Gagá and of Zulé's role as *manbo* and *dueña de la sociedadé*. Zulé's earliest journey, at the age of twelve, is her crossing the border from Haiti to the Dominican Republic with her father, who is forced to relocate in order for his daughter to escape the 'amarre [que] estaba en el agua' that led to the deaths of her two brothers, mother, grandmother and stepmother (21).⁷¹ She then moves to Colonia Azote to be educated in the ways of the Gagá, has her eyes worked to descend to the world of the dead, and visits different communities in her role as a powerful *manbo* in the region. In reference to Kaplan above, it is not possible to categorise these physical and spiritual journeys as exclusively travel or displacement; in some senses they constitute travel with an element of choice involved – such as Zulé's insistence she be

2011, 11-12). As Jean Leroy prepares to leave Gonaives, a terrified vodouisant implores the narrator to help him in his attempt to escape the group of Protestants who burnt the *manbo* Mamá Louise to death inside her *ounfò* and stuck a cross to her charred body, despite the fact that she had not liked the Macoutes or personally been associated with the regime (190-91). This is one of the reasons Max Beauvoir's aforementioned *Bodè Nasyonál* sought to distance Vodou from Duvalierism, in order to prevent a demonisation of both the religious tradition and its practitioners.

⁷⁰ Published in March 1987, *La trenza* was written between San Juan and Port-au-Prince in 1986 (6; 192).

⁷¹ 'the amarre [that] was in the water' (7). Zulé never truly escapes the curse, however, as she also dies bathed in the water of a storm.

permitted to see the world of the dead –, while in others they represent continued displacement since these movements are born out of necessity. When discussing journeys linked to Vodou spirituality such as these, there remains the notion central to the tradition that practitioners are called to serve the *lwa* but that it is an individual's choice to respond to this calling. With regard to Zulé's own initiation, although she was only twelve she actively embraced her spiritual journey from the moment she arrived at Colonia Azote, seeking ways to further her knowledge and experience, while simultaneously being subject to the necessary displacement away from her family and the journeys required as part of her training, initiation and subsequent service to the *lwa* and her *société*. In terms of the *gagá* as a collective, the principal event in the annual calendar– for which they prepare throughout the year – is the procession the *société* makes between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, visiting neighbouring *bateyes* and thus both reaffirming friendships and alliances and reiterating ongoing conflicts. Importantly, these journeys tie together the different *sociétés* in the Dominican Republic – disdained communities isolated physically and culturally from Dominican society – forming them into a nation of sorts. While tensions may flare between the *gagá*, especially during Holy Week, the movement of individuals between the different *bateyes* allows these ties to be formed. As outlined above, the final step of the procession of Zulé's *gagá* on Easter Sunday – the point at which they encounter Similá Bolosse with his 'grupo de facinerosos' and the two fight a physical and spiritual battle that results in the Zulé/Ezili's death – is the culmination of the *dueña*'s physical and spiritual journey, and sees her sacrificed body become the conduit through which the *lwa* and her *société* can interact (155).⁷² This final act then physically, spiritually and conceptually links the nation represented by her travels with the spiritual world, collapsing the *lwa* and the nation into one.

⁷² 'group of villains' (134).

A similar process occurs through the journeys between different communities that Aída and Caruso make in *Como un mensajero*. By depicting the couple travelling to different sites and interacting with a variety of religious traditions that constitute the hybrid religious context in Cuba, the author draws together the belief systems involved into a single narrative that can represent the nation. However, it is not only Montero's characters that travel around the Caribbean, the concept of nation outlined through the plurality of religious traditions across these four novels and their interconnected nature by means of the devotees who practise them is reinforced by the location of these traditions themselves in different parts of the Caribbean. In *Tú, la oscuridad* a branch of the Cuban Sociedad Abakuá is situated in Port-au-Prince, while Ganesha brings her Indo-Guadeloupean traditions with her when she moves to Haiti with Papá Crapaud, the name by which Thierry affectionately called Jasper Wilbur, the first American herpetologist for whom he worked as a guide. In the other three texts there are Vodou and Mayombe communities in Saint Croix, a Vodou presence in Cuba and a reference to *Ifá* in the Dominican Republic. As such, through this interconnected web of religious traditions she delineates, Montero then draws together both the people and religious traditions of the Caribbean into an alternative pan-Caribbean concept of nation.

In reference to the ideas of nation-state and the global-local dichotomy outlined above, it has been demonstrated that the context of African-derived belief systems in the Caribbean allows nation to be conceived in a way that does not necessarily require it to be circumscribed by the nation-state. This is not to say that such ideas cannot function within the nation-state; Montero demonstrates that this in fact occurs in each of her texts. In this regard, however, the hybrid nature of the Caribbean religious context illustrates that the narrative does not fall into the restrictive global-local construct as critiqued by Grewal and Kaplan. Rather, since the hybrid nature of the construct does not remove the distinctions between each tradition – avoiding the 'hybrid singularization' against which Puri (2004, 9) warns –, the religious

traditions comprising this diverse web remain discrete entities that function at both a local and global level. As such, this narrative does not undermine the nation-state as Bhabha and Gilroy have suggested happens with tropes of hybridity, it accepts that the nation-state will continue to function but allows another concept of nation to exist alongside it.

In conclusion, Montero's four novels draw together theories of creolization, hybridity and nation to present a Caribbean-wide concept of nation. Necessarily historical accounts, these narratives go beyond questioning what really constitutes historical discourse and deconstruct patriarchal notions of historiography, writing oral culture into the scribal tradition and reinforcing the present of the spiritual (linked to orality and thus the feminine) in the public sphere. Presenting a multifaceted historical account thus, Montero's texts do not fall into a male-female binary but rather nuance these discourses to offer a more heterogeneous text which writes the female body – physical or symbolic – into the historical narrative and in so doing, reformulates it. Moreover, using theories of *mestizaje* and creolization coupled with Anderson's notion of nation as imagined communities, this chapter has demonstrated that *La trenza*, *Del rojo*, *Tú, la oscuridad* and *Como un mensajero* can be read together to delineate a concept of nation that is not circumscribed by the Europhile notion of the nation-state. The binary oppositions that have characterised discourses of *mestizaje* and creolization are not satisfactory in Montero's narrative as her texts go beyond such constructs as Europe/Africa, Europe/Indoamerica and Europe/Asia to illustrate interactions between each of these. Within this context, the analysis offered has established a concept of nation that functions through the web of religious traditions present in the Caribbean, focusing on the body of the initiate as the site of interaction. This does not mean that the female body constitutes a representation of nation itself and as such is inscribed into the patriarchal framework that this connotes; rather, the body functions as the conduit through which the physical and spiritual places intersect and as such is not circumscribed by the two poles which define Bhabha's 'third space'. The

fourth space thus created within the context of African-derived religious traditions then transcends both the public and private spheres and the body of the initiate. Finally, the conclusion that the narrative running through the novels does indeed constitute an alternative concept of nation is reinforced by the travel and displacement of practitioners and religious traditions between the different spaces outlined in the texts.

Speaking in 1994, Montero described her literary project thus, ‘En mis libros [...] hay una propuesta básica: el Caribe como un todo, como una unidad. No son sólo islas separadas, son un conjunto de sensibilidades, tradiciones y casi una manera de ser’ (Espinosa Domínguez 2000, 209).⁷³ Inscribing her works into a movement that looks to the Caribbean as a source from which to derive identity, Montero has challenged notions of historiography and nation employed in the region that have replicated those imposed by its European colonisers. Díaz-Quñones (1993, 166; 174), echoing Benítez-Rojo and others, posits that it is in ‘el tibio mar de las Antillas’ – that which unites the Caribbean – that this identity can be found, emphasising the importance of Caribbean culture as a framework within which to position the idea of nation.⁷⁴ Rather than focusing on the homogeneous entity that is the ‘el mar de las Antillas’ however, Montero frames her concept of nation within the context of African-derived religious traditions, thereby writing the conceptually feminine into the discourse of nation and creating links across the Caribbean without negating the heterogeneity inherent within the Caribbean.

⁷³ ‘In my books [...] there is a fundamental proposition: the Caribbean as a whole, as a single entity. They are not only separate islands, they are an ensemble of feelings, traditions and almost a way of being.’

⁷⁴ ‘the warm Caribbean sea’.

CHAPTER THREE

STAGING SUBVERSION: SANTERÍA, PERFORMANCE AND CORPOREALITY

As demonstrated in chapters one and two, scholarship focusing on the area of gender and sexuality in Santería and Vodou often points to the liberatory discourse these religious traditions offer to women, citing the opportunities afforded santeras and female vodouisants for increased participation compared to contexts outside these religious traditions and thus the greater agency they can gain as a result. This chapter turns to the specific framework of Cuban Santería and explores the manner in which the aforementioned patriarchal construct present in this and other Afro-Cuban religious traditions such as the Sociedad Abakuá is both reinforced and subverted in Eugenio Hernández Espinosa's seminal play *María Antonia*. Engaging with the theories of ritual performance and bodily performance of gender examined in chapter one, the analysis interrogates the actions of both female and male characters in the play, outlining the restrictive social context with regard to female agency and freedoms present within Santería in which it is framed. This chapter offers a reading which, while recognising the inescapable patriarchal nature of Santería, illustrates that María Antonia's actions in the overlapping religious and secular contexts of the play subvert this framework and enable her to gain agency therein. It then proposes an alternative conclusion to the one drawn most recently by Cabranes-Grant (2010, 133) that the protagonist's death constitutes the end of her struggle and her capitulation to both worldly and spiritual forces, suggesting instead that by claiming agency with regard to her inescapable fate and precipitating her death, María Antonia begins a process whereby she is able to influence the time, manner and meaning of her death, and represents the beginning of a process through which women can exercise power within this construct. In addition to *María Antonia*, this analysis also uses

Georgina Herrera's (2004) *Conversación con María Antonia (cuarenta años después)* as an integral complementary text.¹

María Antonia, written in 1964 and first performed in 1967, has been described as the first play to move beyond the reductive manner in which black Cubans were presented in *teatro bufo* and *teatro vernáculo* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, instead representing both 'la realidad del negro, del hombre pobre y marginado' and Afro-Cuban religious traditions in a more complex fashion (Martiatu 1984, 37-39).² Set in Cuba under the Batista regime, the critique the play offers of pre- and post-revolutionary society – while not the focus in this analysis – is important when considering *María Antonia*'s contemporary and present significance (González 1998, 553). The criticism offered by the play of pre-revolutionary Cuba has been analysed by numerous scholars, including various works by Martiatu (1992; 2000; 2004a; 2004b), González (1998, 553), Davies (1993), and Pogolotti (2004). Moving beyond 1959, Cabranes-Grant (2010, 129) warns that the text should not be read 'as though it were an allegory for the Cuban Revolution' itself, as 'this would be too easy and perhaps untrue'. However, such an observation does not preclude the work's continued relevance as a critique of the period in which it was penned, as Caballero (2004, 153-54) rightly indicates:

María Antonia podía referirse al propio año 1964. Si todavía hoy la promiscuidad de los solares constituye un estamento social inocultable, si hoy la marginalidad ha ocupado el *centro* que parece entonces todo el tiempo *margen*, cómo no iba a ser

¹ This text will henceforth be referenced as *Conversación*.

² 'everyday reality for the black man, for the poor and marginalised man'. *María Antonia* followed on from the success of José Ramón Brene's (1962) *Santa Camila de La Habana Vieja*, in which Santería was also a central theme. However, in Brene's play, the religious tradition is presented as a site of conflict for Camila, whose husband associates the practice with the life on the margins of society that he wishes to escape. Despite this, Martiatu Terry (1992, 106) observes that 'el tratamiento del personaje de la *santera* es respetuoso y está realizado con conocimiento' [*the character of the santera is presented in a respectful manner and is written in a knowledgeable fashion*].

verosímil el drama de *María Antonia* en los conflictivos años 60, plenos de colisiones y enfrentamientos.³ (original emphasis)

Moreover, the play has not ceased to be pertinent, as Herrera's (2004) text in the same volume and Hernández Espinosa's production of *María Antonia* at the Teatro Mella in Havana in April 2011 demonstrate. In an interview with Kathi Kaity on this occasion, the playwright remarks,

Yo siempre veo que María Antonia está en la calle. En la calle con sus pasiones, con sus frustraciones, con su ansia de cambiar códigos también. Poner una conducta con el machismo, siempre con el machismo [...]. Pero está, está. Y la gente se siente identificada.⁴

Performance and corporeality

In her analysis of the African presence in Cuban theatre, Astles (2009, 29) focuses on three main elements, orality, corporeality and materiality, the first of which has been explored in chapter two. The second – a key theme throughout this thesis – she summarises as ‘the body as primary focus of expression through the embodiment of ritual and the dances of the *orichas*’, which echoes the discussion in chapter one that outlined the notion of the body as the conduit between the spiritual and physical, and the reciprocal relationship that exists between the *santero/a* and the *orisha*.⁵ Possession is a somatic experience, whereby the practitioner is *montado* and thus the body constitutes the site of interaction between the *orisha*

³ ‘*María Antonia* could refer to 1964 itself. If today the promiscuity of the tenements is still indicative of an unconcealable social class, if marginality has now occupied the *centre* that seemingly remains the *margin*, how was the drama of *María Antonia* not going to seem realistic in the unsettled and troubled period of the 1960s, during which conflicts and clashes were so common’.

⁴ ‘I always see that María Antonia is in the street. In the street with her passions, with her frustrations, anxious to change social norms too. To take up against machismo, always against machismo [...]. By she's there, she's there. And people identify with her.’ This interview formed part of Kaity's more extensive project of documenting the return of *María Antonia* to el Teatro Mella with Hernández Espinosa's company, Teatro Caribeño. Her short documentary, *Seguimos: Retorno de María Antonia*, in which this excerpt from the interview appears, was accessed on 19/08/11 at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kxrhjq_luls.

⁵ The third theme, materiality, Astles (2009, 29) defines as ‘material objects which have a clear symbolic reference to Afro-Cuban ritual and performance’.

and the Santería community. This ‘transcorporeal conceptualization of the self’ – as Strongman (2008, 14) terms it – that makes spirit possession in African-derived religious traditions possible, whereby various ‘subjectivities rest upon a concave corporeal surface’, squarely places the body at the centre of this practice. The associated notions of possession by the *orisha* as both a liminal and a gendered performance, introduced in chapter one, will be explored in further detail below. Its inherent viscosity is equally important to note, however, as, in spite of its performative nature, possession is not merely representation but rather ‘provoca [...] una verdadera catarsis donde el hombre sale *renacido*’ (González Pérez 2003, 204).⁶

Furthermore, embodiment of the *orisha* through possession is not the only corporeal aspect of the religious tradition. As Balbuena Gutiérrez (2003, 99) writes, ‘[e]n el contexto de las rituales de la santería [...] la danza constituye [...] el medio más propicio y orgánico para establecer los nexos de significación y comunicación con las divinidades’.⁷ Although the fundamental aim of Santería ceremonies is the manifestation of the *orisha* through possession (102), not every dancer will be mounted by the *orisha* invoked; the dance itself by numerous participants is an important element of the process of propitiation. This necessary communal and somatic aspect of the *toque de santo* is demonstrated both times that it is performed in the play, most extensively during the ceremony to celebrate Ochún’s *día de santo* in the third *cuadro* (María Antonia, 975-91). La Madrina, the *iyalochas*, *akpwón*, *iyawó* and the men carrying the image of Caridad del Cobre/Ochún process down to the river, singing and dancing, where they are joined by María Antonia. Although there are numerous santeros/as involved in the ceremony, only one *iyalocha* is mounted while the others and María Antonia continue to sing and dance in order to interact with Ochún now manifested in the physical

⁶ ‘engenders [...] a real catharsis from which man emerges reborn’.

⁷ ‘[i]n the context of Santería rituals [...] dance constitutes the most propitious and organic medium in order to establish connections with the divinities through which to transmit meaning and communication’.

world and as a form of propitiation. The protagonist's refusal to be mounted by the *orisha* in this instance is examined below; at this point the focus is the exemplification this scene offers of the corporeal and communal aspect of the ceremony.⁸ Outside the context of the *toque de santo*, divination through *Ifá*, coconut shells or the *dilogún* constitutes a further corporeal interaction key to the practice of Santería.⁹ Though divination through *Ifá* is generally considered the realm of the *babalao* and as such can only be practised by males who have been initiated as such, the two other forms of divination are open to most initiates, both male and female (M.A. Clark 2005, 49).¹⁰ With divination, the human body is a vehicle for the *orisha* to speak, performing the gestures of divination and serving 'as a receptacle for collective memory in earthly and cosmic space' (Astles 2009, 34).

As a final point with regard to corporeality and the visceral nature of Santería, the religious tradition is inextricably linked to healing (see, for example, Wedel 2004). Many of those initiated do so in order to overcome a physical, mental or emotional affliction, and it is through serving the *orisha* that this is achieved (47-8). María Antonia suffers from illness in each of these categories (or at least is perceived to), the reason for which La Madrina brings her to the *babalao* in order for *Ifá* to be consulted regarding the possibility of her being cleansed and born anew. Death has already claimed her, however, and even if she were to submit to what Batabio terms 'la ley con que tiene que vivir aquí', this would not prevent her impending demise (*María Antonia*, 949).¹¹

⁸ Indeed, santeros/as who attended the first run of performances of *María Antonia* remarked how authentic the performance of the ceremonies was, while others refused to attend due to its authenticity, as Hernández Espinosa recounted to Vasserot (1998, 46).

⁹ Further to this, M.A. Clark (2005, 49) states that possession trance can also be a form of divination, termed 'inspirational divination'.

¹⁰ The contention surrounding the initiation of *iyanifá* has been discussed in chapter one. For further analysis of this issue, see M.A. Clark (2005, especially chapter 3) and Rossbach de Olmos (2007).

¹¹ 'the rules by which one must live here'.

Turning to performance and representation, as González Pérez (2003, 204) notes these terms are not synonymous. As set out in chapter one, the question as to what constitutes performance has been debated at length by theorists such as Schechner, Bell and Butler, though at times focusing on different but intertwined areas. Importantly, Taylor (1994, 14), writing about the Latin/o American context, emphasises that,

[p]erformance differs from theatricality [...] in that it signals various specific art forms [...] (from performance art to public performance) but also in that it encompasses socialized and internalized roles (including those associated with gender, sexuality, and race) that cannot really be analyzed as “theatrical discourses” [...].

She writes this from the perspective of the absence of an equivalent term for ‘performance’ in Spanish, highlighting that Villegas’ (1994) use of ‘theatricality’ as a synonym is infelicitous.¹² Performance, she notes, allows agency and subject position, and as such ‘opens the way for resistance and oppositional spectacles’, whereas theatricality permits neither of these. In addition, ‘the term theatrical discourses further precludes the possibility of anti-hegemonic agency’ (Taylor 1994, 14). Performance, like the related term performativity, does not solely consist of theatrical (re)presentations therefore – though these, obviously, may indeed constitute performance –, but rather is a more complex concept that incorporates the notions of engagement, subjectivity and, as such, agency. Further to this, Cabranes-Grant (2010, 127) suggests that ‘[i]n a possession ceremony, theatricality acts as an indicator of its authenticity’, continuing to note that theatricality here ‘marks the site for a deeper sense of self’. Though he does continue to question the subjectivity of such a performance, and thus implicitly justifies his terminology, *orisha* possession does involve an element of subjective

¹² It should be noted that the term *performatividad* is now increasingly used in Spanish when discussing performativity, although Taylor’s (1994, 4) observation that no equivalent term exists for ‘performance’ still holds true, however. Furthermore, in reference to *María Antonia* in particular, criticism in Spanish has often employed the term ‘representación’ to encompass this concept; two important volumes in this regard are Martiatu’s (2000) *El rito como representación: teatro ritual caribeño*, and Brugal and Rizk’s (2003) edited work, *Rito y representación: los sistemas mágico-religiosos en la cultura cubana contemporánea*.

agency, as is demonstrated below. As a result, ‘theatricality’ and ‘theatrical discourses’ seem unsatisfactory in comparison with ‘performance’.

One of the characteristics of performance and performativity that permits ‘the possibility of anti-hegemonic agency’ is its inherent liminality, as highlighted by Schechner’s (1985, 110) observation that the performer and the performed – or when applied to spirit possession as in chapter one, the adherent and the *orisha* or *lwa* – are ‘not me, not not me’. ‘Betwixt and between’, to use Turner’s (1969, 95) oft-cited description, both performance and the performer inhabit a liminal space (Schechner 2002, 58; 1985, 110). Firstly, when dealing with performances in the theatre, the theatre space itself is liminal; it is ‘a space that by means of performing could become anywhere’ (Schechner 2002, 58). Furthermore, the stage and those performances that take place upon it are equally liminal, serving as the link between the audience and that which is being performed.¹³ In keeping with Taylor above, therefore, the performer thus embodies the potential for agency, yet this is not only the power with which to define one’s own being but also that through which to mediate the experience of both entities involved in the performance (i.e. the performed and those experiencing the performance). It is this mediatory position both in regard to ritual and gender performance which accords María Antonia the power and agency to subvert the restrictive and destructive patriarchal constructs present in the overlapping secular and religious domains of the play.

As Bell (2009 [1992], 16) underlines in her seminal work, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, ritual had, for many years, ‘consistently [been] depicted as a mechanistically discrete and paradigmatic means of sociocultural integration, appropriation, or transformation.’ The performance of ritual had therefore been considered as a manner of formalising groups and

¹³ The term ‘stage’ should be interpreted not only as the platform within a theatre, but rather as a conceptual space within which a performance takes place, as Maxwell (1998, 78-9) has underlined. However, the warning Maxwell sounds regarding the risk of totalisation must be heeded; as such, this discussion does not suggest that all spaces necessarily constitute a stage, nor that all actions are necessarily theatrical.

communities. However, as her analysis goes on to demonstrate, ritualization is tied to the construction and reinforcement of power relationships and the performance of ritual is centred on the body (197; 93). Basing the concept of power on that developed by Foucault across many of his works – significantly that power and freedom go hand in hand, and that power is not synonymous with the forces of violence or coercion –,¹⁴ inherent within ritualization must therefore be the possibility for creation and individual appropriation (200; 222). This notion in turn offers a space in which personal agency is necessary in order for the social hierarchy reinforced through ritual to be maintained, and since ritual is performed, such agency is therefore effectuated through the body.

Bell's concept of ritual and ritualization is demonstrated in the attested reciprocal nature of the relationship between *santero/a* and *orisha* in the performance of spirit possession. Although possession requires the devotee to temporarily relinquish control of his/her body – which, as will be illustrated, María Antonia finds problematic –, his/her embodiment of the *orisha* constitutes a source of empowerment (Drewal 1992, 182), thus investing the body with power as the performing entity in this liminal position. As Rizk (2001, 289) has observed, 'cuando se habla de la "posesión", [...] se está hablando de jerarquías, de poder, de *status* social dentro de una comunidad'.¹⁵ Moreover, Bell (2009 [1992], 222) highlights by drawing on Foucault that ritualization (and thus ritual performance) is a source of social interaction which empowers its agents (albeit within a hierarchical setting), and the possibility of resistance is an integral element of this performance. In reference to Santería therefore, as the nodal point between the spiritual and physical which encapsulates both the force of the *orisha* and that of the subject, the body is the receptacle of this power. It is inserted into a hierarchy within the Santería community, but more importantly constitutes the site from which the

¹⁴ The interaction between power and violence is discussed in chapter five.

¹⁵ 'when speaking of "possession", [...] one talking about hierarchies, about power, about social status within a community'.

spiritual and physical domains can be influenced, both to reinforce the norms involved in ritual performance and/or to subvert them. It is notable that in *María Antonia* only women are mounted: La Madrina by Yemayá, and both an *iyalocha* and María Antonia by Ochún. Though Batabio speaks for Orula through Ifá, which constitutes a bodily performance through the gestures involved (as Astles has emphasised), it is only women who embody the *orisha* by means of a process of penetration. Drawing these ideas together with the notion of spirit possession as a gendered performance previously analysed, *orisha* possession in *María Antonia* is thus a gendered performance played out by the female body, this a liminal entity that through the performance of ritual and gender occupies a position of power with the potential for both reinforcement and subversion of social and ritualised norms. Moreover, in both ritual and gender performance, the agents exerting influence over the body can be internal – the human subject him-/herself – and external. It is the primacy of, and negotiation between, these forces within the context of the patriarchal construct of Santería in *María Antonia* that is at the core of the following analysis.

Violent masculinities

The restrictive and destructive nature of the patriarchal social and religious constructs presented in *María Antonia* is clear from the beginning of the play. The prologue is a scene taken from the last *cuadro* in which Batabio foretells María Antonia's imminent death through Ifá, but before considering the impositions placed on women in the context of Santería exemplified here, it would be instructive to consider the first *cuadro* itself. Termed a prologue by Martiatu (2004a, 38), in spite of it following the section named as such, this series of thirteen *imágenes* provides the background to the characters' lives in the *barrio* in which the majority of the play is set:¹⁶ they are stricken by poverty, forced by circumstance to

¹⁶ Curbelo (2004, 128-9) names the community of El Cerro – the area of Havana where Hernández Espinosa was born – as the basis for that which is portrayed in *María Antonia*. A community comprised of several *barrios* (neighbourhoods), El Cerro exemplified the division in Cuban society under the Republic whereby the former

seize every opportunity – however slight or temporary – for brief respite from their desperate situation, and, above all, it is here that ‘Hernández Espinosa se muestra toda la violencia y la desesperación que son capaces de experimentar estos personajes llevados hasta el límite’ (37-8).¹⁷ Yet the violence goes beyond this, it is of an inherent patriarchal nature. The ninth ‘image’ depicts a father giving a knife to his son, accompanying this act with the exhortation, ‘Pa’que te defiendas. [...] Los hombres no lloran. Antes se sacan los ojos’ (*María Antonia*, 954).¹⁸ After two further tableaux which depict the poverty and the desire for a fleeting escape through drunkenness and popular music that characterise the community, ‘image’ twelve shows two boys fighting, one strangling the other until the latter submits and answers the repeated question, ‘¿Quién es el más hombre?’ with the desired response of ‘Tú’. Upon releasing the second boy, the winner reiterates what he perceived to be his own manliness (and thus the loser’s exclusion from this category) with the warning, ‘Eso para que aprendas a jugar con los hombres’ (955).¹⁹

The patriarchal nature of the violence does not preclude its promotion and indeed employment by women, however. ‘Image’ two sees a mother beat her son for not answering her when summoned and simultaneously warns him, ‘No llores. Los hombres no lloran. No quiero mariquitas en la familia. ¡Yo parí un hombre!’ (952).²⁰ Further to this, in his later soliloquy, Carlos recalls a scene similar to ‘image’ nine cited above, in which he is instructed to defend himself against a regular bully in the neighbourhood. Yet in this instance it is his mother rather than his father who gives him the knife, and after Carlos kicks it away in the middle of the argument, he recalls, ‘Mi madre salió a fajarse. A sacar la cara por mí’

bourgeoisie recognised it for its large houses and gardens, while the area was also densely populated by a majority of blacks and *mulatos*, practitioners of Afro-Cuban religious traditions (123). It remains unnamed in the play, however, although geographical indications are given (see Curbelo).

¹⁷ ‘Hernández Espinosa presents all the violence and the desperation experienced by these characters who have reached their wit’s end’.

¹⁸ ‘So you can defend yourself. Men don’t cry. They’d sooner gouge out their eyes’.

¹⁹ ‘Who’s more of a man?’; ‘You’; ‘That’s to teach you to play with men and not boys’.

²⁰ ‘Don’t cry. Men don’t cry. I’m not having sissies in my family. I gave birth to a man!’

(1000).²¹ As Lumsden (1996, 38) notes in reference to the period prior the Revolution, women as well as men expected the latter to assert their machismo.²² This is not to say that these characters necessarily have an alternative option to perpetuating these social norms; as Martiatu (2004a, 38) emphasises, ‘La sociedad los acorrala, los obliga y luego los rechaza en el colmo de la violencia.’²³

Returning to the prologue, the patriarchal restrictions and violence which characterise María Antonia’s interaction with Batabio (the *babalao*) and *Ifá*, coupled with the series of *imágenes* discussed above, outline the context in which the rest of the play takes place, one in which, as del Pino (2004, 183) observes, the secular and the religious are inextricably interwoven. Before analysing the language employed in this scene, it is important to highlight the implicit patriarchal hierarchy present in Santería itself. Martiatu (2004a, 50) cites the acceptance in the religious tradition of ‘el predominio de un sexo sobre el otro’, explaining this further as ‘la dominación masculina que se expresa en patakines, prohibiciones, advertencias y aun en el sentir popular entre santeros.’²⁴ She therefore underlines that this is an element of the religious tradition independent of Hernández Espinosa’s presentation of it in *María Antonia*, an observation reiterated in a more specific context by M.A. Clark (2005, 66) who, in spite of her argument that Santería is a female-normative religion, recognises that the ‘story of babalawo primacy’ in its hierarchy – though misplaced to her mind – is widely accepted.²⁵

²¹ ‘My mother went out into the street to fight. To stand up for me’. Carlos continues to recount that it was upon killing the leader of the local gang after the bullying had escalated to death threats that he earned the congratulations of his father and was finally considered a man, being taken to the brothel in order to celebrate (*María Antonia*, 1000-1).

²² Lumsden (1996, 184-6), among other critics, notes that ‘the same brand of stifling paternalism’ continues in post-revolutionary Cuba, in spite of legislation and claims to the contrary (see also studies of this legislation and its implementation by Toro-Morn, Roschelle and Facio (2002); Perkovich and Saini (2002); and Núñez Sarmiento (2005)).

²³ ‘Society rounds them up, binds them and then expels them, throwing them into the den of violence.’

²⁴ ‘the predominance of one sex over the other’, explaining this further as ‘male domination that is expressed in *patakí*, prohibitions, warnings and even in popular views among santeros.’

²⁵ Importantly, as emphasised in chapter one, some santeras consider that while they may not occupy an equal position to men in the visible hierarchy of Santería, they are able to maintain a close physical and spiritual relationship with the *orisha* through spirit possession that some men, such as the *babalao*, cannot.

In the prologue of *María Antonia*, then, this structure is made clear. C. James (2009, 48) has indicated that from Batabio's first word – '¡Lárgate!' – the desire of the 'patriarchal domain to maintain control' is manifest, a position reinforced by the 'condemnation of woman' contained in the *babalao*'s following line: '¿Con qué derecho vienes a perturbar la tranquilidad de este lugar? Esto no es el mundo donde el hombre lo revienta todo. ¡Quítate los zapatos y limpia tus pensamientos!' (*María Antonia*, 946).²⁶ In comparison, the formality with which Batabio speaks when interpreting *Ifá* is in stark contrast to the manner in which he addresses María Antonia directly. Following his first throw of the *ekuele*, Batabio reads, 'si usted no sabe la ley con que vivir aquí, lo aprenderá en otro mundo' (949), a form he continues to use when asking questions to facilitate the consultation, such as '¿Usted es hija de Oshún, no?' (950).²⁷ *Ifá* also condemns María Antonia, as demonstrated by the *babalao*'s final pronouncement in the prologue, at which point he repeats in Lucumí the phrase 'Cuando la luna sale, miya, no hay quien la apague' accompanied by the directions '*Como si repitiera una sentencia*' (950, original italics).²⁸ In so doing, Batabio refers to the unavoidable nature of the events to follow and also to María Antonia's death itself since *Ikú* (death) is related both to night-time and to the moon (Cros Sandoval 2006, 109; 138).²⁹ However, the

²⁶ 'Get out!'; 'What gives you the right to come and disrupt the tranquility of this place? This isn't the world in which man can destroy what he likes. Take off your shoes and clean your thoughts!'

²⁷ 'If you don't know the rules by which you must live here, you will learn them in another world'; 'You are an *hija de Oshún*, aren't you?'

²⁸ 'Once the moon comes out, daughter, no one is able to extinguish it'; '*As if he were passing sentence once again*'.

²⁹ Cros Sandoval (2006, 138) recounts a *patakí* in which the son of a *babalao* and the son of *Ikú* were arguing about the rising of the moon, the former arguing that it would not rise for three days. Although the myth illustrates Orula's control over *Ikú* – the moon did indeed not rise due to a sacrifice the *babalao* made –, it also underlines the link between the moon and *Ikú* since both are controlled together and the sons wagered their lives on the outcome of whether or not it would rise. This link is reinforced near the close of *María Antonia* when Cumachela, who embodies *Ikú*, pronounces, '¡Esta noche, antes de que la luna se pierda, bailaré contigo!' [*Tonight, before the moon sets, I will dance with you*] (1034).

condemnation issued by Batabio when speaking on his own behalf is formulated in a much more authoritarian and paternalistic manner.³⁰

In spite of this analysis, it could be suggested that Batabio's manner of speaking is proportionate when considered within the context of Santería. C. James (2009, 48) suggests, 'Not only has [María Antonia] been taken to Batabio [...] because of a physical illness but she is also seen as a contaminatory force,' continuing to cite the *babalao's* abovementioned opening words as indicative of this. However, María Antonia enters Batabio's house with Cumachela on her shoulders; at this point they are one entity and speak as such. As becomes apparent throughout the play, Cumachela embodies Ikú; she is 'el lado oscuro de la heroína, su ser mortal' (Davies 1993, 290).³¹ As such, the single entity of María Antonia and Cumachela perceived as one is contaminatory in itself. Although C. James (2009, 48) concludes that Batabio's reponse to their entry is 'the condemnation of woman, the declaration of her as a figure of corruption', the presence of another influence is recognised by La Madrina, who implores the *babalao*, 'Aleje de su cabeza la sombra del muerto,' and asks, '¿qué cuelga de ese cuerpo?' (947).³² Chronologically, the scenes presented in the prologue take place in the final *cuadro* of the play, following María Antonia's murder of her lover, Julián. Furthermore, as Wedel (2004, 110) observes and the previous two chapters demonstrate, 'In santería ontology, there is [...] no sharp distinction between body and mind. [...] Mind and body, self and others are inextricably intertwined.'³³ As such, could it be the lingering presence of Julián – 'la sombra del muerto' – and Ikú in María Antonia's mind that

³⁰ It should be noted that the *iyalochas* also refer to María Antonia with the informal 'tú' when translating into Spanish the Lucumí that Batabio speaks prior to beginning divination. Although Cabrera's (1952) *Vocabulario Lucumí (El yoruba que se habla en Cuba)* translates these phrases in the more formal 'usted' form (though formality aside, 'usted' is the more usual manner of addressing people other than children in Cuba), the translations given by the *iyalochas* do not have the same paternalistic condemnation inherent in their tone as the questions, orders and conclusions uttered by Batabio when not interpreting *Ifá*.

³¹ 'the dark side of the heroine, her mortal being'.

³² 'Remove the shadow of death from her head'; 'what is sticking to that body?'.

³³ Batabio himself points to the intertwined nature of the body and mind in the final *cuadro*, telling María Antonia: 'la cabeza es la que lleva al cuerpo' ['it is the head that leads the body'] (1035).

must be cleansed when she is told ‘limpia tus pensamientos’? Equally, is it the presence of death within her body that Batabio classifies as contaminatory upon its entry into his house and tells to leave as soon as they arrive? As Fernández Robaina (2008 [1994], 54-56) recounts, one of the *patakí* tells of a pact that was forged between Orula and Ikú whereby the latter may not take anyone without informing Orula and if they are initiated into *Ifá*, then Orula must give his consent. González-Wippler (2004, 105) complements this, although anecdotally, quoting a *babalao* whom he consults as asserting that this pact prevents anyone from dying in a room in which someone is wearing the *idé* (the green and yellow beaded bracelet worn by devotees of Orula). Therefore, while Batabio’s manner of speech is directed at María Antonia and her ‘female defiance’ (C. James 2009, 48), her coexistence with Ikú and thus the presence of death at the *tablero de Ifá* – reinforced by his final command at the end of the play upon seeing her death confirmed by the *ekuele*, ‘¡Sal de esta casa con tu muerte!’ (1036) – would as a result also provoke the ire of the *babalao* and Orula.³⁴

As a final point in this regard, the deference with which La Madrina speaks to Batabio in comparison to the manner in which he addresses her – similar to his mode of speaking to María Antonia – reinforces the hierarchy that exists whereby La Madrina is perceived as subordinate to the *babalao*.³⁵ Though she supplicates Orula directly prior to her arrival with María Antonia at Batabio’s house, once inside La Madrina’s petitions are directed towards the *babalao*. As noted above, the third-person singular form of address is common when speaking to those other than children in Cuba, thus La Madrina’s mode of speech is not surprising. Moreover, as an *hija de Yemayá*, La Madrina’s respect for and understanding of hierarchies is considered to be innate (Bolívar Aróstegui 1990, 95). In spite of this, Batabio’s

³⁴ ‘Get out of this house and take your death with you!’

³⁵ M.A. Clark (2005, 27; 64-70) has explored this hierarchy and concludes that, for the most part, it is based on the level of initiation and aptitude rather than anatomical gender. However, in spite of her insistence that *Ifá* divination is not as central to Santería as many scholars believe, in this instance La Madrina perceives that recourse to *Ifá*, and thus to a male priest, is the only possible course of action if María Antonia’s death is to be prevented.

continuation of using 'tú' when addressing her serves to highlight the primacy of the male over the female in this context. The conflict between machismo and *hembrismo* is a key element of the analysis presented in this chapter and will be considered in detail below;³⁶ however, in addition to the manner of address, it is important to emphasise that the staging of this scene further exemplifies this hierarchical structure. The *iyalochas*, by definition, are all female, while the Akpwón could be either male or female (Hagedorn 2010, 147).³⁷ Upon their arrival, the *iyalochas* lead María Antonia and La Madrina with reverence to the *babalao*, whose appearance is described as follows: '*En el fondo, centro, aparece sentado en el suelo, [...] frente al tablero de Ifá, Batabio el babalao*' (946, original italics).³⁸ After the divination board, Batabio is staged as the most important entity present; moreover, he does not enter but appears already seated at the back of the stage and the rest of the characters move towards him. This sense of removal and superiority is further reinforced by the necessary translation of Lucumí provided. Even when the *babalao* himself translates rather than his *iyalochas*, the position he holds as able to converse directly with the *orisha* and the required translation into Spanish reiterates his higher hierarchical position in comparison to all those present. The image thus created of male and patriarchal supremacy illustrates and impresses on the audience here at the outset the construct with which María Antonia will clash throughout the play.

Moving beyond the opening scenes, the conflict between María Antonia and machismo is clear and has been noted by several critics in addition to those cited above, including Davies (1993, 289), González (1998, 554) and Menéndez (2004, 82-3). Martiatu (2004a, 47)

³⁶ *Hembrismo* is the replication of machista values and behaviour once they have been reconfigured to centre on women rather than men. An individual who espouses *hembrismo* is an *hembrista*.

³⁷ Although the Akpwón is gendered masculine in the script, 'el Akpwón', this role could feasibly be fulfilled by a singer of either sex and the masculine article does not preclude this. However, it is interesting to note that in the April 2011 production of *María Antonia* at the Teatro Mella which Hernández Espinosa directed himself, the Akpwón was female (as seen in Kaity's (2011) documentary).

³⁸ '*Upstage, centre, Batabio el babalao appears, sitting on the floor [...] in front of the tablero de Ifá*'.

describes the indisputable ‘conflicto de género’ in terms of a polarised ‘oposición antagónica: hembrismo-machismo,’ embodied by María Antonia and Julián and which culminates in both of their deaths.³⁹

María Antonia: ‘hembrista, retadora y transgresora’⁴⁰

As has been illustrated, the gender conflict between *hembrismo* and machismo that continues throughout the play is a result of the definition of the religious and secular contexts along patriarchal lines. Moving beyond the opening scenes, the accepted primacy of men over women is evident throughout, as exemplified by Julián’s treatment of his various lovers whom he reduces to entities whose purpose is his personal gratification. Notably, the first time Julián appears he is with an unnamed woman in a small storage area which he has used for various purposes since he was a boy (initially to hide from the police, then as a place to sleep, and afterwards as a private place to bring women). Disinterested in her from the beginning but having brought her there for company, when he hears María Antonia approaching, calling out his name, he chases the woman away with the threat, ‘¡Y como vuelvas a mirarme la cara, te rajo en dos!’ (968).⁴¹ The next scene in which he appears, *cuadro sexto*, he flits between Nena – the owner of the bar he frequents – and two prostitutes (Caridad and Sonia), the latter being offered by his manager as part of his signing a contract having just won a boxing match.

This *machista* aspect of his character is equally present and further developed in his relationship with María Antonia. Refusing to visit her for ten days while she languished in her room, ill and alone, the interactions between Julián and the protagonist are marked by violence and conflict. Despite having repeatedly abandoned her, he continues to restate his

³⁹ ‘gender conflict’ in terms of a polarised ‘antagonistic opposition: *hembrismo* versus machismo’.

⁴⁰ ‘*hembrista*, challenger and transgressor’, quotation taken from Martiatu 2004a, 45.

⁴¹ ‘And if you look me in the face again, I’ll slice you in two!’.

claim over her: during their first depicted intimate encounter he asserts, ‘Julián no ha abandonado nunca a María Antonia. Soy tu dueño y tuyo’ (969); then in the second – which culminates in his murder –, ‘(Agarrándola) Yo soy tu macho, ¿oíste? Eres mía y te tengo cuando me dé la gana’ (1024).⁴² He acts in the manner expected of him by his friends and those in the community, displaying what he and those around him perceive to be the qualities of the quintessential Cuban macho encapsulated in their notion of what it means to be ‘un hombre’: physically strong, seemingly fearless, womanising, and flirtatious yet uncompromising, especially with regard to issues of sex and gender roles. By means of illustration, when Julián makes the first of the above claims, he suggests that María Antonia also has an influence over him in spite of the higher hierarchical position he holds as a man. However, when he perceives his authority to have been undermined, he asserts his machismo through the violence of his speech and thus reinforces his position, as shown below,

JULIÁN. [...] Cuando nos conocimos, [...] quedamos en que yo por mi lado y tú por el tuyo; que siempre habría un momento para nosotros.

MARÍA ANTONIA. Yo no soy ninguna puta de San Isidro.

JULIÁN. ¿Y qué quieres? ¿Que me case contigo? ¿Encaramarte arriba de mí? Yo soy hombre, no el pelele ese que estaba contigo. (1025-6)⁴³

Julián’s machismo is further justified in Santería by his *orisha de cabeza* Changó and his membership of the all-male Sociedad Abakuá. Bolívar Aróstegui (1990, 112) notes that *hijos de Changó* are ‘pendencieros, fiesteros y libertinos, [...] verdaderos espejos de machismo’, characteristics reiterated by Davies (1993, 290) and Martiatu (2004a, 43) (though the latter

⁴² ‘Julián has never abandoned María Antonia. I’m your master and I’m yours’; ‘I’m your man, do you hear me? You’re mine and I’ll have you when I so desire’.

⁴³ ‘JULIÁN. [...] When we met, [...] we agreed that I’d do my thing and you’d do yours; that there’d always be moment for the both of us.

MARÍA ANTONIA. I’m not one of those whores from San Isidro.

JULIÁN. So what do you want? For me to marry you? To climb up and rise above me? I’m a man, not that wimp that was with you.’

terms it ‘virilidad’ and ‘voluptuosidad masculina’).⁴⁴ The misogyny inherent in the myth of Sikán upon which the Sociedad Abakuá is founded and its preclusion of women as members has been outlined in chapter two. Additionally, however, it is important to note that when a rite of passage is celebrated, the sacrifice of Sikán – representative of woman – is symbolically re-enacted (Martínez Echazábal 1994, 18), as would have therefore occurred when both Julián and Tino were initiated prior to the narrative present of the play.⁴⁵ Indeed, Cabrera (1969, 141) has highlighted the misogyny of Ekue and situates this within the framework of the Sociedad, contending that ‘[f]uera del Fambá—el cuarto de los Misterios—los *obonekues* [*moninas, o hermanos abakuá*] no son misóginos como su numen’.⁴⁶ The relationship between Julián and María Antonia must also be framed in light of the *patakí* which involve Changó and Ochún, explained in chapters one and two. While lovers, the relationship between the two *orisha* is difficult and is characterised by abandonment, unrequited love and jealousy. For this reason, Martiatu (2004a, 51) writes,

Hay una tradición en la Santería [...] y es la prohibición, en la mayoría de los casos [...], de autorizar la unión entre una hija de Ochún y un hijo de Changó. Son amores difíciles y raramente terminan bien.⁴⁷

Recognition of this, she concludes, is key to understanding María Antonia and Julián’s relationship.

⁴⁴ ‘argumentative, party goers and lacking restraint, [...] true mirror images of machismo’; ‘virility’ and ‘male voluptuousness’.

⁴⁵ It could be suggested that Carlos performs this symbolic sacrifice of Sikán when he murders María Antonia at the play’s close, thus simultaneously reinforcing his *hombría* and executing the act which would mark his own initiation into the Sociedad Abakuá having avenged the death of Julián as required by the sect’s code. Whether his admittance as a *ñāñigo* would be permitted is questionable, however, as he broke one of the rules of the Sociedad by maintaining a relationship with María Antonia and therefore questioning ‘el honor personal de [un] ecobio’ [*the honour of an ecobio*] (Sosa Rodríguez 1982, 182).

⁴⁶ ‘[o]utside the Fambá – the house of the mysteries – the *obonekues* [*moninas or abakuá brothers*] are not misogynous like their forefathers’.

⁴⁷ ‘There’s a tradition in Santería [...] and it is the prohibition, in the majority of cases [...], of allowing the union of an *hija de Ochún* and an *hijo de Changó*. These relationships are difficult and rarely do they end well.’

Yet it is not only Julián who reiterates the notion that being *un hombre* requires the overt expression of male superiority and control. In spite of Yuyo's entreaties and professed desire to leave his wife for María Antonia, when she tells him there was nothing to their sexual encounter and is incredulous that he could have believed there was, he exclaims, '¡Yo soy muy macho pa'que te burles de mí!' and reduces her to the status of a common whore: 'Para lo único que sirve una mujer como tú, es para hacer gozar' (979; 982).⁴⁸ Later in the same *cuadro*, Tino, no older than a teenager, repeats the sentiment, telling María Antonia, 'Te puedo enseñar lo que hace un hombre de verdad con una mujer como tú', and responding to her laughter with, 'No te rías, ¿eh? No permito que ninguna mujer se burle de mí' while ostentatiously grabbing his crotch (989-90).⁴⁹

Although each of these characters ends up reinforcing this machismo through their behaviour, there are various shades of masculinity that they express and with which María Antonia interacts. Some of these are fixed, such as the punitive masculinity Batabio embodies as a figure of authority who imposes certain patriarchal notions present in Santería, or the representation of the Cuban *macho* in Julián. Faced with both of these María Antonia remains defiant and intransigent: she rejects the deference for Santería and the *babalao* that Batabio requires by refusing to conform to the norms he dictates, and violently confronts Julián on each of the occasions she encounters him in the play, finally expunging him altogether. With regard to Yuyo, he is infatuated with María Antonia, ready to leave his wife and children in order to maintain a relationship with her. His actions convey a masculinity based on a sense of male entitlement, allowing him to act in this manner in spite of the fact he is married and a father. María Antonia capitalises on his infatuation to serve her own needs however, asserting

⁴⁸ 'I'm too much of a man for you to make fun of me!'; 'The only thing a woman like you is good for is screwing'. This line, '¡Yo soy muy macho pa'que te burles de mí!', is repeated by Carlos in similar circumstances at the end of the play before murdering María Antonia.

⁴⁹ 'I can teach you what a real man does with a woman like you'; 'Don't laugh, if you know what's good for you. I don't let any woman make fun of me'.

her *hembrismo* by rejecting him once he has fulfilled his purpose of keeping her company for one night, provoking Yuyo's anger. For his part, Carlos states that he does not wish to act in the manner forced upon him by his parents and the wider community who require him to claim the violent masculinity outlined above. By orienting his character towards education and literature, Hernández Espinosa exemplifies in Carlos a type of masculinity that is not based on an idea of physical or hierarchical superiority by virtue of being a man but rather one that seeks to find a female companion with whom to raise a family. However, the social context of the *barrio* in which the play takes place does not permit such an expression of masculinity, presenting it as failed when challenged by poverty (as in the *manigua*) or by the neighbourhood bully, emasculated by Julián or publicly rejected by María Antonia.⁵⁰ Having contemplated a future with Carlos that proved to be impossible, María Antonia then rejects the masculinity he embodies, forcing him in turn to recognise its failure and appropriate the machismo that saw him consolidate his *hombría* as a teenager through murder. Ultimately, therefore, the various masculinities these characters portray lead to the acceptance, if reluctantly in the case of Carlos, of the violent masculinity required of them by the social and/or religious contexts which they inhabit.

María Antonia is for the most part defiant in the face of this machismo, refusing to accept it and valorising her womanhood. Orphaned and in the care of La Madrina from a young age, she recalls that the lack of opportunity to finish her education and thus her leaving school while still a girl was a direct consequence of not having a father who could provide for her:

“María Antonia, hija, desde ahora en adelante tengo que llevarte conmigo a la colocación”. “¿Por qué?” “Ya has crecido y hay que trabajar”. “Manuela, la hija del

⁵⁰ The *manigua* is an area of thick woodland which represents a magical or mythical space (Davies 1993, 293).

carpintero, es más grande que yo y su madre la lleva al colegio”. “Sí, pero su padre trabaja”. “Y tú también trabajas, Madrina”. “Pero él gana más que yo”. (1001)⁵¹

Her violent response to this, borne out of anger, led to a consultation with a *babalao* who told La Madrina ‘que Oshún era dueña de mi cabeza [...]. Me abrió las puertas y me dijo: “Hija de Oshún, compórtate como tal y que ella sepa refrescar tu Eledda”’ (1001).⁵² As María Antonia recounts, this led to further marginalisation centred on her body. Continuing into adulthood, she is trapped within the ‘triángulo representativo de la marginalización histórica en Cuba: mujer, negra y pobre’ (Menéndez 2004, 90), a gendered inferior position which she occupies constantly reinforced and reiterated through impositions placed upon her body within the machista framework outlined above.⁵³ Her attempts to escape take the form of her violent rejection of this patriarchal control, focused on her body as the seat of power and subjugation, and consequently as the site of the struggle for self-definition. However, as Martiatu (2004a, 45) observes, in spite of María Antonia’s violent rejection of machismo, the weak point she shares with Ochún – that of loving to the point of downfall – ensures that for much of the play she remains subordinate to Julián, as Ochún was to Changó. Even just before she murders him, when Julián tells María Antonia he is leaving to pursue his boxing career abroad, she pleads, ‘No, mi negro, no te vayas. Haré lo que tú quieras. Tú eres mi macho, mi dueño. Yo soy tu esclava’ (*María Antonia*, 1027).⁵⁴

In *Conversación* (156), Herrera underlines the lack of choice María Antonia had regarding how she could respond to the situation in which she found herself:

⁵¹ ““María Antonia, dear, from now on I have to take you to work with me”. “Why?” “You’ve grown up and you have to work.” “Manuela, the carpenter’s daughter, is older than me and her mother takes her to school”. “Yes, but her father works”. “And you also work, Madrina”. “But he earns more than I do”.’

⁵² ‘Ochún was my *orisha de cabecera* [...]. He opened the doors for me and told me: “*Hija de Ochún*, act accordingly and may she know to refresh your *eledda*”’.

⁵³ ‘triangle representative of historical marginalisation in Cuba: she’s a woman, she’s black and she’s poor’.

⁵⁴ ‘No, *mi negro*, don’t leave. I’ll do whatever you want. You’re my man, my master. I’m your slave’.

[*María Antonia*—Tú hablas conmigo de violencia y no te das cuenta de que fue todo lo que tuve, lo único que me ofrecieron de regalo el día de mi nacimiento.

[*Herrera*—La aceptaste, fue como un reto, y tú...

—¿Yo qué? ¿Había para mí otra cosa?⁵⁵

Unable to respond in any other way due to her entrapment in an inherently violent context, the defiance *María Antonia* embodied was her only option. From her marginal position, she had to fight in order to not be completely subsumed and rendered powerless by those whose actions she perceived to control her. Her manner of speech in interactions with all the male characters in the play can be seen as indicative of this. In the context of *Santería*, it is clear from the above linguistic analysis that there is a distinct hierarchy between *Batabio*, *La Madrina* and *María Antonia*, a hierarchy which, as a non-initiate who nonetheless has been identified – and tried to live – as an *hija de Ochún*, places *María Antonia* at the bottom.⁵⁶ Having been deemed a ‘desorejá’ by *Batabio* and a *puta negra* by the community for embodying the ‘happiness’ she regards as characteristic of the *camino de Ochún*, she cannot escape this double damnation and yells, ‘¡Yo no creo en esa mierda!’ (1035-6).⁵⁷ Previous to this, in the case of *Yuyo* and *Carlos*, rather than cowering when faced with the prospect of them stabbing her, she responds to both in the same manner, ‘¡Dale!’ and ‘¡Nunca saques un

⁵⁵ ‘[*María Antonia*—You speak to me of violence and you don’t realise that it was all that I had, the only thing that they gave me as a gift on the day I was born.

[*Herrera*—You accepted it, it was like a challenge and you...

—I what? Did I have any choice?’

⁵⁶ Several critics have suggested that *María Antonia* has been initiated into *Santería* or has had initiation prescribed as the manner in which she would avert the death she faces. These include: *Fulleda* (2003, 179), who states that ‘*María Antonia puede no despeñarse si corona su cabeza*’ [*‘María Antonia can prevent her demise if she undergoes initiation’*]; *Martiatu Terry* (1998, 56), who writes ‘In *María Antonia*, [...] the heroine is able to save her life by means of her initiation into *Santería*’; and *C. James* (2009, 49), who conflates *La Madrina*’s plea to “‘Cleanse her from the inside. Uproot her and plant her again” (66)’ in the prologue (and thus chronologically at the play’s close) with the ‘pursuit of the path of *Oshún*’ which is prescribed in *María Antonia*’s childhood. *María Antonia* has not been fully initiated, however, as she indicates herself when talking to *Carlos* in the *manigua*: ‘Quieren que yo me haga santo’ (1012) [*‘They want me to be initiated’*]. Furthermore, the fact that both *María Antonia*’s and *La Madrina*’s requests for the protagonist to be born again would also suggest that she has not already been through this process. As will be explored below, it is *María Antonia*’s death that symbolically marks her initiation into *Santería*, as *Martiatu* (1992, 939-40) suggests.

⁵⁷ ‘stubborn whore’; ‘I don’t believe in that shit!’.

arma si no vas a usarla!' (985; 1035).⁵⁸ In this fashion she appropriates and replicates the actions of those attempting to control her, a conclusion that was noted by Menéndez (2004, 88) herself upon leaving the première of *María Antonia* in 1967, when she heard someone say, '¡Es mucho hombre esa mujer!'.⁵⁹ Originally uttered in praise of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda in the nineteenth century, this phrase reflects the gender discrimination against which *María Antonia* fights since it reinforces a hierarchy in which men are positioned above women.⁶⁰ However, despite this, it also reflects the path *María Antonia* takes for much of the play since circumstances force her to pitch *hembrismo* against *machismo* and so she is restricted in her struggle by the very framework that she is attempting to escape.

A key context in which this control is problematised is that of possession, both sexual and spiritual. As an *hija de Ochún*, *María Antonia*'s body already constitutes a site of interaction between the *orisha* and the physical world, embodying the essence of *Ochún* through her actions. Possession is further indicative of their inextricable nature, reinforcing the importance of the body within the discourse of control within the play. Considering sexual possession in the first instance, this is traditionally conceived as male-dominated role (M.A. Clark 2005, 99). However, in much the same way as *María Antonia* seeks to appropriate *machista* violence in order to fight against it and gain perceived agency, she is shown to take control in this domain also, as the relationship between *María Antonia* and *Yuyo* exemplifies. Rejecting his advances in the first *cuadro* while shopping for the necessary goods for *La Madrina*'s *toque de santo* – and obtaining them without payment –, she later instructs him to come to her room that evening after having argued with *Julián* (974). The following day, content with the events of the previous night, *Yuyo* is once again rejected by *María Antonia*, who tells him she has no emotional attachment to him and that he should go back to his wife

⁵⁸ 'Go on!'; 'Never brandish a weapon if you're not going to use it!'.
⁵⁹ 'She's such a man, that woman!'

⁶⁰ This is noted by both Menéndez and the editor of the volume, Inés María Martiatu.

since their tryst was merely a substitute in the absence of Julián (978-83). Though Yuyo has possessed María Antonia in the act of sexual intercourse, it is the latter who occupies the position of power having enticed, enthralled and then shunned him. This is in comparison to his wife, who performs the role expected of her within this construct and comes to plead with him to return. Injured, with his masculinity challenged, he threatens to kill María Antonia in order to prove himself in front of the crowd, but she maintains her position of power and goads him as outlined above. As such, though she gains agency and seemingly subverts the constraints of the patriarchal construct that forbids such actions, this results in Yuyo and the wider community imposing further sanctions upon her body. She is termed ‘una cualquiera’ (a whore), reduced to the status of a prostitute and ostracised within the *barrio* (981). The reinforcement of patriarchal constructs by the community in response to María Antonia’s actions is not only effectuated in this instance with Yuyo, a fact María Antonia later recalls: ‘Los bares cerraban sus puertas; las mujeres tiraban agua a la calle y hacían limpieza a sus maridos. Las madres soltaron a sus hijos a la calle; me los echaron como perros rabiosos’ (1001).⁶¹ By appropriating this position, therefore, María Antonia arguably reinforces the very patriarchal norms against which she struggles as, in Butler’s (1988, 531) terms, her performance has become a norm which thus negates the power that she has seemingly obtained. In Martiatu’s (2004a, 66) words, she is ‘buscada por todos, no porque sea bella, sino porque “está buena” para ser poseída y saciar en ella el deseo.’⁶² Contradictorily, therefore, rather than being further empowered in possession, she is merely reduced to the ‘receptacle’ and the potential for power is negated as others appropriate her body for their own means.

⁶¹ ‘The bars closed their doors; women threw water into the street and performed cleansing rituals on their husbands. Mothers let their sons out into the street, setting them on me like rabid dogs’.

⁶² ‘Sought after by all the men, not because she is pretty, but rather because “she’s just right” to be possessed and to satisfy one’s desire’.

Indeed, this embodiment of the essence of Ochún that has seen her subvert these patriarchal norms and challenge multiple forms of masculinity has concomitantly provoked the restrictions that have been placed upon her body. She recounts that the treatment marginalising her from the community was a result of following the path she saw prescribed for her, but though she was following the trajectory of Ochún she became a pariah. In keeping with Cabranes-Grant's (2010, 129) assertion that 'María Antonia uses *santería* only for erotic purposes' (an analytical standpoint itself undermined by this discussion), the community perceive María Antonia as using *brujería* to entrap their husbands. However, this is only a partial presentation of both Ochún and María Antonia. In much the same fashion, but in order to force María Antonia to act as he wishes, Julián attempts to exert control over her and 'deflect attention from his masculine flaws' (C. James 2009, 47), saying, 'Tú no naciste para ese carácter. Las hijas de Oshún nacieron para endulzar las aguas y enloquecer el viento' (*María Antonia*, 969).⁶³ Rejecting such impositions upon her agency as is clear in her retort, 'No te acerques. Ya puedes irte al gimnasio, campeón' (970), the reinforcement of María Antonia's entrapment is based not on divination therefore, but on the presentation of an incomplete picture which ignores the inherent contradictory nature of Ochún's character.⁶⁴ In her conversation with Herrera, María Antonia critiques this very characterisation, ready to contradict what she believes is Herrera's insinuation that *hijas de Ochún* are 'dada[s] al goce y al placer' (*Conversación*, 166).⁶⁵ Describing Ochún in a more complete manner, Martiatu (2004a, 43) writes,

Puede ser amorosa y protectora de las mujeres embarazadas y de los niños y en otras ocasiones se muestra voluble, caprichosa, malvada o traicionera. Puede reinar en el

⁶³ 'You weren't born to be of such character. *Hijas de Ochún* were born to sweeten the waters and madden the wind'.

⁶⁴ 'Don't come near me. You can leave now and go to the gym, champ'.

⁶⁵ 'given to enjoying themselves and to pleasure'.

universo del amor, de las pasiones, pero también en el de la muerte y el odio. Puede ser a la vez luminosa y oscura.⁶⁶

Although the happiness and voluptuousness of Ochún is a key element of her character and often those of her initiates, as an *orisha* with multiple *camino*s neither she nor her children can be reduced to these specific characteristics as Julián contends. María Antonia embodies Ochún more completely than those around her would like, and her overriding wish to define herself and escape from the patriarchal construct is both aided and thwarted by this fact.

By writing his protagonist and Ochún in this manner, Hernández Espinosa interrogates the popular presentation of Ochún in wider Cuban society and to a certain extent rewrites the *patakí* detailing the relationship between Ochún and Changó. Firstly, Ochún, through her association with La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, occupies the position of Cuba's patron saint, depicted as a light-skinned *mulata* with straight hair (though in some *ilé* she is perceived as a black woman with kinky hair (Cros Sandoval 2006, 241)). Also associated with money (241-42), the playwright's decision to make explicit that María Antonia is a black prostitute who lives in poverty and to write her as the embodiment of Ochún therefore critiques the racial and economic symbolism ascribed to Ochún in the popular imaginary as a figure that brings the Cuban nation together, as the story of Caridad del Cobre illustrates.⁶⁷ Hand in hand with this, Hernández Espinosa challenges the manner in which *hijos/as de Ochún* are described and thus the image portrayed both of the *orisha* and of the wider Cuban population with whom she is associated. Bolívar Aróstegui (1990, 121) writes that children of Ochún, while sensual and friendly individuals who enjoy dancing and *fiestas*, make an effort to comply with public opinion to which they assign great importance. The character of

⁶⁶ 'She can be loving and the protector of pregnant women and children, and on other occasions she proves fickle, capricious, wicked and disloyal. She is able to reign in the universe of love, of passion, but also in that of death and hatred. She can bring both light and darkness at the same time.'

⁶⁷ María Antonia describes herself as 'negra' on several occasions in the play, as well as being described as such by other characters, and Hilda Oates – the actress cast by Roberto Blanco to perform the role of María Antonia in 1967 – is also black. The myth of Caridad del Cobre has been outlined in chapter one.

María Antonia runs contrary to this, however, seeking to escape the patriarchal construct that dominates both the secular and religious contexts she inhabits, and by extension questioning the validity of such restrictive portrayals of *hijas de Ochún* and the wider population. This is then reinforced by Hernández Espinosa's rewriting of the *patakí*, inscribing his play into the tradition of orality in Santería discussed in chapter two and referenced above by Astles.

In an interview with Christilla Vasserot (1998, 46), Hernández Espinosa stated that as part of his work he wrote and invented *patakí*, providing the examples of two of his plays, *Odebí el cazador* and *Obá y Shangó*. Describing himself as an artist and not a folklorist, he concluded that the beauty of the world of Santería was the freedom and openness within it which enabled him to do so. Although the playwright does not name *María Antonia* as one of his works in which he has made use of this opportunity, Menéndez (2002, 223) suggests that the play is an example of the dynamic nature of the oral tradition within Santería. The rewriting of the *patakí* that recounts the relationship between Ochún and Changó effectuated in *María Antonia* is a corollary of his protagonist being an *hija de Ochún* who resists societal norms. Instead of *María Antonia* allowing her love for Julián to dictate her acceptance of his abandonment on the terms he sets out in spite of the sacrifice she had already made for him by going to prison for a crime he committed – as Ochún did with Changó –, Hernández Espinosa's protagonist murders her lover in a direct clash of *hembrismo* and *machismo* in an attempt to break the cycle of this *patakí* repeating itself in her relationship with Julián. In so doing, *María Antonia* reconfigures the myth that sees her inherit a legacy from Cumachela with whom she is intimately related whereby the latter's desertion by her lover having asked him for what he cannot give her becomes *María Antonia*'s abandonment by Julián for the same reason (*María Antonia*, 1020).⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Although Cumachela embodies Ikú and has replaced *María Antonia*'s shadow as such, here Hernández Espinosa also shows her to display elements of the various *caminos* of Ochún, one of which is linked to death

María Antonia's embodiment of Ochún allows her to destabilise the public/private dichotomy accepted in society. Performing the role of *hija de Ochún* as she views it, María Antonia moves seamlessly between the public and private spaces, transferring her sexuality into the public sphere. For her, 'en ellos no aparecen límites definidos, no hay separaciones absolutas entre el mundo y la casa, con lo cual se agiganta la vulnerabilidad del hombre' (Menéndez 2004, 80).⁶⁹ As demonstrated in the previous two chapters, Santería itself has challenged the traditional construct whereby Afro-Cuban religion was maintained in the domestic sphere, and thus inherently linked with women. Hernández Espinosa has been described as the first playwright to valorise in theatre – thus in the public domain – both Santería as a religion and the position of the black women therein, thereby challenging its presentation in this medium as merely *brujería* (Martiatu 2005, 22-3). María Antonia thus continues to challenge this divide, undermining male authority in this space, which in part explains the male characters' violent subjugation of her and the women's designation of her as a *puta*. Refusing to allow men to dominate her, María Antonia attempts to appropriate the power with which they have defined her body thus far by maintaining her control over it at all costs, as has been exemplified by the manner in which she confronts Julián, Yuyo, Pitico, Tino and Carlos. Though her performance of Ochún in this space serves to undermine the patriarchal construct in which women must remain subordinate, it simultaneously reinforces this same construct. While she therefore helps 'la concientización necesario para propiciar el proceso de cambio' (Menéndez 2004, 91) – which is explicitly reiterated in Herrera's text –, this process of change requires the conflict to reach its zenith in her murder as an act of defiance and resistance.⁷⁰ Importantly, María Antonia's treatment at the hands of the community mirror

and the cemetery (Bolívar Aróstegui 1990, 117). The intertwining of sex and death that the various *camino*s of Ochún therefore connote is explored briefly below and in greater detail in chapter six.

⁶⁹ 'no definitive boundaries appear between them, the divisions between the outside world and the home are not absolute, and as a result men become increasingly vulnerable'.

⁷⁰ 'the raising of awareness necessary to favour the process of change'.

that to which Ochún was subjected after having enticed Ogún back from the forest using her seductive powers and *oñí* (honey). Despite the community's initial gratitude as they could now be prosperous once again, over time 'la gente no recuerda ese gesto de Ochún, y fueron ellos mismos, cuando ya tuvieron el hambre saciada, rebozante la barriga, quienes emplearon la fuerza recuperada para señalarla' (*Conversación*, 167).⁷¹ In much the same fashion, the community wish María Antonia to perform the role of Ochún but ostracise her for the very fact of doing so.

This imposition of norms upon María Antonia's body through the context of Santería is reiterated by Batabio. Excoriating her for rejecting the laws of this world, he concludes that she lost her *aché* 'correteando por ahí' and that it is her body that has led to her demise: 'Usted se salió de sus costumbres y botó la cabeza, hija. Y la cabeza es la que lleva al cuerpo' (947; 1035).⁷² However, despite the *babalao*'s suggestion that she has been focusing on the pleasures of the flesh and allowing them to define her, for María Antonia her head is all that she has left; she believes in Santería, but is unable to accept the displacement of her human spirit through *orisha* possession. Participating willingly in the *toque de santo* for Ochún and dancing to invoke the *orisha*, when she feels she is about to be mounted she breaks the circle and flees. Conversing with Yuyo immediately afterwards, María Antonia describes spirit possession as a means of domination: 'Mi cabeza no le pertenece a nadie. ¿Viste cómo me la quisieron robar? Por un minuto creí perderla. Oshún no encuentra cabeza y me busca, pero no se la voy a dar, aunque en ello me vaya la vida' (978).⁷³ In spite of the

⁷¹ 'people do not remember that gesture of Ochún's, and it was the same people who, when their hunger was sated and their stomachs lined, used their energy thus renewed to point the finger at her'.

⁷² 'gallivanting about'; 'You turned your back on habits and lost your head, daughter. And it is the head that leads the body'.

⁷³ 'My head does not belong to anybody. Did you see how they wanted to steal it from me? For a moment I thought I would lose it. Ochún doesn't find a head and looks for me, but I'm not going to give it to her, even if it costs me my life'.

power of possession performance outlined above, for much of the play María Antonia considers it as another way in which she loses agency.

Looking to the performance of the scene in closer detail, the seemingly oppressive nature of spirit possession is made even clearer. The ceremony is taking place in order to take the statue of Caridad del Cobre, representative of Ochún, to the river and ‘refrescarla [...] para que [María Antonia] no pierda la cabeza’ (970).⁷⁴ Having been *despojada* (ritually cleansed),⁷⁵ María Antonia goes into the river with the *iyalochas*, dancing, singing and laughing along with the *iyalocha* who has been mounted by Ochún. They continue in the same manner back to La Madrina’s house, and having arrived,

*La danza va in crescendo. El Akpwón canta persistentemente sobre María Antonia, que está a punto de caer en trance. Para precipitar la posesión hace sonar sobre ella una campanilla de metal amarillo. María Antonia trata de escapar, pero las Iyalochas a la Oshún le hacen un cerco. El Akpwón le conversa al oído. María Antonia da un grito y violentamente rompe el cerco. Huye.*⁷⁶ (978, original italics)

From both an auditory and visual perspective, María Antonia is once again defined by external agents. The conflict is centred on the difference in perspective regarding what constitutes ‘perder la cabeza’: for La Madrina and the wider Santería community it is María Antonia’s death and the reclamation of her *eleddá* by Ochún that would be indicative of her having “lost her head”, for María Antonia, however, it is the inability – temporary as it may be – to remain in control of the manner in which her body performs its role. In the secular context, although others have ascribed meaning to her bodily performances and deemed her

⁷⁴ ‘make her fresh again [...] so that María Antonia doesn’t lose her head’.

⁷⁵ The purpose of the *despojo* at this point of the ceremony is to remove any bad influences or spirits before interacting with the *orisha*. Depending on the context it can be conducted with a live bird such as a chicken or dove, or with a mixture of water, leaves and herbs.

⁷⁶ ‘The dance quickens. The Akpwón sings persistently over María Antonia, who is about to fall into a trance. In order to precipitate her possession, the Akpwón rings a bell made of yellow metal over María Antonia. María Antonia tries to escape, but Ochún’s *iyalochas* make a circle around her. The Akpwón speaks into her ear. María Antonia cries out and violently breaks the circle. She flees.’

actions contrary to the patriarchal norms of society, María Antonia has maintained conscious control over her actions (though, as has been demonstrated by the above analysis and in *Conversación*, the options were constrained by her marginalised position in the community and wider Cuban society). Furthermore, as possession is a gendered performance in which the *caballo* takes on a female role, those precipitating the manifestation of the *orisha* through dance and sound cues are aligned with the male-gendered role of the *orisha* and thus further contribute to María Antonia's subjugation. Although Hagedorn (2010, 147-9) is careful to underline that the music performed for the *orisha* is not 'inherently female or male', she does suggest that 'the sexualized characterization of *oricha* possession seems to refer [...] also to the way in which the empowering musical sound [...] penetrates the possession vehicle—through the ears, the skin, the head.' Despite the fact that María Antonia is not mounted on this occasion, the symbolically male-gendered auditory cues coupled with the physical delineation by the *iyalochas* of the space in which she can move serve to create an oppressive situation which María Antonia experiences as a loss of both power and agency. Importantly, there is a shift in her perception of this at the close of the play, as will be demonstrated following consideration of the *manigua*.

After having been rejected once again by Julián, who following his boxing match had gone to celebrate at the *bar de los muelles* without conveying any message to her, María Antonia runs to La Madrina's house where, by means of a bodily ritual, she flees and finds herself in the *manigua*. Encountering Cumachela in its depths, the interaction between the old lady and María Antonia reiterates the latter's inescapable death as their journeys are presented as inextricably intertwined. The two characters hold a conversation but at times speak together, which can be interpreted in opposing but complementary fashions. Firstly, this can be perceived as constituting a battle between the two individuals in which María Antonia is shown in conflict with the paternal authority of Ikú (though presented as a woman), as is

demonstrated by their speaking at the same time and so both inherently fighting to be heard. Conversely, it also presents María Antonia and Cumachela as one entity, and so indicates that María Antonia has been dominated by the male authority of Ikú.

In coming to the *manigua*, María Antonia's body has facilitated her transportation to a liminal space in which it seems she may be able to explore a possible future without many of the restrictions placed on her outside this context. In contrast to bodily possession – both spiritual and sexual –, the two subsequent *cuadros* that take place in a clearing of the *manigua* focus on possibility conceived in the mind. As Carlos discerns, María Antonia is trying to escape, not only from her daily life but also from herself. He ascribes his own feeling of helplessness to her: 'uno necesita a veces ser dueño de algo, y cuando no se es dueño de nada, ni de sí mismo, uno se echa a correr' (998).⁷⁷ Both victims of the patriarchal norms of society, the scene leads to simultaneous soliloquies in which they each recount their trajectories to this point (1000-1), soliloquies which establish a connection between their separate experiences and point to the impossibility of a future together explored further in the seventh *cuadro*. Narrated at the same time, Carlos and María Antonia's stories are fused into a single account which moves beyond socioeconomics to focus on machista attitudes. Carlos' family had the money to keep him in school and buy him books, in contrast to María Antonia's abovementioned childhood as an orphan which prevented her from continuing her education due to financial hardship. However, they were both forced by the marginalisation they suffered for not conforming to these societal norms into a violent response against the constraints placed upon them: Carlos was required to kill the gang leader to prove his *hombria* to his father and the wider community, María Antonia was further marginalised from society to the extent that violence was the only option that remained available to her. The

⁷⁷ 'sometimes one needs to be master of something, and when one is master of nothing, not even of oneself, one runs away'.

result of both of their actions was sexual initiation and the concomitant appropriation of power and further subjugation this entails, as outlined above. By virtue of its liminal nature, then, on the one hand the *manigua* offers Carlos and María Antonia a space with inherent potential for resistance. On the other, however, as will be demonstrated, this potential is thwarted by the impossibility of transferring the ideas constructed therein to the space they ordinarily inhabit. While welcome respite, the possibility of change cannot be realised.

This lack of potential is established at the same moment that Carlos and María Antonia's stories are being woven together. While the soliloquies make explicit a clear connection between Carlos and María Antonia's past and future trajectories, the fact that they are simultaneous also illustrates that a joint path will be defined by conflict since as a result neither of the stories is intelligible in its own right and through their performance the violence portrayed in each becomes directed at the other. This will be demonstrated in the closing scene of the play when Carlos stabs María Antonia and she provokes him in the same way as she did Yuyo and Pitico. Therefore, their escape from the contexts in which they feel helpless and constrained by those around them in turn serves to reinforce the violence they have fled. Furthermore, the interweaving of their accounts and the mutual understanding between the two hitherto strangers throughout the scene suggest that this situation is equally damnatory for others in their position.

In the second scene set in this clearing, Carlos and María Antonia play a game which explores the possibility of a life together. Consisting of a series of snapshots of life as a couple – or dreams as María Antonia calls them (1017; 1038) –, the promise depicted in the first is at once marred by Carlos' insistence that María Antonia stay at home, clearly delineating the public and private spaces along gendered lines and once again reducing María Antonia to a subordinate role (1013). As the game progresses the situations the couple describe

increasingly reflect their current realities: poverty-stricken, María Antonia's body is once again defined by others, though in this case she is the unhappy housewife whose role is to clean and bear children; Carlos works longer hours on failed attempts to create the magic cement that was to make them rich. Moreover, despite the potential at the outset, their relationship mirrors the unhappy marriage of Yuyo and Mathilde, with a father unable to provide for his family thus seeking solace elsewhere and his wife attempting to make do in increasingly desperate poverty. Returning to Butler (1988, 519-20) and the manner in which gender is constituted cited in chapter one, she writes that it is 'instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*' and the 'possibilities of gender transformation are to be found [...] in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style.' As such, potential for change is harnessed through slightly different repetitions in the manner in which gender is performed, and in so doing, possibility is created through this subversive repetition. In the case of Carlos and María Antonia, however, each repetition results in the reinforcement of the previous stylized act, whose failure was necessary in order for the one which follows to commence. Rather than subvert the restrictions placed upon their actions within the community, the potential for escape offered by the liminal space of the *manigua* proves only to reinforce them. The impossibility of a future free from these impositions indicated by the penetration of the other's soliloquy with the violence recounted in one's own is reiterated here by the increasing subjugation of both characters to the failure of their repeated stylizations to offer an escape.

As noted above, María Antonia's bodily performance of Ochún also links her to death through the association of the *orisha* with the cemetery, Cumachela's embodiment of Ikú and most importantly, the manner in which María Antonia dies, stabbed in the vagina by Carlos at the moment at which she is mounted by Ochún. In her discussion of the ritual elements of *María Antonia*, Martiatu (1984, 43) highlights that in Santería death signifies a change rather

than a definitive end, that the symbolic death a neophyte goes through as part of their initiation which then leads to their rebirth as an *iyawó* is repeated on a spiritual plane whereby the spirits of the dead continue to interact with the living and that death in itself is the assurance of birth. This performance of life and death through the body by means of the subjectivities that inhabit and penetrate it is linked to the performance of María Antonia's sexuality in which her body is mounted and penetrated by a number of entities – herself, Julián, Yuyo, and finally Ochún and Carlos at the same time –. This close link between death and sexuality is an important aspect of African-derived religious traditions in the Caribbean, with the Gede exemplifying their coexistence in Vodou and various *caminos* of different *orisha* associated with death and the cemetery alongside their amorous relationships with other *orisha* in Santería. Georges Bataille (1986 [1962], 17) has theorised the connections between sex and death in depth, writing that '[t]he transition from the normal state to that of erotic desire presupposes a partial dissolution of the person as he exists in the realm of discontinuity', thereby linking the liminal experience of death to that of eroticism. In their introduction to a selection of Bataille's works, Botting and Wilson (1997, 13) render this liminality more explicit, concluding that '[i]n eroticism the poles of life and death, being and nothingness, fullness and emptiness are one, dissolved like subject and object in the insensible totality of things.' Furthermore, as Baudrillard (1976, 240-41) highlights, for Bataille sexual excess itself leads to death, a notion Foucault (1990 [1985], 127) reiterates, drawing on Greek philosophy, in his second volume of *The History of Sexuality*. The intertwining of these two notions and their importance in the analysis of all the works in this thesis will be explored in greater detail in chapter six, however at this point it is important to foreground that María Antonia's sexuality and her death are inextricably linked and together contribute to the liminality of her body both within the context of the play and the wider environment of Santería.

In addition to María Antonia's double possession at the moment of her death, the link between sex and death is further underlined by the protagonist's relationships with Yuyo, Carlos and Julián. With Yuyo, his emasculation upon being rejected leads him to threaten María Antonia with a knife, claiming that he is ready to possess her in this fashion as a corollary of no longer being permitted to penetrate her sexually. Such a clear juxtaposition of the two is expressed the previous day when María Antonia finds Julián behind the marketplace: seeking to resolve their conflict, María Antonia tells Julián 'Sería capaz de matarte', to which he replies '¡Mátame!' and they kiss (971).⁷⁸ With Carlos, however, it is the mythical nature of the *manigua* that initially draws these two concepts together (obviously the link is clear when he murders her at the play's close). As a space of possibility which quickly becomes the opposite, Carlos and María Antonia contemplate a sexual relationship, but this has already been prefaced by María Antonia's meeting with Ikú and concludes with her acceptance of her impending death. The liminal space of the *manigua* then also becomes a site where sex and death coalesce.

Subversion in death and sacrifice

Turning to the final three *cuadros* of the play and the deaths of Julián and María Antonia, it is at this point that the imposition of the patriarchal norms upon her body and her subversion of them through her performance of both ritual and gender come together and are most clearly expressed. The death of these two characters is a key element of previous analyses of the work, which either signal María Antonia's death as a reimposition of patriarchy upon her and thus her failure in her quest of self-definition or, while recognising this, conclude that she is finally free from these constraints to which she could never accept subjugation. Fullea (2003, 179) seems to contradict the idea that María Antonia's death was pre-determined in the

⁷⁸ 'I would be capable of killing you'; 'Kill me!'.

context of Santería, writing in reference to a series of plays – including *María Antonia* – that focus on this religious practice,⁷⁹

Aquí no funciona la inevitabilidad y [los personajes] tienen la oportunidad de re-escribir su historia ellos mismos y de apropiarse, por consiguiente, de la realidad. Que lo hagan o no tiene que ver con la innegable condición y voluntad humanas.⁸⁰

In contrast, González (1998, 551), along with del Pino (2003, 186-7), classifies *María Antonia*'s death as inescapable, and both link the unavoidable nature of her demise to the religious construct in which she participates. Other critics highlight that since there is no future possibility for an improvement in *María Antonia*'s situation or for her to escape the restrictions that have been placed on her actions thus far, death is the option that she chooses and it constitutes 'escape, liberación' (Martiatu 2004b, 7; Pogolotti 2004, 26).⁸¹ While the suggestion that another viable option exists may be questionable given the omnipresence of *Ikú* throughout the play and the condemnation of *María Antonia*'s actions, *María Antonia* certainly precipitates her death and it does constitute a form of escape. However, this sequence deserves additional detailed analysis as it is the contention of this analysis that the murders of Julián and *María Antonia* would benefit from a more nuanced approach that draws on these conclusions but takes them one step further in order to demonstrate that, though *María Antonia* reinforces the established patriarchal construct, through her performance she gains agency and subverts the very system that has condemned her.

Though *María Antonia*'s reaction to Julián's announcement of his departure is inevitable due to the social construct in which masculine domination must be countered by violence, his

⁷⁹ The plays Fullea refers to are, in order: *Réquiem por Yarini* (Carlos Felipe, 1960), *María Antonia* (Eugenio Hernández Espinosa, 1964), *Santa Camila de La Habana Vieja* (José Ramón Brene, 1962), *Lila, la mariposa* (Rolando Ferrer, 1963), *Chago de Guisa* (Gerardo Fullea León, 1992), *La piedra de Elliot* (Elaine Centeno, 1993), and *Electra Garrigó* (Virgilio Piñera, 1948).

⁸⁰ 'Here it isn't a question of inevitability and [the characters] have the opportunity to re-write their own stories and as a result to appropriate reality for themselves. Whether they do it or not has to do with the undeniable human condition and free will'.

⁸¹ 'escape, freedom'.

murder at her hands is indicative of her appropriating agency and subverting the male-oriented system of Abakuá. Matibag (1996, 258) states that Julián's death from drinking the powder María Antonia put into his *chequeté* was unexpected, however her statement as he collapses that it is 'por ti que rezas. [...] Es por ti que llora Ekue' and her reaction to it – 'si hubiéramos podido vivir' – suggests the contrary (1029-30).⁸² Furthermore, the ritual she performs in the third *cuadro* places an *amarre* on Julián and ties his fate to hers (Matibag 1996, 258). In light of the discussion above regarding the inevitability of her death and its omnipresence throughout, it would seem that by binding Julián in this way and expressing the desired outcome 'Que ande detrás de mí como el muerto detrás de la cruz', María Antonia – unwittingly or not at the moment of performance – ensures his death (992).⁸³ This is further supported by María Antonia meeting Cumachela/Ikú singing a funeral dirge immediately after having bound Julián with the *amarre*. By taking control of his destiny in this fashion, she once again demonstrates her defiance in the face of his belief that he, as a man and *hijo de Changó*, is free to abandon her. Though there is an inherent contradiction in that fact that as a result of her refusal to be subjected once more to a construct that defines her as a *puta* she has thereby destroyed her love, María Antonia is unable to react any differently without once again suffering the same subjugation to which she has already been subjected. Furthermore, María Antonia murders Julián to the sound of the Abakuá *nkrikamo* drum which is speaking for Ekue. Without going as far as to suggest this act serves to avenge the murder of Sikán, María Antonia does establish her control over a *ñáñigo* to the sound of the very drums that speak this voice, and thus symbolically rejects the abovementioned misogyny inherent in the ritual space of the Abakuá. In dismissing the premises of the Abakuá in such a fashion, however, the vengeance required by the Sociedad due to the murder of one of their own is invested with further meaning as it serves to re-establish this misogynistic premise upon

⁸² 'it is for yourself that you pray. [...] It is for you that Ekue cries' and her reaction to it – 'if we'd been able to live' –.

⁸³ 'that he follow behind me like the dead man behind the cross'.

which the sect is founded. Though Tino, a young *ñáñigo*, does not kill María Antonia himself – and Carlos’ own initiation by doing so is questionable, as noted above –, C. James (2009, 45) suggests that by witnessing it and announcing her death, this ‘might be read as a symbolic necessity marking [his] passage into manhood [...] who [...] therefore replaces Julián within this cosmos.’

In spite of these impositions on María Antonia and the fact that Julián’s murder must be avenged, her actions in the final *cuadro* of the play illustrate her subversion of the constraints placed upon her. Firstly, having sensed the presence of death and been warned of its impending arrival on numerous occasions, she tells La Madrina after Batabio has ordered her to leave his house, ‘No me basta esta vida, no la quiero. Necesito otro mundo. ¿Dónde está? Que vengan a buscarme, me encontrarán contenta y sabrosa’ (1036).⁸⁴ Rather than fleeing as her godmother implores, María Antonia states, ‘No. A tu casa me irán a buscar. Diles a los tamboreros que no dejen de tocar. Oshún quiere alegría’ (1036).⁸⁵ While death constitutes an act of corporeal subjugation, both its inevitability and her invitation for it to happen reduce its potency as an imposition upon her. By claiming the unavoidable outcome, she then nuances a situation that would otherwise be solely conceived in terms of gender-based violence, rendering it more complex as it becomes framed as an inescapable yet subjective bodily performance with María Antonia positioning herself at its centre.

The manner in which María Antonia acts when Carlos arrives exemplifies this further. Importantly, prior to arriving at La Madrina’s house during the ceremony, Carlos has once again been presented in feminised terms. In reference to his appearance alongside María Antonia in the *bar de los muelles*, Cabranes-Grant (2010, 132) writes, ‘This double

⁸⁴ ‘This life isn’t enough for me, I don’t want it. I need another world. Where is it? Let them come and look for me, they’ll find me content and alive with pleasure’.

⁸⁵ ‘No. They’ll come looking for me at your house. Tell the drummers not to stop playing. Oshún wants happiness’.

feminization – a woman repels him, and a man literally kicks his arse – implies that Carlos is marked as a lesser male, an ostracized subject’. This is reinforced by the women in the bar, who mock him as if he were a young boy, and subsequently Cumachela, who offers him the knife that will become the murder weapon and reiterates the words from the ninth ‘image’ in the prologue (which have already been linked to his father, if not spoken by him directly): ‘Es mejor ir pa’la cárcel que pal hoyo’ (1023).⁸⁶ Carlos returns to ‘reinstate his masculinity’, and in so doing María Antonia simultaneously diminishes it (Cabranes-Grant 2010, 133). This is initially achieved through her challenge of his authority, repeated from her altercation with Yuyo, which develops as follows. Rejecting Carlos’ forceful advances which elicits the response ‘¡Yo soy muy macho pa’que te burles de mí!’, María Antonia’s voluptuous dance for Ochún becomes increasingly provocative as she removes her clothes (1038).⁸⁷ Having brandished the knife, it is not until María Antonia goads him with ‘¡Nunca saques un arma si no vas a usarla!’ and shouts ‘¡Dale!’ that Carlos reacts to her provocations, at which point he thrusts the knife into her vagina, finally possessing her and killing her by stabbing her in what many in the community consider to be the essence of her being as a *puta negra*.⁸⁸ It is clear that from his perspective he only acts in this fashion due to the societal pressure upon him to do so in order to prove his masculinity; in a reflection of the way machismo forced María Antonia to destroy her love, Carlos is forced to destroy his. In this instance, however, María Antonia is shown to subvert the same masculinity thus reinstated as, in a similar way to Drewal’s analysis of spirit possession above, though María Antonia is possessed by Carlos by means of the knife and he in turn is obligated to do so in order to reinstate his masculinity, she is shown to exert power over him and influence him in the manner in which he acts.

⁸⁶ ‘It is better to go to prison than to the grave’.

⁸⁷ ‘I’m too much of a man for you to make fun of me!’.

⁸⁸ ‘Never brandish a weapon if you’re not going to use it’; ‘Go on!’.

Moreover, it is at this point that María Antonia is mounted by Ochún. Cabranes-Grant (2010, 133) poses a series of important questions regarding the agency of María Antonia in this regard, which warrants in-depth consideration. He writes,

But it is only when she dies that María Antonia's *oricha* claims her at last. [...] Is this a choice that María Antonia embraces willingly, or is she being possessed by default? [...] Is María Antonia offering Ochún a magnificent gift only for a few seconds, or is she becoming part of the god's energy? In other words, is María Antonia being absorbed into the general pulsations of *aché*, or is she experiencing a last-minute redemption, a final confirmation of the right of *santería* to guide her *camino* or path?

Framing his questions through the dichotomy of which influences are defining María Antonia in this scene, Cabranes-Grant manages to capture a key aspect of the relationship between santero/a and *orisha*, that it is bi-directional. However, like other critics, he appears not only to undermine María Antonia's subjectivity at this point, but also to negate her empowerment by means of the performance of *orisha* possession. In much the same vein as Davies' (1993, 290) conclusion that 'A pesar de las invocaciones de su madrina, Ochún solo baja en María Antonia al desplomarse ésta,' the formulation of Cabranes-Grant's questioning seems to focus on the power invested in the *orisha* and present María Antonia's only option as willing submission or not, without considering the element of self-definition inherent in the process.⁸⁹ As such, with the exception of the first question, this analysis would suggest that the answers lie between the two possibilities Cabranes-Grant outlines.

With regard to whether María Antonia 'embraces' being mounted by Ochún or it happens 'by default', the very question ignores the process of propitiation that has preceded it. As noted above, *orisha* are invoked through songs and dance, and when they possess an adherent they

⁸⁹ 'In spite of her Madrina's invocations, Ochún only possesses María Antonia when the latter collapses'.

are offered the clothing that they desire. Having rejected possession by Ochún previously, María Antonia dances for the *orisha* whilst wearing the latter's shawl and using her fan, before continuing her dance as she disrobes in provocation of Carlos. María Antonia both invites and permits possession by Ochún therefore, rather than merely having the choice of whether to submit to it or not, and in performing this role, she further subverts machismo by the strength she displays. Although Carlos stabs her while desperately embracing her, she does not die in his arms in an image of complete submission; rather, she removes herself from the physical restriction his embrace imposes and continues to dance both for and as Ochún, before falling to the ground dead. Once again, constituting the link between the physical and the spiritual, María Antonia influences both: she manifests Ochún through her body, presenting herself visibly and willingly to the *orisha*, which then allows her to make a final gesture of defiance to the patriarchal construct that has caused her death. In so doing, she both gives something to Ochún and becomes part of Ochún; her *eleddá* – and thus her *aché* – becomes part of the *orisha*, and thus is guided by the *orisha*.

This is not to suggest that the patriarchal norms of secular machismo and Santería are not reinforced, as this is clearly also the case. María Antonia's death is at the hands of both of these, whereby her body is destroyed in order for her affront to social and religious norms to be appeased. Doubly possessed – and thus symbolically doubly dominated – the masculine primacy in both contexts is reasserted. The insistence of Batabio and Ifá that she must die for having rejected 'la ley con que tiene que vivir aquí' is equally brought to fruition, as Batabio's reminder to María Antonia that she has forgotten that 'es la cabeza la que lleva al cuerpo' is demonstrated to be the case.⁹⁰ María Antonia acted as she thought an *hija de Ochún* should, but not having allowed Ochún to become *asentada* and been initiated as such – though comprehensible from María Antonia's point of view – has meant her body has been

⁹⁰ 'the rules by which one must live here'; 'it is the head that leads the body'.

seen to rule her head. Within the context of Santería, María Antonia has not respected the necessary reciprocity of the *orisha*-adherent relationship, and Ochún can indeed be considered to have reclaimed María Antonia's *eleddá*. However, this is not the whole picture and contrary to Cabranes-Grant's (2010, 133) conclusion that '[w]ithout a body of her own, María Antonia's resistance ceases', her sacrifice within the context of these patriarchal constructs rather enables her to become the symbol of resistance against them. Furthermore, separation of María Antonia's head from her body, though signalling the end of her physical life on earth, enables her entry into communion with Ochún and her continued manifestation through the *orisha* as Herrera's text shows.

In spite of Ochún's reclamation of María Antonia's *eleddá*, the fact that Ochún did so in such a visible fashion thus facilitating María Antonia's final defiant act points to Ochún's tacit support for María Antonia's struggle and understanding of its legitimacy. As such, although her perceived lack of respect for the *orisha* and refusal to heed their advice ultimately leads to María Antonia's murder, in portraying the scene in this manner Hernández Espinosa also posits that, in addition to recognising the patriarchal construct of Santería, there is room therein to critique this accepted tradition as he has done by reworking the *patakí*. In *Conversación*, Herrera makes clear the perception that María Antonia has become one with Ochún, the former presenting herself in 'sus avatares' who appears as 'una mujer de piel oscura, viste de amarillo suave contrastando con su pelo fuerte y duro, encanecido', but equally reinforcing that María Antonia remains a distinct entity within this association between the two and that the manner in which both are presented has been influenced by the other (158; 155).⁹¹ Ochún's support thus demonstrated should not be interpreted as a suggestion that María Antonia's violent reactions against all that she regarded as oppressive

⁹¹ 'her avatars' who appears as 'a woman of dark skin, dressed in soft yellow contrasting with her bold and strong greying hair'.

are thus considered proportionate and legitimate in themselves, but rather that Ochún recognises that her grievance against the impositions upon the female body within a male-dominated context is valid. Herrera and María Antonia continue to discuss this violence, with María Antonia underlining how ‘fue todo lo que tuve, lo único que me ofrecieron el día de mi nacimiento’ and asking how, without being a fortune teller, she could have known ‘que el mundo giraba y que en uno de sus giros entrarían cambios’ (156).⁹² Yet, it was indeed by changing something in one of these *giros* – her acceptance of the reciprocity of the possession performance – that a change was effectuated. As such, it was by changing an element integral to the ‘stylized repetition of acts’ that – in addition to an escape for María Antonia – an opportunity to subvert the system was made possible.

Furthermore, this cycle continues for others, as both Hernández Espinosa’s play and Herrera’s *Conversación* demonstrate. In addition to the cyclical nature of *María Antonia* whereby upon reaching the reappearance of Batabio’s house in the final scene the play returns to the prologue, there are several points at which lines are repeated thus indicating a possible return to previous action. Carlos’ abovementioned repetition of Yuyo’s assertion ‘¡Yo soy muy macho pa’que te burles de mí!’ and María Antonia’s reply, along with the latter asking Cumachela ‘¿Quién es Carlos?’ in the *manigua* and later in the last *cuadro*, constitute points at which the action could be replayed.⁹³ Though this indicates the inescapable nature of María Antonia’s situation, as has been noted, it also points to the action itself being inescapable, and thus its repetition with different protagonists. María Antonia observes this herself in her conversation with Herrera, stating ‘Género, raza y estadio social van a crear muchas María Antonia, que de acuerdo con su siglo y su milenio, así será explotada, violentada, así morirá y así matará’ (165), a sentiment the playwright himself reiterates in his

⁹² ‘it was all that I had, the only thing given to me on the day I was born’; ‘that the world was turning and that in one of its turns change would come about’.

⁹³ ‘I’m too much of a man for you to make fun of me’; ‘Who’s Carlos?’.

interview with Kaity (2011).⁹⁴ In this way, María Antonia's repeated appearance to Herrera and to others illustrates the further reaches of her defiance of male domination and that her death did not represent the end of her resistance.

The manner in which María Antonia precipitates her death and the perception of it as predetermined come together with this notion of continued resistance to frame her murder in terms of a sacrifice.

[Herrera]—Qué lástima que todo haya sucedido así.

[María Antonia]—No podía ser de otra manera; yo estaba marcada por la letra de mi nacimiento.

—¿Era imprescindible que la tuya fuera tan terrible?

—Yo fui la escogida, y lo que te va a tocar no lo cambia nadie, no lo borra nada.⁹⁵

(160)

Having suffered the impositions on her body, María Antonia's experience becomes a story of resistance which is repeated and reinforced through its performance by the many other María Antonias to which she and Hernández Espinosa allude. However, the account must be retold if it is to have any effect, as the protagonist and Herrera exhort:

[María Antonia]—También ese es tu empeño: saber y que sepan la verdad de historias así, como la mía.

[Herrera]—Y la de Ochún; siempre el sacrificio que no se va.⁹⁶ (167)

⁹⁴ 'Gender, race and social standing are going to create many María Antonias, who in accordance with the century and millennium, will be exploited, violated in this manner, will die this way and will kill this way'.

⁹⁵ '[Herrera]—What a shame it all happened this way.

[María Antonia]—It couldn't have been any other way; I was marked by the letter of my birth.

—Was it necessary that yours be so terrible?

—I was the chosen one, and no one can change what's meant for you, it cannot be deleted'.

⁹⁶ '[María Antonia]—That is also your task: to know and to make sure others know the truth of such stories like my own.

[Herrera]—And Ochún's story; ever the sacrifice that is not effective.'

Yet, more than simply recounting this story, the many María Antonias that have followed symbolically perform it again. As Francis (2011, 60) observes, ‘actions under one instance of domination do not forever alter the system of dominance and therefore often have to be repeated.’ In their own liminal spaces where they perform gender, *orisha* possession or both, those who follow then embody María Antonia, thereby increasingly subverting the male supremacy that has defined their bodies through every repetition of the act, with its own idiosyncrasies and individual characteristics, as María Antonia did in her re-rendering of Cumachela’s own tale. While not suggesting that María Antonia becomes an *orisha* herself who mounts adherents by means of spirit possession, the embodiment of her essence whereby successive generations are not her, but not not her in their own performances then allows this resistance to continue.

Finally, this notion of sacrifice and inescapable death must be compared that of Zulé in Montero’s *Del rojo*, analysed in chapter two. At the close of the novel, Zulé is murdered by her *sèvitè* and spurned lover, Jérémie Candé, while she is mounted by her *mèt tèt*, Ezili, and he by Carfú. Her sacrifice, equally inevitable and predetermined from the novel’s outset, serves to protect her *gagá* and prevent its consolidation with that of Similá Bolosse. As the powerful *manbo*, Zulé rejects the alliance Similá proposes which would see her lose power and influence as he transports his narcotic shipments through her *batey* (*Del rojo*, 170). By means of her murder at the hands of Jérémie Candé, however, Similá’s right within a patriarchal framework to exact his revenge for her refusal to submit is negated and she rises to be with her *mèt tèt*, becoming the conduit ‘through which man ascends and gods descend’ (Fernández Olmos 1997, 280). While Zulé’s sacrifice ensures the well-being of her religious community and prevents the imposition of a male-dominated framework associated with the Duvalier dictatorships and the Macoutes, María Antonia’s sacrifice permits the cycle of resistance against the patriarchy imposed upon women like her in both secular and religious

contexts to continue through their performances and therefore the repeated destabilisation of this construct. Neither text removes, or indeed is able to remove, the restrictions placed upon women by the accepted norms in society and within these religious traditions, however the protagonists' sacrifices do enable their subversion to continue.

In conclusion, therefore, the manner in which *María Antonia* performs ritual and gender serves to both reinforce and subvert the patriarchal construct critiqued in the play. Rather than constituting 'una apología al machismo, a la prostitución y a la santería cubana', charges that Curbelo Mezquida (2009, 17) notes were levelled against the play upon its première, *María Antonia* establishes an insightful critique of each of these, emphasising the unsatisfactory but inescapable nature of male domination within them.⁹⁷ By offering a reading that focuses on the performative nature of Santería and its presentation in the play, this analysis has demonstrated that, in spite of repeatedly restricting the manner in which *María Antonia* could perform her gender, Santería also provided a context in which she could appropriate both power and agency. Centring on the protagonist's body as the site of the interaction between the physical and spiritual, the public and private, the framework of performance theory whereby an agent retains their subjectivity and engages with both that which is performed and those observing the performance allows a reading of *María Antonia* in which she manages to subvert the secular and the religious male-dominated contexts. Her performance of Ochún draws on several of her *caminos* and, as *Conversación* shows, sees her reject the mindfulness of conforming to public opinion which Bolívar Aróstegui (1990, 121) cites as characteristic of children of Ochún to then subvert the accepted patriarchal norms and delineate a space for continued resistance. At the same time as critiquing such characterisation, Hernández Espinosa takes advantage of the opportunity Santería offers for creativity in the *pataki* and rewrites the myth of Ochún and Changó, which then aids *María*

⁹⁷ 'a justification for machismo, prostitution and Cuban Santería'.

Antonia's resistance by means of her association with, but not subsumption by, the various *caminos* of Ochún. Conversely, however, the protagonist's performance of ritual also constricts her, as Cabranes-Grant (2010, 136) concludes. Relinquishing power by conforming to the norm, María Antonia is unable to escape her predetermined death and her body is once again subjected to the violence of male supremacy. In spite of this, by confronting her inescapable demise in a manner which further enabled her to exert her agency as an individual, María Antonia's death is a sacrificial act that allows the essence of her resistance to be repeatedly embodied by the many other María Antonias that have followed. In this way, the act is re-performed by others who also influence it, reframing it in a continually evolving manner, and thus reiterating this subversion. The negotiation between the internal and external influences upon María Antonia's actions – the violence to which she is subjected, her own defiance, the community's perception of her, the gendered performance of *orisha* possession – reflects the conflicts within both the character and the religious tradition themselves. Destabilising the accepted primacy of these through her performance, María Antonia's sacrifice has ensured that her resistance continues.

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN, HAITIAN VODOU AND RECONSTITUTION OF THE SELF

[I]n order to engage and confront the identity that is imposed upon them, women need to enter “the frying pan.” From there, it is on to the fire where, like the mythical phoenix, they can resurrect themselves from the remains of their former selves. (Sloan 2000, 46)

Drawing on the themes of resistance and subverting patriarchal constructs through Santería and Vodou explored in chapters two and three, this chapter will continue the focus on the body as the site of interaction by examining the reconstitution of the fractured self in Kettly Mars’ *Fado*. Set in a context of Haitian Vodou interwoven with Portuguese fado, Mars’ novel recounts how a childless recent divorcée manages to reconstitute her fractured sense of self by exploring her sexuality as she traverses a series of fragmented physical and conceptual spaces. Her brokenness exemplified by her butchered and wounded body, Mars’ protagonist – Anaïse/Frida –¹ undermines the male-centred framework that categorises women as wives/mothers or whores by conflating these notions and embodying the essences of both Ezili Freda and Ezili Dantò. Bringing these two avatars of the same *lwa* together in a manner which reflects that of the *marasa*, Anaïse/Frida engenders a third entity in the tripartite twin *lwa*, the *marasa twa*, that points to a space in which the various dichotomies explored in the novel can be collapsed, thus preventing her sense of self from being rent apart once again. Following a brief discussion of the most cited reading of this novel which centres on the binary of reason and madness, this chapter outlines the nature of and extent to which Anaïse’s physical and conceptual self is fractured. It then analyses the spiritual context of Vodou knit

¹ The body of Mars’ protagonist is inhabited by two subjectivities, Anaïse and Frida. ‘Anaïse/Frida’ will be used when referring to her as a single entity.

together with *fado* in which the novel takes place before turning to focus on the concepts of corporeality and multiple subjectivity as negotiated by means of Anaïse/Frida's sexuality. In a space where these notions have been brought together, the chapter concludes by looking at Mars' application of the concept of death as it is perceived in Vodou to the actions of her protagonist and analysing the manner in which the *marasa twa* provide Anaïse/Frida with the opportunity to avoid reinscription into the patriarchal system that she has managed to undermine, thereby consolidating the sense of self she has reconstituted.

As it is the main text to be discussed, it would be beneficial to begin with a short summary of *Fado*. Comprising thirty-three short, unnumbered chapters, this one-hundred-and-ten-page novel begins soon after Anaïse's ex-husband and current lover, Léo, left her after his mistress conceived. The divorce is presented as largely the result of Anaïse's apparent inability to bear children, itself related to her repeated rape and two subsequent abortions as a teenager. Anaïse then starts work as a prostitute at *Bony's*, manifesting the persona of Frida. Both personas conceive with their respective lovers, and the novel closes with Bony and Léo poisoned by Frida and Anaïse respectively, who themselves take the same poison. The relationship between the two personas is fluid, at times they become one single entity, at others they are separate, but both inhabit the same body and ultimately choose what they describe as 'freedom' ('liberté' (109) / 'délivrance' (105)) in their return to Ginen.²

In an interview with Nadève Ménard (2011, 231), Mars described *Fado* as, 'l'histoire d'une passion qui déconstruit un corps, qui fait éclater les frontières entre la raison et la folie.'³ While an interpretation concentrating on the blurring of the boundaries between reason and madness is one possible reading of the novel, and the one that has been the focus of most of

² Ginen is conceptualised both as Africa and the realm of the *lwa* and the dead.

³ 'the story of a passion which deconstructs a body, which shatters the boundaries between reason and madness'.

the reviews it has received (see, for example, M. Victor 2008, Vété-Congolo 2010a, in addition to the blurb on the novel's back cover), when the reader looks more closely at the cultural context in which the text is written an alternative and more complex reading becomes apparent. Viewed thus, through the lens of Vodou and popular culture, *Fado* offers a discourse which foregrounds the embodiment of the *lwa*, the co-habitation of two discrete subjectivities within a single female body, a spiritual context which enables the reconstitution of the fractured self by means of the socio-political, spiritual and psychological planes, and the omnipresence of Vodou in Haitian popular culture from before independence to the present day. For her part, Vitiello (2011, 369-70) has described *Fado* as follows,

Fado [...] explore le thème des *marasa*, ainsi que les figures de la femme double, la femme de plaisir aux antipodes de la femme prude. Le mystère, la folie et la religion s'entrecroisent comme des voix issues du même corps mais qui seraient *a capella* dans des registres différents. [...] Les deux faces d'une même femme où portant deux mondes voisins se côtoient sans se mélanger. L'entrecroisement des destins féminins et masculins dans *Fado* se déroulent sur fond de musique portugaise langoureuse et languissante, entre douleur et plaisir, entre vie et mort.⁴

The duality thus summarised by Vitiello echoes Vété-Congolo (2010a, 914), who writes, 'Le roman est construit sur le principe thématique de la dualité, puisque nous sont présentés une double personnalité, une double vie, une double vision de la femme, un double meurtre.'⁵ While Vété-Congolo continues to observe that, 'La dualité relevée auprès de la psychologie du personnage le rend intrigant', she does not mention the importance of Vodou within the novel, which, though not foregrounded to the extent it has been in other of Mars' works such

⁴ '*Fado* explores the theme of the *marasa* [twin *lwa*], as well as the faces of the "double woman", the woman seeking pleasure in opposition to the prude. Mystery, madness and religion are interwoven like voices coming from the same body but which, *a capella*, would sound in different registers. [...] The two sides of one woman in whom two worlds exist side by side without mixing together. The interweaving of the destinies of the male and female characters in *Fado* unfolds against the background of sultry and languid Portuguese music, between pleasure and pain, between life and death.'

⁵ 'The novel is constructed around the thematic principle of duality: we are presented with a dual personality, a double life, a double view of women, a double murder.'

as *Kasalé* or some of her short stories such as *Lobo* or *Normélie*, is nonetheless a key element of the novel's context and a central theme throughout.⁶ As such, although this viewpoint is more nuanced than the author's own description cited above, the following discussion will build on Vitiello and Vété-Congolo's conclusions to demonstrate the centrality of Vodou to the protagonist's reconstitution of her fractured self and the importance of the concept of duality therein.

As noted above, Anaïse recalls that she was raped repeatedly as a teenager by a headmaster known to her family which led to two pregnancies and forced terminations at the age of fifteen. Although Anaïse's rape was a bodily violation which contributed to her fracturing, she describes the two abortions in particularly violent terms, defining them as 'butchery' and recounting that the second time, 'le couteau du docteur a de nouveau fait son travail. Grattant, délogeant la vie de mes fibres' (49).⁷ She decided at this point that 'je ne serais jamais mère' and recalls that she did not tell her father because '[j]'ai eu peur qu'il ne me croie pas et me rejette. J'ai eu peur de ma fragilité, de mon corps, du poids de cette faute dont j'étais complice malgré moi' (49).⁸ Yet the fact that Anaïse is childless is not only due to her conscious decision not to become a mother; earlier in the novel she states that she is sterile, which, she now realises, her husband held against her (20-21). Physically dismembered thus – Anaïse describes sex with Bony as physically knitting her body back together, and therefore she must see herself as fractured in this regard (31) –, she is also violated on a psychological plane as she felt unable to confide in her father for fear of his reaction and describes herself as 'complicit', therefore in part taking the blame for what happened to her. However, conceptually these events subjugate Anaïse further when viewed through the patriarchal

⁶ 'The duality at the psychological level of the character makes her intriguing'.

⁷ 'the doctor's knife once again did its work. Scraping, dislodging the life from the fibres of my flesh'.

⁸ 'I would never be a mother'; 'I was afraid that he wouldn't believe me and that he'd reject me. I was afraid of my fragility, of my body, of the weight of this sin in which I had been complicit in spite of myself'.

framework in which the novel takes place. As Rich (1977, 251), among many others, notes, with the exception of certain examples such as cloistered nuns, the “childless” woman has been regarded [...] as a failed woman’ since she is unable to fulfil her ‘natural’ role of mother as it has been traditionally conceived. Rejected by Léo for this reason, Anaïse is further fractured when he leaves her for his pregnant mistress, not only losing ‘un homme dans ma maison’ but also ‘l’illusion de mon pouvoir’ as a result (20).⁹ She has also described her sexual relationship with Léo during their marriage as her ‘fulfilling her duties’ in contrast to the narrative present in which the passion and ardent desire of them both is expressed during their daytime trysts (20; 21). When viewed within this male-dominated construct therefore, Anaïse perceives herself as having lost any agency she believed she had, unable to fulfil any of the roles of wife, mother or lover, thereby deeming her “broken” from both her perspective and that of her husband to whom she has tied her notion of power. It should be noted that Anaïse’s abortions, though secret and forced, also position her alongside the negation of life and motherhood, and therefore present her as an ‘unnatural’ woman linked with death.¹⁰ As a final point in this regard, Anaïse’s fractured self is not only linked to her inability to perform the roles assigned to her prior to the narrative present, however, she is also presented as negotiating – and ultimately resolving – a duality which is a fracture in itself. As a single entity, the protagonist encapsulates the figures of the spurned wife and the whore, the bourgeois professional resident of uptown Port-au-Prince and the marginalised denizen of the city slum.

However, it is this physical knitting together of the body by means of her sexuality that encapsulates the notion of the reconstitution of the self explored in this chapter. The novel’s protagonist frames this idea as follows, ‘Avec Bony, je recolle mes fragments épars. Quand

⁹ ‘a man in my house’; ‘the illusion of my power’.

¹⁰ See, for example, Soros 1998. The intertwining of the notions of death, pregnancy and motherhood and how these apply to this analysis of *Fado* are discussed in the fourth section of this chapter.

nous faisons l'amour, je redeviens un corps, une tête, quatre membres et un sexe soudés par le plaisir' (31).¹¹ Drawing together her disparate body parts through the exploration of her sexuality, Anaïse/Frida has described herself as a 'real woman', one whom she had not previously known herself (21). Having her broken front teeth replaced after they were knocked out by a drunk client (itself further indicative of her physical fragmentation) highlights on a physical plane the reconstitution she is to experience on the spiritual plane through her engendering of the *marasa twa*. This pregnancy – though problematic for the protagonist as will be analysed below – and the events leading up to it see Anaïse/Frida negotiate the duality she comprises in a confrontation of the physical and socio-political violence to which she has been subjected to resolve these issues in a manner that, as an individual, enables her to view her concept of self as a woman who is able to function outside the restrictive male-dominated order to which she has been subjected. As such, she not only reconstitutes her sense of self but defines a space in which she rejects that domination.

This notion of a duality is represented in the spiritual framework within which the novel is set, although as will be illustrated the two influences are intertwined to form an harmonious whole. For Anaïse/Frida, fado speaks to her with its 'mots écorchés, aux accents fissurés' by which it expresses 'une mélancholie fêlée' (30).¹² Before continuing to consider the duality inherent in both the context of the novel and its protagonist, it is imperative to consider the musical genre itself and the role it plays in the text.

Entitled *Fado* and bookended by the voice of Amália Rodrigues, Mars' novel interweaves Haitian Vodou and Portuguese fado, thus rendering the plurality of Haitian popular culture more complex by introducing a lusophone musical genre associated so closely with Portugal

¹¹ 'With Bony, I stick my scattered fragments back together again. When we make love, once again I become a body, a head, four limbs and a vagina knit together by pleasure'.

¹² 'flayed words, with ruptured accents' by which it expresses 'a cracked melancholy'.

and Lisbon in particular. In so doing, even before the multiple subjectivities of the protagonist are considered, the author presents a hybrid context for her novel which reflects the presentation of Anaïse/Frida as comprising multiple identities, which then enables her to explore these alongside her sexuality.¹³ Mars therefore provides a space in which the key themes of reconstitution of the self and mobility are expressed, grounding her narrative in a setting that is both transatlantic and inextricable from the sea, and incorporating the timeless nature of fado and Vodou into the form and content of her novel. However, not only does the author render the Haitian context of the novel more complex, she creates a cultural engagement between Haiti and the wider world. The influences are bi-directional, and this conceptually sees Haiti take a step out of the isolation historically enforced on it since the Haitian revolution, as outlined in chapter one.

As a musical genre, fado is the product of a series of cultural exchanges which have come together to form a 'mythology' regarding its origins, that is, a variety of accounts which persist in the popular imaginary (Tavares and Nery in Gray 2007, 121). As Gray (2007, 106) reports, it has been claimed in popular belief that fado is derived from the music of the troubadours or was invented by the Moors, or that it was sung by 'homesick sailors on boats during the Discoveries'. It is said to have come from the streets, the brothels of Lisbon, from Africa, from Brazil. In spite of this, 'almost always, fado is from Lisbon' (106), 'in its contemporary incarnation as a music inextricably [...] linked to Portugal' (Elliott 2010, 25). Various accounts are given preference by scholars too, though 'claims that fado traces its origins to Afro-Brazilian sources imported to Lisbon during the early nineteenth century [...] are lent much credence in contemporary fadology' (23). Tinhorão's analysis, *Fado: Dança*

¹³ The notion of hybridity employed here is that concluded as appropriate in chapter one; in this context it is a heterogeneous cultural framework which draws on the multiple influences apparent in contemporary Haitian culture and rendering it more complex through the interweaving of fado. Resonating on a visceral level with the protagonist, fado serves to write a hybrid musical context coupled with Vodou that replicates the plural religious framework constructed by Montero in her novels.

do Brasil, Cantar de Lisboa, which cites the Afro-Brazilian roots of fado, has been regarded as ‘convincing’ and ‘tightly-argued’, with much subsequent scholarship referencing his work (Holton 2002, 113; Elliott 2010, 23; see also Nery 2004 and Gray 2007). Importantly, therefore, fado is considered to be transatlantic in its origins and to have been influenced by African-derived cultural practice in the Americas. Incorporating this musical genre into the context of her novel, Mars then creates a cultural construct which not only reflects the multiple influences of Haitian popular culture and mindset – Vodou, the French language, the United States –, but looks outside this using a cultural form which links Brazil, Portugal and Africa.¹⁴ The author explicitly draws Haiti, Portugal and Africa together at the outset of the novel, following the opening reference to fado and Amália Rodrigues with the lyrical lines, ‘Mon lit tel le Tage et mon corps tour de Belém, témoins d’un destin funeste qui faisait voile pour le Bénin’ (13).¹⁵ Benin (modern-day Dahomey and considered to be the seat of Vodou) represents Ginen in the narrative, the physical and spiritual place to which Anaïse and Frida return, thereby reinforcing the link within the transatlantic context of fado already forged by the slave trade (Vété-Congolo 2008, 132). Furthermore, the protagonist later states that ‘Chaque caravelle qui passe emporte dans ses voiles funestes un instant de notre histoire. Et le fado nous accompagne, l’ami fidèle qui ne rate aucun de nos départs’ (75).¹⁶ Mars’ incorporation of fado into the Vodou tradition whereby the music accompanies the souls returning to Ginen reiterates the African-derived element of the music itself, highlighting its

¹⁴ The link that Mars draws between Haiti and Brazil is one that is already established in the context of African-derived religious traditions. As noted in chapter two, Brazilian Candomblé is closely related to Santería and stands alongside Haitian Vodou within a framework of Afro-Caribbean religious traditions. Indeed, to give an example at the level of individual practitioners, Manbo Mireille Aïn – French vodou priest based in Cyvadier, Haiti – has been initiated into both Candomblé and Vodou and the *orixá* Ogum mounted her during a Vodou ceremony. Outside the religious context, further links exist between Brazil and Haiti; two more polemical examples of which are that Brazil currently heads the military arm of the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti, MINUSTAH, and the country is reportedly becoming increasingly popular with Haitian economic migrants.

¹⁵ ‘My bed like the Tagus and my body the Tower of Belém, witnesses of a fateful destiny which sets sail for Benin’.

¹⁶ ‘Each ship that passes carries a moment of our history on its fateful voyages. And fado accompanies us, the faithful friend which does not miss any of our departures’.

influence upon tradition that has long been considered to be ‘European’ and enriching the spiritual context of the novel by complementing Vodou in this manner.

The sea is a common theme in fado, both in the imaginary of its origins and the lyrics themselves. Historically accurate or otherwise, in Gray’s (2007, 121-2) words the ‘Portuguese navigators playing the *guitarra* on the high sea’ is one of its ‘originary tropes’, while Holton (2002, 112) points to ‘one body of literature, comprised by fado lyrics, Portuguese poetry and early musicology, [which] muses impressionistically on fado’s maritime birth’ and continues to cite Pinto de Carvalho, writing in 1903, who likened the ‘undulating rhythms’ characteristic of this music to ‘the sonorous movement of the waves [...], sad like the laments of the Atlantic’. This maritime connection then complements this theme which runs through Mars’ novel, while the transatlantic trade to which fado is so intimately related reinforces the perceived African and Afro-Brazilian roots of fado noted above.¹⁷ This intercontinental exchange therefore leads to the discussion of the importance of fado in the negotiation of space in Mars’ text.

In *Fado* the spaces in which the events depicted take place are discrete; they occur either in the bourgeois, uptown area of Port-au-Prince or in the downtown city slum. Moreover, the majority of the novel is set either in Anaïse’s house or at Bony’s brothel and the reader never witnesses Anaïse/Frida in transit between these two specific key locations.¹⁸ Along with Vodou – the importance of which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter –, fado serves as the link between the two residences, being the music played in both and signalling (up until the novel’s concluding chapter) the presence of the persona of Frida.¹⁹ The utilisation of fado

¹⁷ It could therefore be suggested that by dint of the link thus highlighted, *Fado* underlines the importance of contributions made by African-derived cultural practices to ostensibly European cultural forms.

¹⁸ Anaïse/Frida is depicted outside, however, and more so in the ‘bas-ville’.

¹⁹ In the concluding chapter fado transforms to emphasise the link between Anaïse and Frida, and that they are two aspects of the same person’s identity.

to bridge the spaces of the poor and the bourgeois neighbourhoods and locales mirrors the musical genre itself, a transition personified in the lives and careers of two famous fadistas, Maria Severa Honofriana (known as Severa) and ‘fado’s greatest star’ Amália Rodrigues (Holton 2002, 110; Elliott 2010, 15). Beginning with the latter, Elliott (2010, 15-6) notes that she embodies a ‘central mytheme’ of fado, that of ‘the symbolic character of the street vendor’, representing the ‘popular classes’ (in the sense of ‘lumpen proletariat’) as she sold fruit ‘on the streets of Lisbon in the years immediately preceding her discovery and subsequent fame.’ This becomes more significant when coupled with her career, since as a fadista during the fascist *Estado Novo* regime, ‘Amália has been both touted as the populist voice of Lisbon’s working class while simultaneously critiqued as the mouthpiece for fascist cultural policies’ (Holton 2002, 112). Fado was professionalised by force under the government of António Salazar, ‘a move that [...] took fado away from its “true home” and placed it in the more respectable bourgeois environs of the grand Avenida da Liberdade’ (Elliott 2010, 15).²⁰ This move from Mouraria, Elliott notes, ‘was crucial in forming the split between (clandestine) amateur fado performance and its professional counterpart’, resulting then in a ‘romanticization’ of lower Mouraria as it disappeared in the face of urban renovation (15). As such, fado itself also bridged this divide, although its continuation outside of the sanctioned space was necessarily clandestine. As a professional, then, Amália was associated with the regime, but following a period of adjustment after its downfall in 1974, she once again became the voice of fado and over time returned to being perceived as representative of the musical genre itself (Cook 2003, 23; Elliott 2010, 53).²¹

²⁰ Santería went through a similar process in Cuba following the 1959 revolution in which the government sought to foreground the Afro-Cuban aspect of Cuban culture while weakening the tradition’s spirituality (Cros Sandoval 2006, 326). Moreover, the cooptation of popular cultural forms by official culture can be witnessed with regular occurrence, as happened to Haitian *konpa* – especially under the François Duvalier dictatorship – to give another pertinent example (see Averill’s (1997, 71-107) chapter, “‘*Konpa-dirèk* for Life’: François Duvalier’s Dictatorship and *Konpa-dirèk*”).

²¹ Elliott (2010, 53) describes Amália’s biography as one that mirrored fado: ‘resound[ing] with references to poverty, to the Mouraria, to singing on the streets while selling fruit, to being discovered in the fado houses and wooed into the world of professional performance and recording, and, ultimately, to living her life in a fog of *saudade* and permanent unhappiness which no amount of success or fame could shift.’

Severa, for her part, was ‘the legendary fado vocalist, instrumentalist and lyricist whose life span paralleled fado’s first appearance in Lisbon’ (Holton 2002, 110). Describing her as ‘a fadista, prostitute and denizen of the poor riverside neighborhood of Mouraria,’ Holton continues to cite Joaquim Pais de Brito’s analysis:

Severa’s life represented “that fringe of the population with which fado was first associated as it spread throughout the city; prostitution, with all of its social and spatial involvement, spread throughout taverns and brothels among vagrants, pimps and fadistas”. (110)

This link with prostitution is mirrored in *Fado*, since it is at *Bony’s* that Anaïse is first introduced to the music of Amália Rodrigues which then precipitates her embodiment of the persona of Frida. Inhabiting the city slum thus, Anaïse/Frida reprises the similar origins of fado in the Mouraria area of Lisbon, while fado concomitantly enables Anaïse to embody Frida/Ezili Freda. Central to this metamorphosis, Anaïse/Frida tells her ex-husband and current lover, ‘j’ai commencé à vivre dans la peau de Frida le jour où l’on me présenta Bony, à un dîner d’anniversaire’, before continuing to note that there were ‘Les sanglots d’un fado chanté par Amália Rodrigues attachés à nos ombres’ (14; 15).²² Furthermore, in the following chapter, Anaïse states that for two weeks she was the only one to occupy Bony’s bed, ‘Le temps qu’Anaïse devienne Frida’ (17).²³ The fact that music heralds Anaïse’s embodiment of Frida is reminiscent of the manner in which *lwa* are called to mount a vodouisant, through singing and playing the *tanbou*. This process also takes two weeks and takes place while Anaïse is lying down, similar to the initiation ceremony (*kanzo*) which involves a period of between three and twenty-one days’ seclusion during which those being initiated often lie on mats on the floor (Brown 2006, 14). Seeping from her pores, Frida then inhabits the same

²² ‘I started to live as Frida the day I was introduced to Bony, at a birthday dinner’; ‘The sobs of a fado sung by Amália Rodrigues anchored to our shadows’.

²³ ‘The time it took for Anaïse to become Frida’.

body as Anaïse and from this point on, she is repeatedly accompanied by fado music. Vodou and fado are inextricably intertwined therefore, with the music marking Anaïse's embodiment of Frida, which itself then enables the protagonist with to explore her sexuality. Further to this, fado is seen to facilitate the movement of fadistas between spaces defined by class and also to represent crossing that divide, which is reminiscent of Severa for whom fado provided an opportunity to participate in higher social circles, albeit to a limited extent, through her love affair with the Count of Vimioso (Holton 2002, 110).

Moreover, the embodiment of the essence of fado that these two women represent complements the notion of embodiment in Vodou, a central theme in Mars' *Fado*. In much the same way as one is born a vodouisant, 'a fadista is born with *fado na alma* (fado in the soul)', and fado itself has been described as the 'expressão da alma simples do povo' (Gray 2007, 113; Sucena 2002, 29).²⁴ Resident in, and an expression of, the soul, fado is thus embodied, an idea reinforced by Júlio Dantas (in Sucena 2002, 24) who writes that Severa once proclaimed 'A Mouraria, sou eu! O fado, sou eu!'.²⁵ Apocryphal or otherwise, this assertion encapsulates the idea that the fadista's body is inhabited by fado. By means of this embodiment, fado can then engender movement between conceptual spaces since it 'is not necessarily experienced as bound to the specificity of place or historical moment' (109). In this manner, the movement between the enclosed spaces of Anaïse's house and Bony's brothel, themselves marked by the protagonist's body being inhabited by Frida/Ezili Freda and Anaïse/Ezili Dantò, is framed by her visceral experience of fado related to her exploration of her sexuality.

²⁴ 'Expression of the very soul of the people'. The notion of being born a vodouisant is derived from the idea that individuals are ordained to serve the *lwa* before they are born, even if the individual chooses not to propitiate the *lwa*. As noted in chapter two with respect to Santería, illness is often seen as one of the indications that a santero/a is not propitiating their *orisha*, this irrespective of whether the individual has had previous experience of Regla de Ocha. In a similar fashion, the manner in which illness is combatted in the context of Haitian Vodou requires consideration of an individual's 'totality: mind, spirit, body, society, and universe', and as such, the individual's relationship with the *lwa* (M. Beauvoir 2006, 113).

²⁵ 'I am Mouraria! I am fado!'

Drawing together the themes discussed, therefore, the music of fado transcends Anaïse/Frida's body, serves as the musical cue for her embodiment of the essence of the *lwa*, approximates the physical and conceptual spaces and facilitates movement between them, and indicates her exploration of her self ('alma'). Vodou and fado serve as complementary constructs that intertwine to form a complex framework in which the female body is the site for the interactions and negotiations of space, the exploration of sexuality and the resultant reconstitution of the fractured self. Lending its name as the title of the novel, fado permeates Mars' text, framing it with the voice of Amália Rodrigues, that 'throaty voice [which] intones a politics of polyphony and perseverance' (Holton 2002, 116).

The body, multiple subjectivities and configurations of womanhood

In her discussion of 'the woman novelist in Haiti', Latortue (1990, 188-89; 182) outlines the two longstanding female literary archetypes that contemporary women writers in Haiti have sought to escape: "l'ange" (the peasant and proletarian woman, the passive bourgeoisie) or "la bête" (the bourgeoisie, when she is not passive as she is supposed to be). Citing Marie Chauvet and Nadine Magloire as her key examples, she argues that a doubling continues in these novels, but they transgress these two categories instituted by male writers by refusing to conform to the strictures the two discrete archetypes impose (189-93). Latortue notes that this dialogue has been placed within the city scape, a theme highlighted by Vitiello (2004, 185) in her analysis of Yanick Lahens' works in which she highlights the collapsing of the distinctions between the bourgeois 'ville haute' – Pétienville, nestled on the hill above Port-au-Prince – and 'la ville basse' or 'la capitale', that is, Port-au-Prince itself. This desire to deconstruct the dichotomies of the female protagonist and the urban space thus rendering them more complex has been noted in Mars' works, an author who has been described as one who 'écrit pour affirmer la vérité et la beauté de son héritage multiculturel' and has observed

herself that, 'La femme dans les livres, elle n'est pas une héroïne ni une femme abattue qui n'est pas forte. [...] On est tous [...] des êtres complexes. L'être humain est complexe par définition' (Étonnants-Voyageurs 2011; Mars 2010b).²⁶ In writing a complex female protagonist who resists the oppositional categories imposed through texts that reinforce this binary construct both in the female body and in space therefore, these authors complicate the somewhat simplistic representation of women in Haiti which constitutes 'the projection of an ideology created by male bourgeois society' (Latortue 1990, 182).

In her summary of Robert Rogers' *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature*, Lagos-Pope (1985, 731) concludes that the results of this study were not surprising: 'los dos arquetipos prevalecientes son el de la esposa, una mujer rubia, clara y pura, y el de la prostituta, una mujer oscura, tentadora y sensual.'²⁷ Observing that 'esta polarización ha ido perdiendo vigencia' (731), later in her article Lagos-Pope states – in relation to the texts by Marta Brunet and Rosario Ferré which she analyses – that,

el doble se transforma en el principio organizativo básico que articula la experiencia femenina al aludir, específicamente, a la división del mundo de la mujer en compartimentos estancos y al subrayar las restricciones que a ésta le ha impuesto la sociedad patriarcal. (735)²⁸

This 'subordination of the feminine' is the focus of Jean Franco's (1988, 507) oft-cited article, "Beyond Ethnocentrism: Gender, Power and the Third-World Intelligentsia". Emphasising

²⁶ 'writes to declare the truth and beauty of her multicultural heritage'; 'The female protagonist in books isn't just a heroine nor just an oppressed woman who isn't strong. [...] We are all [...] complex people. Human beings are complex by definition.' This is taken from a longer comment made by Mars during the "Les spectres du passé" panel on 24 May 2010 which was one of a series of panels held at the Étonnants-Voyageurs Book Festival in Saint-Malo, 22-24 May 2010.

²⁷ 'the two prevalent archetypes are that of the wife, a blonde, light-skinned and pure woman, and that of the prostitute, a dark, sensual temptress.'

²⁸ 'this polarisation has been becoming less relevant'; 'duality transforms itself into the basic organising principle that articulates female experience by alluding specifically to the division of the world of women into watertight compartments and by underlining the restrictions to which she has been subjected by patriarchal society.'

this association of the masculine with the public and the feminine with the private in the context of Latin American literature, Franco outlines an extant semiotic diagram in which, '[f]rom the colonial period until recent times, the meanings borne by the feminine' are depicted as a quadrangle centred on the phallus ('the bearer of meaning'), with the virgin mother, the virgin, the mother and the whore positioned in the four corners. Importantly, each of the archetypes is defined by the phallus and subordinate to it.

With regard to the double and the oppositional identities of the phallogocentric framework, the interaction of different appropriated subjectivities and subject positions can undermine the authority such a construct imposes. As Audre Lorde has suggested in an interview with Claudia Tate (1983a, 102), 'the differences and similarities between things in apparent opposition' can be used in 'constructive ways, creative ways'; in a similar fashion one person's identity can comprise different 'people'. This discussion will now turn to the notion of subjectivities and subject position in order to outline a framework through which the dual discrete subjectivities embodied by the protagonist of *Fado* can engage with one another as 'others' to then enable the reconstitution of the self.

In reference to this notion of 'el doble femenino', Lagos-Pope (1985, 733) asserts,

Un aspecto que hay que tener en cuenta [...] es el punto de vista psicoanalítico, según el cual este recurso se presta para representar conflictos interiores como si fueran interpersonales, de manera que distintos personajes encarnarían facetas opuestas de una misma personalidad.²⁹

In much the same vein as Lorde above, there are multiple aspects of an individual's character – the different 'mes' – which can often be represented through different characters (733). In

²⁹ 'One aspect that must be borne in mind [...] is the psychoanalytical point of view, according to which this resource lends itself to the representation of internal conflicts as if they were interpersonal, with the result that different characters embody opposing sides of the same personality.'

Fado, however, 'el doble' is explored by means of the two separate personas that inhabit the protagonist's body. This interaction between subjectivities and between subjectivity and subject position is explored by Oliver (2004, xv), who writes in her introduction to *Colonization of the Psychic Space* that, although they are different, subjectivity and subject position 'are always interconnected': '[s]ubject positions are our relations to the finite world of human history and relations—the realm of politics', while '[s]ubjectivity [...] is experienced as the sense of agency and response-ability constituted in the infinite encounter with otherness'. Moreover, she argues that subjectivity is not the definition of oneself in opposition to the other, but rather is attained through the continual interaction of the self with the other in a relational manner (xvii-xviii). As will be demonstrated, the personas of Anaïse and Frida repeatedly interact with each other in order for the self (Anaïse) to be reconstituted through her embodiment of the other (Frida). However, while the self is Anaïse prior to the narrative present of the novel, the interactions between Anaïse and Frida lead to a questioning of which one is self and which one is other, resulting then in a presentation of both as self and both as other. This self and other are themselves the products of a patriarchal construct that has created such a dichotomy – that of the spurned wife versus the whore – and the bourgeois professional in contradistinction to the marginalised resident of the city slum. In bringing these together, Mars both deconstructs the compartmentalisation of women's identity, thus challenging the restrictions placed on the manner in which they are permitted to act, and highlights that rather than a conflation of two personas, the self her protagonist manages to reconstitute is one of a complex, multifaceted woman comprised of multiple, interacting 'mes'. In this manner, Anaïse/Frida embodies the concept of multiple avatars of the *lwa* in Vodou outlined in chapter one, whereby a *lwa* often comprises numerous 'personae', each of which has specific characteristics and which interact with and complement each other (Desmangles 1992, 95). In *Fado*, the importance of Vodou to the narrative is clearest when considering these coexisting personas, each of whom is associated with two of the avatars of

Ezili. Dayan (1995, 59) writes that this *lwa* is '[r]ecognized as the most powerful and arbitrary of gods in vodou', as well as 'the most contradictory: a spirit of love who forbids love, a woman who is the most beloved yet feels herself the most betrayed', she 'can be generous and loving, or implacable and cruel.' The two personae of this complex *lwa* represented in *Fado* most directly are Ezili Dantò and Ezili Freda.

Beginning with the former, Ezili Dantò is associated with the Mater Salvatoris or Virgin of Czestochowa, a black virgin depicted carrying a child. In Vodou, this child is identified as Anaïs or Anaïse, the daughter of Ezili Dantò (Brown 2010 [1991], 246; Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 2011, 131; Houlberg 2005, 20). The persona of Anaïse in *Fado* is therefore associated with Ezili Dantò – *lwa* of motherhood and a warrior – via her daughter and, as such, her character is informed by this *lwa* (especially in her relationship with and conceptualisation of motherhood).³⁰ In addition to Anaïse/Frida's maternal actions (to which this discussion will return later), Anaïse's status as a spurned wife reflects in part the kind of relationships Ezili Dantò is said to have maintained with her lovers. Though never marrying and fiercely independent in this regard, Ezili Dantò also maintains a relationship with Ogou, 'a warrior spirit pictured as a hero, a breathtakingly handsome and dedicated soldier' (Brown 2010 [1991], 235). However, Ogou is also untrustworthy and although 'Ezili Dantò will take this man into her bed, [...] she knows she cannot depend on him' (235). In a similar fashion, Léo has a comfortable job in a bank, Anaïse works as a graphic designer, they live in the 'haute ville' and Anaïse does not foresee the end of their marriage. However, when Babeth, Léo's mistress, conceives, he leaves Anaïse and they divorce, at which point Anaïse perceives that she has lost her aforementioned illusion of power in addition to her husband. In much the

³⁰ It is also important to note that in writing a character called Anaïse who moves beyond the boundaries of the male-conceived dichotomy of women associated with Ezili Dantò and motherhood as related to the 'dark-skinned peasant or proletarian woman' (Latortue 1990, 183; White 2000, 70), Mars both places her novel within the canon of Haitian literature in its reference to Annaïse in Jacques Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée* and rewrites this representation to illustrate that Roumain's depiction of womanhood within this dichotomy is not satisfactory and must be interrogated (as both Latortue (1990) and Mars (2010b) have stated).

same way as Brown (2010 [1991], 235) draws a parallel in *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* between Ezili Dantò and ‘many of the specifics of Alourdes’s own life and the lives of other women in her family’, in which she focuses on ‘problems with lovers’, Anaïse also reveals her own previous problematic relationships with men.³¹ Halfway through the novel Anaïse recounts the story of her two abortions, the result of repeated rape at the age of fifteen by a headmaster whom both she and her father had trusted, which then is presented as the source of her physical and conceptual fragmentation that developed and manifested itself from this point onwards as illustrated above (49). It might seem, therefore, that the protagonist’s desire not to have children is incongruous with her representation of Ezili Dantò. However, Ezili Dantò always has the interests of children at heart even if it involves her own suffering and, having been shattered by these experiences, Anaïse needs to reconstitute her fractured self in order to assert her independence from the patriarchal construct that has caused her pain and rejection.³² As will be demonstrated below, the fact she ultimately conceives marks the conception of this reconstituted self through her actions as Ezili Freda, despite the fact that it would also symbolically reinscribe her into the oppressive context from which she sought, and ultimately seeks, freedom.

³¹ Mama Lola is the nickname by which Alourdes is often known, the full name of whom was revealed in the second edition of *Mama Lola* (Michel 2010, xvi).

³² There are various accounts of how Ezili Dantò sustained the scars on her cheek, for which she is recognised, as noted in chapter one. In her *La Légende des Loa Vodou Haïtien*, Déita (1993, 272-74) recounts that she sustained them in a struggle with Ezili Mapiang, who wanted to take Ezili Dantò’s child, Anaïse, from her. Déita (272) writes that Ezili Dantò describes her child thus, ‘celui qui me complète et que je complète. Ensemble nous donnons la lumière et la vie. Séparés nous sommes capables de provoquer la mort’ [*the one that completes me and whom I complete. Together we give light and life. Separated we are capable of engendering death*]. Ezili Mapiang is jealous of this, and in the ensuing fight she wounds Ezili Dantò with a knife. Brown (2010 [1991], 229) tells a different story, that ‘Ezili Dantò fought fiercely beside her “children” in the Haitian slave revolution. [...] She was wounded, Haitians say, and they point to the scars on Our Lady of Czestochowa’s right cheek as evidence.’ Importantly, therefore, in both accounts the scars Ezili Dantò carries on her cheek were sustained in defence of her child or children. For their part, Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert (2011, 131) suggest that they are ‘said to be a reminder of the bitter rivalry between the two Ezilis’, that is, Ezili Dantò and Ezili Freda, an alternative explanation also found in Brown’s (2010 [1991], 256) work who writes, ‘Sometimes it is said that, because Dantò was sleeping with her man, Maria Dolorosa (Ezili Freda) took the jeweled sword from her heart and slashed the face of her rival.’ Ezili Mapiang (or Mapyang) is mentioned by Alfred Métraux (1972, 116) in his *Voodoo in Haiti* and is described by Dayan (1995, 116) as one of the ‘aspects of Ezili’ who is ‘[u]gly, destitute, and abandoned [...], mythologized as evil’. For further discussion of Ezili Mapiang see Déita’s (1993) *La Légende des Loa Vodou Haïtien*, pp.323-26.

Brown (2010 [1991], 228-29) has described Ezili Dantò as ‘an independent, childbearing woman with an unconventional sexuality that, on several counts, flouts the authority of the patriarchal family.’ However, whilst Ezili Dantò is important in the way that Anaïse/Frida manages to challenge the patriarchal construct in which she is depicted, it is her expression of her sexuality through her embodiment of Ezili Freda rather than through her association with Ezili Dantò that the reader witnesses the protagonist’s undermining of the restrictions placed on her by the situation in which she has lived thus far and potentially by the milieu into which she then moves, that of a prostitute at *Bony*’s.

Though Dayan (1995, 63) notes that it is Gran Ezili who is ‘conceived as a stooped matron of prostitutes’, it is Ezili Freda whom Anaïse embodies when she becomes Frida. In addition to the similarity in name highlighted by Vitiello (2011, 369), Ezili Freda’s sensuality and propensity for having many sexual partners is reflected in the manner in which Anaïse’s behaviour changes when she becomes Frida. Remembering her years of marriage, Anaïse states, ‘Je remplissais mes devoirs par routine’, believing that Léo was remaining faithful to her and was suddenly awakened from her ‘torpeur et [...] candeur conjugales’ by the announcement he would be leaving her to live with – and ultimately marry – Babeth (*Fado*, 20).³³ In the narrative present, however, Anaïse/Frida uses her sexuality in her attempt to gain the sense of power that she thought she possessed. This illusion of power that was predicated on her ‘fulfilling her [marital] duties out of routine’ exemplifies Anaïse’s status as a woman whose sexuality has been suppressed within a context that has expected her to act as the archetypal wife, maintaining conjugal relations with her husband and providing children.³⁴ Lorde (1984, 53) writes in her seminal essay “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” that,

³³ ‘I fulfilled my duties out of routine’; ‘marital torpor and [...] the straightforwardness of conjugal life’.

³⁴ Oliver (2004, 135) discusses Kristeva’s analysis of the perception of women as a maternal body being ‘something natural rather than cultural’ in her book *Colonization of the Psychic Space*. This notion is returned to below.

There are many kinds of power, used and unused, acknowledged or otherwise. The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane [...]. In order to perpetuate itself, every oppression must corrupt or distort those various sources of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change. For women, this has meant a suppression of the erotic as a considered source of power and information within our lives.

As a source of power, therefore, the erotic and female sexuality have been negated by their presentation as ‘a sign of female inferiority’ and by women being ‘made to suffer and to feel contemptible and suspect by virtue of its existence’, resulting in the erroneous belief ‘fashioned within the context of male models of power’ that ‘only by the suppression of the erotic [...] can women be truly strong’ (53). Indeed, as Chancy (1997, 127) has stressed, despite the participation of women in Haitian society as this and Montero’s novels evidence, ‘[s]exuality takes on a striking importance [...] for it is the ultimate site of women’s subjugation and is, by extension, the site of possible empowerment.’ In her analysis of the Martinican author Nicole Cage-Florentiny’s short story *Amours marines ou Erótico mar*, Vété-Congolo (2008, 128) references Eissler and Lichtenstein, writing that they ‘contend that sexuality plays a critical role in identity’, an observation apparent in Mars’ novel as it is through Anaïse/Frida’s exploration of her sexuality that she manages to reclaim her subjectivity and thus the power to define her own identity. This notion – key in *Fado* – has been explored by Mars in her previous novel *Kasalé*, in which Sophonie, its protagonist, chooses to become a partner of the *lwa* Agwe manifested through Athanaël. Thereby ‘embrac[ing] her femininity and sensuality’, she ‘discover[s] all the dimensions of an undivided womanhood’ to subsequently give birth to a daughter conceived on a mythical plane between Lasirenn and Athagwe, thus enabling the vodou heritage of the *lakou* to continue from the current matriarch Gran’n to the new generation (Vété-Congolo 2010b,

309).³⁵ Anaïse/Frida's grasping of her sexuality and sexual identity contrasts with Sophonie's, however, who is presented as somewhat passive in her relationship with Athanaël (Athagwe) in comparison to Frida in hers (308-309).

Importantly, the spurned wife versus whore dichotomy is represented as two subjectivities who share the same corporeal space, characteristic of – in Strongman's (2008, 14) terms – the 'transcorporeal conceptualization of self' in African-derived religions. Anaïse and Frida inhabit the same body as two distinct personas who inform each other both as self and other. While the body does then serve as the site of interaction between the physical and the spiritual in the same manner as it does in the other novels discussed in the previous chapters, in *Fado* the focus is placed both on the multiple subjectivities that inhabit it and the different spaces that it traverses, in addition to it constituting a nodal point between the public and private spheres. In the first chapter of the novel, Anaïse describes Frida as an ever-present entity who has long dwelt within her body, underlining that, 'Je lui donne voix. Je lui érige quatre murs où exister, je la légitime' (15).³⁶ Thus presented as a duality, the female body is not only a means through which to engage with other individuals and spaces, it also functions as a space in which Anaïse and Frida can interact. A divided yet single whole, though fractured and dismembered, her body then constitutes both the site and the means for transcending the dichotomies in status and space, and it is to this that this analysis now turns.

Space and sexual identities

As outlined above, by traversing a series of fragmented spaces Anaïse/Frida's body enables the intersection of the socio-political, spiritual and psychological, thus permitting the

³⁵ Lasirenn is the consort of Agwe (also called Athagwe as in *Kasalé* (31)) and is considered to be closely related to the avatars of Ezili. Depicted as a siren or mermaid, she 'is believed to bring good luck and wealth from the bottom of the sea. As a result, she is sometimes known as Ezili of the Waters' (Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 2011, 126-27).

³⁶ 'I give her a voice. I provide her with four walls in which to exist, I lend her legitimacy'.

interrogation of each. Beginning with the socio-political, this discussion has already emphasised the spurned wife versus whore dichotomy and its reflection and exploration through the interaction of Ezili Dantò and Ezili Freda. On one level, these two *lwa* represent the conflict and impossibility of co-existence that has been created between the traditional literary representations of the Madonna and whore; Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert (2011, 131) and Brown (2010 [1991], 229), among others, have underlined the fierce rivalry that exists between the two. However, the two are also complementary, an idea reflected in the description of Frida and Anaïse as *marasa* articulated by the latter at the novel's close when the latter refers Frida as, 'Ma sœur jumelle, mon autre moi-même' (109).³⁷ The notion of coexistence is mentioned explicitly at several points throughout the novel; at the outset Anaïse ponders the question she believes Léo really wants to ask, 'Qui es-tu devenue, Anaïse?', whilst elsewhere Frida is a presence that has manifested itself from within Anaïse's being (14).³⁸ Interestingly, however, in chapter seventeen – the halfway point of the novel – the two temporarily collapse into one without distinction as the narrative recounted by Anaïse moves seamlessly from the 'I' as Anaïse at home to the 'I' as Frida at *Bony's* (58-61). It should be noted at this point (to be expanded upon in greater detail below) that following on from this juncture at which Anaïse/Frida is already exploring her sexuality and both gaining agency and reconstituting her sense of self therein, Anaïse begins to reassert herself in order for Anaïse and Frida to then engender the third entity that is the *marasa twa* together. This then forestalls the alternative outcome which would see Frida continuing as the dominant subjectivity and their conceiving a child in chapter eighteen see them move from traversing the categories of spurned wife and whore to being reinscribed into the framework and

³⁷ 'My twin sister, my other self.' The concept of twins is frequently explored in Haitian and Haitian diasporic literature (Mars' *Lobo*, Deyita's *Esperans Dezire*, Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Lilas Desquiron's *Les chemins de Loco-Miroir*, to name but a few). However, the notion of *marasa* as tripartite within Haitian Vodou and resultant further interpretations of Anaïse's description is key to this analysis and will be discussed below.

³⁸ 'Who have you become, Anaïse?'

confined to the category of mother, instead allowing the protagonist to take her reconstitution a step further.

Returning to the dichotomy of the spurned wife and whore, then, Anaïse's status as the former and the restrictions placed on her as such are reiterated throughout the novel. Having lost her illusion of power, the persona of Anaïse retreats from all but necessary interaction with society beyond the four walls of her house. She works from home and avoids the streets of Port-au-Prince 'qui tuent sans discrimination[, c]es rues peuplées d'êtres à mi-chemin entre l'humain et la bête' (22).³⁹ As Anaïse, therefore, she is no longer able to interact with this society from which she feels completely alienated, so much so that she ceases to recognise herself and others as belonging to the same human race. She sees the men as 'hommes-caméléons', chameleons that change their temporal outward identities to suit their surroundings, and the women as 'femmes-couleuvres', non-venomous but malicious snakes who are perfidious by nature. This is a further example of the duality of the body and therefore no different in this specific respect to Anaïse/Frida, yet rather than being restitutive as has been argued with regard to Anaïse/Frida, it is important that in associating them with chameleons or snakes, wider society is seen as both deleterious and other.⁴⁰ In so doing, Anaïse then views herself as other to society, mirroring the manner in which she was treated when raped as an adolescent, objectified and dehumanised to the extent she thought her father would not believe her and therefore would reject her (49). Subject to the restrictions she perceives wider society imposes upon her, the persona of Anaïse withdraws from this context.

While Anaïse then becomes Frida, those with whom she does interact who are not lovers continue to view her as Anaïse the divorcée. One of these, Anaïse's female neighbour, spies

³⁹ 'which kill indiscriminately[, t]hese streets crowded with beings halfway between humans and animals.'

⁴⁰ This association is reinforced by the character of l'Empoisonneur (the Poisoner) – another 'homme-caméléon' –, who is intimately associated with death and embodies various spirits.

on her from the window, unable to comprehend, ‘Quels liens pervers peuvent-ils retenir un homme divorcé à son ex-femme ? Quelles choses inavouables se passe-t-il entre deux époux séparés ?’ (68).⁴¹ In much the same fashion as above, the neighbour – and therefore Anaïse – is presented as other; she is a rat spying from the window with ‘ses petits yeux brillants, la queue enroulée autour des barres métalliques’ (68).⁴² Necessarily also bourgeois as she lives next door to Anaïse and owns a car, the neighbour represents the disapprobation of wider bourgeois society regarding Anaïse’s actions. Moreover, Anaïse’s presentation as other is made explicit here, since, like María Antonia in chapter three, she becomes ‘celle que les femmes mariées redoutent parce qu’elle devient une prédatrice assoiffée du sexe de leurs époux’ and ‘pour les hommes une proie facile qu’ils convoitent parce que sans homme, donc forcément désemparée’ (69).⁴³ As such, she is subjected to the patriarchal construct which rejects and marginalises her ‘pour délit de défaut d’homme’, yet within which she becomes the object of male desire because of this very characteristic (69).⁴⁴ Harry, Léo’s friend, attempts to court Anaïse, attracted by the ‘vibration’ given off by ‘le corps d’une femme satisfaite’ (34),⁴⁵ later trying to force Anaïse to kiss him until she sinks her letter opener into his face (94). Throughout, therefore, the reader is presented with a context in which s/he witnesses bourgeois society’s imposition on the manner in which women within this environment are supposed to act and repudiation of those that do not conform, while legitimating the actions of men like Harry towards Anaïse as permissible. While in a different socio-political context to María Antonia in this bourgeois setting, the conflict that exists between María Antonia and the women within her community is replicated both here and between Frida and Natacha – a newcomer – in the context of Bony’s brothel. In contrast,

⁴¹ ‘What perverse links can there be to hold a divorced man to his ex-wife? What unspeakable things happen between a separated husband and wife?’

⁴² ‘her small gleaming eyes, her tail coiled around the metal bars.’

⁴³ ‘the woman that married women dread because she becomes a predator who thirsts for sex with their husbands’; ‘for men an easy prey whom they covet because she is single, therefore necessarily at a loose end’.

⁴⁴ ‘for the crime of lacking a man’.

⁴⁵ ‘the body of a satisfied woman’.

however, there exists a sense of camaraderie between the prostitutes already working at *Bony's*, including Frida, prior to the newcomer's arrival.

In the face of this rejection by the bourgeoisie and the long-standing effects of Anaïse's rape as an adolescent, the persona of Frida comes to the fore, thus enabling the protagonist to undermine this patriarchal authority by exploring her sexuality whilst continuing to function in the spaces of the bourgeois neighbourhood and the 'bas-ville'. Following this account, Anaïse expresses her desire to 'désapprendre la peur' and invokes Frida, asking, 'Est-ce que Frida a peur de vivre dans le bas-ville ?' (50).⁴⁶ In Frida we see a woman who is the opposite to Anaïse, one who does not 'fulfil her marital duties' but rather appropriates a sexual being for herself. Casting off her 'oripeaux d'épouse' which have confined her in this subordinate position, Anaïse/Frida asserts that, 'Tu vas découvrir la femme en moi, Léo, la vraie. Celle que je ne connaissais pas moi-même' (21).⁴⁷ Her essence as a woman is therefore directly linked to her sexual relationship with Léo, in which she takes the leading role. The divorce was necessary for Léo to become her lover, and in this role '[i]l me mange dans les mains aujourd'hui. Me donne tout ce que je lui demande' (21).⁴⁸ Not able to recognise the woman to whom he was married, he is 'plus que jamais attaché à mon lit' (21).⁴⁹ For Léo, his relationships with the two women in his life are very similar to before, he has both a wife and a mistress but they now fulfil opposite roles. In this way, therefore, nothing of the patriarchal construct has changed, Babeth and Anaïse/Frida still occupy the defined positions of wife/mother and mistress/whore. However, as the lover, Anaïse/Frida has not only appropriated 'the true woman' resident inside her but in this position she exercises the power that she perceived as lost. Continually returning to the house that was once his, yet that is

⁴⁶ 'unlearn her fear'; 'Is Frida afraid of living in the lower town?'

⁴⁷ 'wifely rags'; 'You are going to discover the woman in me, Léo, the true woman. The one whom I didn't know myself'.

⁴⁸ 'he eats out of my hands now. Gives me everything I ask for'.

⁴⁹ 'attached to my bed more than ever'.

sufficiently unfamiliar both due to the changes in furnishings and in Anaïse so as to resemble a first visit (27), Léo then becomes subservient to Anaïse/Frida to a certain extent due to the power she now wields. ‘Tu ne savais pas que ton corps pouvait tant brûler,’ she asks herself of Léo, ‘[t]u ne sais pas pourquoi tu en veux toujours, toujours plus de ce plaisir dont tu émerges à chaque fois confus’ (23).⁵⁰ For the protagonist, however, this unidentified quality by which Léo is so enthralled is the result of ‘le fado et Bony et *Bony*’s de la rue des Fronts-Forts’ (22).⁵¹ In short, it is Frida.

In this way, therefore, Frida’s status as a prostitute can be read both as a result of a further imposition of patriarchy through Bony and as an undermining of it. As part of the two-week ‘initiation’ period referenced above in which Anaïse/Frida must be moulded into the woman Bony and the clients desire, it was necessary for her to ‘reperdre ma virginité, ou plutôt la retrouver’ (17).⁵² Returning to a position before she was raped therefore, Anaïse must symbolically unlearn her experiences as this persona and then relearn how to function as the woman Bony and the clients want her to be. Later in the novel, Frida notes that Bony ‘tyrannise les filles, [...] il doit les contrôler’ (33), that in the interests of business and to ward off troublesome expressions of camaraderie between the ‘girls’ he must impose his will upon them (67).⁵³ Within this, Frida once again has ‘l’illusion de pouvoir’ that Anaïse had, she states that ‘Bony [...] m’appartient car je commande à son désir’ and tries to convince Anaïse ‘que son homme ne trahira jamais sa confiance’ (40; 78).⁵⁴ This is not the case, however, as becomes apparent when Bony takes in Natacha, a new, young prostitute whom Frida considers her rival. Furthermore, although Anaïse and Frida recognise each other as

⁵⁰ ‘You didn’t know your body could burn so much’; ‘[y]ou don’t know why you want more of it, always more of this pleasure from which you emerge each time in a daze’.

⁵¹ ‘fado and Bony and *Bony*’s on Fronts-Forts Street’.

⁵² ‘lose my virginity again, or rather to recover it’.

⁵³ ‘tyrannises the girls, [...] he has to control them’.

⁵⁴ ‘Bony [...] belongs to me as I have command over his desire’; ‘that her man will never betray her trust’.

subjectivities residing together in the protagonist's body, Anaïse does not feel able to mention Frida to those with whom she does interact such as her friend Maryse, her long-term gynaecologist Gladys, or even Léo for that matter; such dialogues between the two remain internal. In this regard, therefore, Frida is presented as a sexually liberated individual when considered in comparison to Anaïse (who herself was confined to marriage and subsequently the image of the childless divorcée), but one who outwardly functions solely within the restrictive phallogocentric framework outlined above.

In contradistinction to this, however, the fact that Anaïse/Frida manages to gain a position of agency both at *Bony's* and with Léo points to the subversion of this very construct. At *Bony's*, Frida procurs a position in which she manages to move beyond that of merely one of his working girls to be recognised as his mistress. In spite of the manner in which Bony manages his establishment whereby he maintains sexual relationships with all the prostitutes working there, Frida obtains a preferential status undoubtedly aided by her love of fado. While the others dislike this music and play merengue and *konpa* when Bony is not there, fado becomes part of Frida's being, integral to her sense of self just as Ezili Freda is. For Bony, fado encapsulates the soul of his business and his life overall, inextricable from the establishment which he inherited from his mother. He continues to play Amália Rodrigues, evocative of that period for him, and the singer becomes internalised in Anaïse/Frida. She describes fado as providing her with 'une grande liberté d'être', but 'non sans angoisse par moments', and it comes to represent her ability to exercise a level of agency she was unable to exert previously (27).⁵⁵ As such, with Bony she is able to enjoy this privileged position whereby she works but occupies his bed more than the others. With Léo, as has been demonstrated, Anaïse manages to capture his interest more than she did as his wife by her embodiment of Ezili Freda and fado. Moreover, she moulds him into the lover she desires,

⁵⁵ 'a great freedom of being', but 'not without its anxieties at times'.

one that desires her as the true woman expressing herself from within rather than the position as a wife and potential mother. Although it is partly out of necessity that Anaïse/Frida learns ‘à l’aimer en plein jour’ since he can only visit her during his lunch break, she reconfigures this as a further example of the expression of her sexuality as central to her being, leaving ‘à Babeth la nuit, l’obscurité, la pudeur des draps’ (28).⁵⁶

An important example throughout the novel of Anaïse/Frida’s subversion of the restrictive archetype of the whore is her refusal under any circumstances to kiss Léo, Bony or any of her clients, or indeed to allow them to kiss her, ‘même quand on la supplie, même pour un supplément de tarif’ (18).⁵⁷ Her lips are described as ‘les lèvres rebelles’, rebellious lips, and her decision represents a seemingly minor but significant stance on her part which allows the protagonist to exercise authority within a context in which she is outwardly defined by male desire. Her insistence leads to her body becoming fractured even further when, as mentioned above, a drunkard knocks her front teeth out after she bit off the tip of his tongue which he was trying to force into her mouth (18).⁵⁸ Her subsequent reluctance to smile serves as a reminder of the violence meted out against her, but she does not abandon her resolve in the face of this adversity. As such, while Anaïse/Frida is marked physically as a reprisal for her refusal to completely negate her agency when becoming a prostitute, her assertion of this fact in her own way serves to reiterate her challenge to this perceived authority throughout the novel.

⁵⁶ ‘to love him in broad daylight’; ‘to Babeth the night, the darkness, the modesty of the sheets’.

⁵⁷ ‘not even when they plead with her, not even for a supplementary fee’. The only individual who kisses Anaïse/Frida is l’Empoisonneur when he embodies an ardent poet, whom Frida seeks in order to obtain the poison to kill Bony and Léo and for Anaïse/Frida to then take as well. This reinforces the association between sex and death illustrated by both the nature of María Antonia’s murder and the Gede spirits in Vodou, thereby aligning Anaïse/Frida’s own death with the exploration of her sexuality. This and other examples linking the two are discussed in the fourth section of this chapter.

⁵⁸ Bony pays for her teeth to be replaced in the eighteenth chapter of the novel, an example of the manner in which her body and therefore her self is reconstituted, a theme to be discussed below.

A further manner in which the phallogocentric framework is undermined is through the rejection of the notion that the category of whore is an homogeneous identity. The four archetypal identities afforded women in literature as outlined above are reductive in nature, assigning women to four possible roles whose sole interaction could be through the male figure. However, the idea of multiple femininity illustrated in *Fado* is not restricted to the dual subjectivities representative of Ezili Dantò and Ezili Freda who come together in the body of the protagonist; the women in the novel are portrayed both as individuals and a collective whole who together exert a level of authority over the men presented as their ‘maîtres’. Frida observes that the prostitutes working at *Bony’s* constitute ‘une seule femme à plusieurs corps, à plusieurs mystères’, the multiple aspects of femininity that can inhabit numerous bodies or equally – as the protagonist herself illustrates – a single body (25).⁵⁹ The concept of womanhood in this context – itself linked to the *lwa* through Mars’ use of the word ‘mystères’ – is necessarily complex therefore, unable to be represented as a single category of prostitute.⁶⁰ Furthermore, this femininity is linked across the categories via each woman’s sexuality, as illustrated by the connection Frida shares with an unnamed scorned wife who kills her husband at the brothel: ‘étrangement, je me suis connectée par la pensée à cette femme, j’ai senti le long de mon bras, sur le parcours de mon échine, dans chaque pore de ma peau la vibration du coup fatal qu’elle a porté. Un orgasme. Le premier spasme de l’orgasme’ (39-40).⁶¹ Anaïse/Frida notes that, ‘C’est la femme en elle qui a tué’, that it was as a woman she had avenged her husband’s rejection and therefore his relegation of her to the status Anaïse held at the novel’s opening (40).⁶² Yet, importantly, Anaïse/Frida experiences this connection as sexual *jouissance*, ‘une libération absolue’ which can be felt due to her

⁵⁹ ‘a single woman comprising several bodies, several mysteries’.

⁶⁰ *Mystères* is another term used to refer to the *lwa*, with the main room or building housing the altar to the spirits in a *peristil* called the *kay mistè*. Symbolically, therefore, Mars creates a further link between *Bony’s* and the Vodou pantheon via the sexuality of the former’s residents.

⁶¹ ‘strangely, I was connected by thought to this woman, I felt the vibration of the fatal blow she had given along the length of my arm, over the course of my spine, in every pore of my skin. An orgasm. The first spasm of an orgasm.’

⁶² ‘It’s the woman in her who killed him’.

being a woman.⁶³ In this fashion, therefore, Mars suggests that what Anaïse/Frida seeks in straddling the divide between spurned wife and whore, linking the two via the female body rather than through the phallus as has been hitherto necessary, is not only the freedom from this restrictive construct on an individual level but also as a collective, multifaceted female identity. Furthermore, in keeping with Lagos-Pope above, Mars simultaneously points to the multiple aspects of an individual's personality – Lorde's different 'mes' – that constitute the complexity that is the female protagonist she portrays.

In bridging the divide between these two archetypes, Anaïse/Frida also constitutes the crossover between the uptown, bourgeois neighbourhood and the downtown city slum. In addition to the context of Vodou interwoven with fado serving as one of the links that crosses the divide between these two physical and conceptual spaces, so does Anaïse/Frida's body by means of her sexuality. As White (2000, 75) underlines, the erstwhile dichotomy of Ezili Freda being associated with the bourgeois woman and Ezili Dantò with the proletariat is no longer valid, with such 'strict association of each lwa with a particular class [...] too simple'; the manner in which Haitians identify with these two *lwa* is far more complex and individual since they have been, and continue to be, defined through a series of interactions between the numerous subjectivities that comprise the two groups.⁶⁴ However, by drawing together Vodou and fado as Mars does and using Ezili Freda's sexuality associated with Frida becoming a prostitute, the novel undermines the division between the two spaces and the restrictive notions of permissible behaviour held by the urban elite as it brings the actions pertaining to the city slum into this space as a reconstitutive force. For Anaïse/Frida, she embodies fado as she embodies Ezili Freda, and both make the move from *Bony's* to her

⁶³ 'complete liberation'.

⁶⁴ This is a process that continues and exemplifies the fluid nature of the religious tradition, in which the *lwa* influence the perceptions of adherents and vice versa. This has been witnessed in multiple ways, from the conversations surrounding gender roles and participation of women to those more recently interrogating the involvement of gay men in particular in Vodou, to name two pertinent examples.

house in the 'ville haute'; it is both Frida and fado that Léo finds 'dans la peau d'Anaïse' and that is the source of the sexual power she exerts over him (26).⁶⁵

This concept of a multifaceted identity within a single body that manages to transcend these discrete spaces of bourgeois neighbourhood and city slum is explored in further detail through the character of l'Empoisonneur. Described as 'l'homme-caméléon' (99), therefore symbolically related to the world outside of the defined spaces of Anaïse's home and *Bony's*, l'Empoisonneur's body is inhabited by a different spirit each time Frida visits: a seductress (l'Empoisonneur-femme), a senator (l'Empoisonneur-sénateur), an ardent poet (l'Empoisonneur-poète) and finally as himself (l'homme-caméléon). Firstly, this individual exemplifies the notion discussed in reference to Montero's novels and María Antonia of the body as a conduit for the interaction of the physical and spiritual planes, however, more interestingly here this single character conflates the socio-political divisions by being able to represent these three personas in addition to his own by means of a single physical body.⁶⁶ Upon arriving at l'Empoisonneur's house, Frida describes 'ses muscles proéminents et la bosse indécente de son sexe nu sous le tissu fin', continuing to note his 'corps d'homme viril' before naming him 'l'Empoisonneur-femme' and focusing on his feminine accoutrements (82).⁶⁷ As 'une femme en chaleur, espérant la rosée d'un homme', he is related to prostitution and therefore embodies the socio-political group represented by Frida, while equally exemplifying the fluid concept of gender and sexual identity in Vodou practice (83).⁶⁸ On subsequent occasions, l'Empoisonneur is a senator and a poet, as such belonging to both the political and artistic elite. This homme-caméléon therefore draws together these spaces and

⁶⁵ 'in Anaïse's skin'.

⁶⁶ This also ties in with Similá in *Del rojo*, who comprises the roles of *bòkò*, the *lwa* Belié Belcán and Toro-Trois-Graines, and the Macoutes by dint of his association with them and the Duvalier regimes. Through these various elements of his character, Similá is at times a lover, at others an enemy, and at still others a colleague alongside whom Zulé carries out spiritual work.

⁶⁷ 'his prominent muscles and the indecent imprint of his naked penis under the thin fabric'; 'virile manly body'.

⁶⁸ 'a lustful woman, awaiting the dewdrops of a man'.

functions in each, complementing the role Anaïse/Frida plays in traversing the divide between the bourgeois professional and the prostitute and conflating the uptown neighbourhood and city slum.

Secondly, l'Empoisonneur additionally transcends these two spaces by the effects of the poison he gives Frida, resulting in the deaths of Bony and Léo and the suicide of Anaïse/Frida, thus simultaneously undermining the framework which the elite represents. Poisoning, as Pierre Pluchon (1987) notes, was a common crime of which black slaves were charged, with the best known *empoisonneur* in the eighteenth-century being Makandal (who, Moreau de Saint-Méry observed, through his popularity lent his name to poisons and poisoners in general (Pluchon 1987, 178)). Later considered – in Haitian popular culture, at least – to be an important figure in the burgeoning struggle for independence, Makandal was popularly described not to have perished at the stake, but to have metamorphosed into a mosquito, later becoming a vodou spirit.⁶⁹ Linked to the overthrow of colonialism and the rejection of domination by white slave masters, l'Empoisonneur therefore further exemplifies the deconstruction of the male-female/dominator-dominated binary upon which the colonial powers considered Saint-Domingue to be based. In this context, the poison provides Anaïse/Frida with the ability to choose between 'la vie et la mort, la délivrance et la damnation' for Bony, Léo and herself.⁷⁰ In this manner, he complements Anaïse/Frida's subversion of the patriarchal construct by supplying the poison, while the poison itself becomes the means through which these two spaces are conflated in death. Lastly, this poison is the sole physical object in the novel that moves between the two discrete spaces of *Bony's* and Anaïse's house. Appearing in Anaïse's bathroom cabinet in the last chapter and being

⁶⁹ As noted in chapter one, Carpentier has explored the image of Makandal and his believed ability to metamorphose in *El reino de este mundo*. The coexistence of and interaction between the physical and spiritual planes in Haitian culture forms a part of the context of *lo real maravilloso* in his novel, of which Makandal and Boukman's status as *lwa* and the former's metamorphosis are an important element.

⁷⁰ 'life and death, deliverance and damnation'.

used in the same manner by her and Frida, it symbolises the identical final decision that they both make which sees the two spaces intersect most completely.

Motherhood, sexuality and reconstitution of the self

Thus far, this analysis has focused on the manner in which the various dualities within the novel are traversed by means of the musical and religious context, the body and sexuality, at points forming pluralities within each of these frameworks. It will now turn to the notion outlined at the outset regarding the reconstitution of the self, drawing heavily on the discussion above regarding the manner in which Anaïse/Frida's liberatory sexuality within the framework of Vodou and fado permits her to undermine the restrictive constructs that exist in these spaces.

In addition to linking discrete spaces, the female body provides the 'four walls' in which the distinct subjectivities of Frida and Anaïse can coexist, informing and interacting with each other, yet simultaneously is an agent in the novel by means of the sexuality it expresses. While the body serves as this defined active space, it is itself enclosed for much of the novel between the four walls of Anaïse's house or Bony's brothel.⁷¹ In much the same way as for the authors referenced by Tate (1983b, xx) in her introduction to *Black Women Writers at Work*, these 'geographical boundaries merely represent the physical limits of her quest' and Anaïse/Frida's 'destination [...] is not a place but a state of mind.' Tate continues to note that 'the black heroine's awareness of herself, first as a human being and second as a woman, is firmly secured in her psychological makeup', an observation which is key to the reconstitution of the self in *Fado* (xxiv). The fact that the body is distanced from society in such a manner highlights that 'her journey is an internal one' which focuses on her awareness

⁷¹ The epigraph to the novel from Amália Rodrigues' fado "Nem ás paredes confesso" states, 'De quem eu gosto / Nem ás paredes confesso' [*The one I love / Not even to the walls will I confess*]. This conflates fado and the delineated space therefore, and through fado's presentation as an embodied entity so combines it with the body as a space in which these interactions could take place.

and sense of self and foregrounds the ‘intense introspection’ Tate underlines as necessary for the protagonist to be able to relate to herself (xx; xxiv). This awareness through reflection on the multiple aspects of one’s identity and the actions carried out through an exploration of sexuality are what allows Anaïse/Frida to draw her fractured body together without viewing the different subjectivities as mutually exclusive.⁷² In so doing, she denounces the confinement and imposition of patriarchal society upon women, which then ‘frees herself from her condition of Object to tell her other side of the story’ (Pokorny 1994, 77).

The nature of Anaïse/Frida’s dismembered body and therefore fractured sense of self has been outlined above. It is the unexpected end of her marriage, however, that gives her the impetus to seek the change she effectuates in the novel: ‘Je n’ai pas vu venir la fin de mon mariage avec Léo. Son départ a déstabilisé mes certitudes’ (20).⁷³ Meeting Bony at a birthday dinner shortly afterwards, his blasé approach to discussing the business he runs in this bourgeois context awakens Frida within Anaïse’s being, the persona that has long been present within her but which she does not appropriate until this point. Initially she describes herself as ‘subjuguée’, therefore unable to repress the desire to follow Bony due to the strength of the manifestation of Frida within her, ‘Comme ma sueur, Frida glisse enfin de mes pores d’où elle veillait depuis longtemps’ (15).⁷⁴ Yet, while it is Bony who awakens the personification of Anaïse’s sexuality within her, it is what he represents as the possibility of her negated sexuality offering the chance to break free from the restrictions placed on her up until this point that is important. It is not that she is ‘subjugated’ by him per se, though he is the person she follows and the one who initiates her into being a prostitute, but rather that this aspect of

⁷² Toni Morrison, when asked by Tate about the differences she saw between white and black women’s writing, answered: ‘Black women seem able to combine the nest and the adventure. They don’t see conflicts in certain areas as do white women. They are both safe harbor and ship; they are both inn and trail. [...] We don’t find these places, these roles, mutually exclusive’ (Tate 1983c, 122). This is the case that the reader witnesses in *Fado*, where the dual subjectivities inhabiting Anaïse’s body interact to enable her to gather her fractured self.

⁷³ ‘I didn’t see the end of my marriage to Léo coming. His leaving undermined/shook my convictions.’

⁷⁴ ‘subjugated’; ‘Like my sweat, Frida seeped at last from my pores from where she had long been watching’.

her self asserts itself as Frida in order to enable her to challenge the oppressive framework in which she exists. Nevertheless, although Anaïse accepts this willingly, she does also become subject to the patriarchal hierarchy in place in the brothel as demonstrated above, stating that she has to ‘rediscover her virginity’ in order to become a prostitute and that she does so also in order to ‘délivrer mon corps. L’ouvrir’ (17).⁷⁵ Anaïse’s body represents her sense of self, and so while on one level she must be moulded by Bony and therefore describes herself as becoming virginal again, on another she reappropriates her body from the violence meted out against it and against her self, thus freeing it from this oppression and opening it up to position herself as an active agent in her sexuality which can then be used to delineate an idea of femininity outside of the restrictive constructs outlined above. Therefore, having been initiated as a prostitute, the protagonist then uses the sexuality she gains as a result to undermine the very constructs to which she has been subjected.

Anaïse/Frida articulates the reconstitutive aspect of her exploration of her sexuality explicitly while she ponders the importance of fado to her. Listening to Amália Rodrigues, Anaïse/Frida muses that, although she does not understand the lyrics, ‘elle me parle de ma vie, de cet enfant que je n’ai pas désiré, de tous les départs qui m’ont amputée d’un morceau de moi-même’ (30).⁷⁶ Fado connects with her on a basic level and with its ‘flayed words’ and ‘ruptured accents’ represents the visceral fracturing of her sense of self expressed in ‘a cracked melody’. However, it also participates in her recovery, continuing to play in the background as she knits the scattered fragments of her body together through pleasure (31). Frida has surged from within Anaïse’s being, a manifestation of Ezili Freda and fado, enabling her to engage with her sexuality thus expressed and create meaning therein by their intersection. Each of the ‘departures’ from her life – her innocence through rape, her children

⁷⁵ ‘free my body. Open it up.’

⁷⁶ ‘she speaks to me of my life, of that child that I didn’t want, of all the departures which have cut from me a piece of myself’.

through the two forced abortions, her sense of power at home by her husband replacing her with a younger, fertile woman, her front teeth because she refused to completely submit to a client's wishes – have been framed in a context of male dominance. Vodou and fado allow Anaïse to express her sexuality through Frida, and in so doing she manages to weave her sense of self back together, originally fractured by her oppression within multiple patriarchal configurations of femininity.

In addition to her sexual liberation, Anaïse's body is also physically reconstituted by the front teeth that she gets replaced, paid for by Bony. Reinforcing the complex presentation of the protagonist, this event underlines that she is not positioned in opposition to the frameworks she seeks to undermine but participates in them in a way that enables her to reconfigure them to permit a construct in which women are able to define their own concept of self. One of the objectives Frida seeks is to forge a relationship with Bony in which she can be described as his mistress, and although the gift from him is evidence of his desire to define her – indeed Bony is moved by his own generosity –, the result is the outcome that Frida has been pursuing: upon seeing her with her new teeth, Bony realises that 'Elle est en fait sa maîtresse-femme' (63).⁷⁷ Moreover, the integral nature of the replacement of her teeth to the reconstitution of her body and therefore her self is demonstrated earlier in the same paragraph, 'Frida est devenue une nouvelle femme'.⁷⁸ While this is problematic since Bony considers that he has both physically and conceptually refashioned Frida as he wishes, imposing his notion of her as his 'mistress-wife' and conceiving of her as a new woman 'grâce à lui', Frida remains an active participant in their relationship, itself emphasised by the intensity with which she expresses her sexuality when they make love.⁷⁹ Anaïse/Frida then

⁷⁷ 'She is in fact his mistress-wife'.

⁷⁸ 'Frida has become a new woman'.

⁷⁹ 'thanks to him'; Bony notes that 'quand il lui fait l'amour elle est tellement intense, comme si c'était le dernier acte qu'elle posait sur terre avant la fin du monde' [*when he makes love to her she is extremely intense, as if it were the last action she carried out on earth before the end of the world*] (63). It is at this point that Frida

participates in a process of suggesting, in Sloan's (2000, 46) terms, 'new configurations of meaning by reappropriating and reinventing images of women' which is achieved by means of an engagement with and confrontation of 'the identity that is imposed upon them' and thereby determining an alternative. This is not always successful as first envisioned, however, as once Frida becomes Bony's 'maîtresse-femme', he then acts as Léo did with each of his wives, taking another mistress and in so doing subjecting these women to the male-dominated hierarchy.

A further manner in which Anaïse/Frida manifests her challenge is through her adoption and reconfiguration of motherhood. Within the phallogocentric framework, motherhood and prostitution are separate archetypes that can only be accessed via the phallus. However, in *Fado*, the protagonist accesses these through both her reconfiguration of what motherhood can mean and her drawing together of Ezili Freda and Ezili Dantò as distinct subjectivities which inform each other and therefore allow her to create meaning. In her discussion of Kristeva's work, Oliver (2004, 135) writes, 'Women are put in the paradoxical position of having to endorse a social code that devalues them and represses the maternal body as something natural rather than cultural.' Anaïse suffers in light of this very paradox – whereby Léo rejects her because she seems unable to fulfil her 'natural' role and bear children –, but also has been subject to a more complex paradox since her body was devalued and violated at the hands of a doctor when she did fulfil this 'natural' role and conceived after having been raped. In light of her decision never to have children and her subsequent apparent sterility, Anaïse/Frida then assumes a maternal role with respect to Félicia, one of the prostitutes at Bony's, and at times describes her relationship with Léo in maternal terms. Importantly, Frida is also described as a woman who does not have, and has never wanted, children, in keeping

conceives, marking the final stage of her reconstitution of the self, which will be discussed along with the resultant impositions placed upon Anaïse/Frida in further detail below.

with Ezili Freda, and Anaïse ‘n’a pas su être mère’ (21).⁸⁰ However, in this context in which Ezili Freda is pre-eminent, the reader sees the influence of Ezili Dantò, in conjunction with the wider notion of Ezili as a whole representing sisterhood between women, demonstrated through Frida’s loving Félicia ‘un peu comme elle aimerait sa fille’ (24).⁸¹ Throughout the novel Frida is shown to treat Félicia as she would a daughter, listening to her repeated nightmare regarding her father’s death many times but each time as if it were the first, caring for her when she falls ill, and when Frida begins to sense that she might be pregnant, feeling as if she is going to cry each time she sees Félicia. Faced with the absence of desire and the apparent inability to have children, the notions of motherhood and sisterhood are conflated and conceptualised as the former, thus moving beyond the idea of a ‘natural’ social code in which children are necessarily born of the womb to one which reflects more closely the idea of motherhood encapsulated in Ezili Dantò.⁸² If it is the exploration of sexuality within an overarching context of Vodou which binds women together in this novel, as has been argued, then Anaïse/Frida’s age and embodiment of Ezili Dantò places her in a position of spiritual motherhood with regard to the other women working at the brothel, similar to that of a *manbo* who fulfils a motherly role for the ‘children’ she initiates.⁸³ This then manifests itself most clearly in the relationship between Félicia and Frida, the former both a young girl and a woman who has missed out on adolescence, which then enables Anaïse/Frida to collapse the

⁸⁰ ‘didn’t know how to be a mother’.

⁸¹ ‘a bit like she would love her daughter’.

⁸² The concept of non-biological motherhood and “other mothers” – that is, a concept of mothering ‘based on cultural perceptions of kinship’ and therefore not restricted by biological or familial ties – has been investigated in detail by numerous scholars and is a common theme in Caribbean and African-American literature (Reyes 2002, 11). For further discussion see works such as Patricia Bell-Scott’s (1993) edited volume *Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers and Daughters*, Angelita Reyes’ (2002) *Mothering Across Cultures: Postcolonial Representations*, and Sharon Abbey and Andrea O’Reilly’s (1998) edited work *Redefining Mothering: Changing Identities and Patterns*.

⁸³ Félicia is described as a ‘fillette et femme’ [*little girl and a woman*] as are the other women at the brothel, Frida excluded (24). Due to this, Frida in fact feels maternal towards them all, but notes that ‘les filles du Bony’s, il ne faut pas leur montrer qu’on les aime’ [*it’s imperative not to show the girls at Bony’s that you love them*]. This is not clear cut, Frida also ponders ‘comment je peux aimer ces filles, partager avec elles un homme qui nous tient liées dans une douloureuse et jouissive complicité’ [*how I can love these girls, share with them a man who binds us together in a painful and pleasurable complicity*] (25). However, it is this complexity of Frida and the girls themselves which undermines the notion that the category of ‘whore’ is an homogeneous whole as has been previously argued.

discrete categories of mother and whore while simultaneously subverting the hierarchy that insists that motherhood is a ‘natural’ role and necessarily must be through a woman procreating. Instead of rejecting this concept, therefore, Mars’ protagonist draws on the notion of other-mothering and redefines motherhood within a context of female sexuality and Vodou, which then allows her to fulfil a role for which she was rejected as incapable on her own terms.

In contrast to this, however, in the chapter that follows the abovementioned midpoint in the novel at which Anaïse and Frida are presented most completely as one, Bony entreats Frida, ‘Viens, [...] j’ai envie de te faire un enfant’, and she realises she is pregnant two chapters later (64; 71).⁸⁴ Anaïse/Frida also conceives Léo’s child, a necessary event on the one hand as they both inhabit the same body, and one which is presented in a complex manner. Firstly, in a similar fashion to Sophonie’s pregnancy in *Kasalé* and the subsequent birth of her daughter through the *lwa* which signals the rebirth of the *lakou* and the continuation of Vodou practice in the community after Gran’n’s death, Anaïse/Frida’s pregnancy therefore indicates on one level the conception of something new immediately following the point at which the two personas are most closely linked (Vété-Congolo 2010b, 307).

Secondly, however, the notion of bearing Léo’s and Bony’s child is problematic since to do so would reinscribe Anaïse/Frida into the patriarchal construct that she has sought to challenge and reconfigure through the alternative concept of motherhood expressed above. Upon being informed by her gynaecologist that she is pregnant despite the odds, Anaïse whispers, ‘Gladys... je suis morte’ (89), which then triggers Frida’s visits to l’Empoisonneur.⁸⁵ Indicative to a certain degree of Frida’s and Ezili Freda’s own desire not

⁸⁴ ‘Come, [...] I want to make you a baby’.

⁸⁵ ‘Gladys... I am dead.’

to have children, more importantly this event, along with the more frequent appearance of the young and ambitious Natacha at *Bony's*, prompts the re-emergence of the persona of Anaïse 'qui ricane quand [Frida] tente de la convaincre que son homme ne trahira jamais sa confiance' (78).⁸⁶ Anaïse was originally rejected by Léo for her apparent sterility and through the exploration of her sexuality has managed to delineate an alternative concept of motherhood that does not force her to fulfil a male-dominated 'natural' perception of what that entails. Having negotiated a relationship with Léo made possible by her exploration of her sexuality at *Bony's*, for Bony to also say 'I want to make you a baby' and define her as his 'maîtresse-femme' denies Anaïse/Frida any agency within that relationship also, thus rendering both her relationships male-dominated once again. The reassertion of Anaïse in this context along with her statement regarding her impending death therefore signifies on a symbolic level that giving birth to a baby would undo the progress Anaïse/Frida has made in managing to reconstitute her body and thus her sense of self. This additionally links to the idea expressed above regarding Ezili Dantò, who as a mother to many seeks the benefit of her children over her own well-being. If, then, giving birth to this child would force Anaïse/Frida back into this framework in which women are subjected to the restrictions that she has sought to undermine, Mars' protagonist has no choice but to reject this outcome and seek an alternative, that is, the death of Léo and Bony who are readying to abandon her and her own departure from the physical world, itself conceptualised as 'délivrance'.

It is important to outline at this point the link between pregnancy, maternity and death that this foregrounds, a notion to be analysed in greater detail in the concluding chapter of this thesis. As Kristeva (1987, 239), among others, has highlighted, the association between maternity and death harks back to the symbolism associated with the biblical Eve as the woman who is the mother of humankind but brought death into the world as the wages of her

⁸⁶ 'who scoffs when [Frida] tries to convince her that her man will never betray her trust'.

sin, as well as through Mary who gave birth to Jesus in order for him to die. Furthermore, pregnancy has also been formulated in terms of “parasitical entities” and “cellular growths” by Simone de Beauvoir, a deadly notion which Zerilli (1992, 113; 120-22) links directly to the engendering of patriarchy in the woman’s body. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989, 36-37) makes a similar point, explaining that men seek to reduce woman to the ‘infant-producing organ’ with which they associate her, and by their prohibitions restrict her vitality. Anaïse/Frida’s pregnancy and mothering of Félicia can be seen in a similar vein, the first of which provokes Anaïse’s exclamation ‘Je suis morte’ and Frida’s visits to l’Empoisonneur. The direct link between the two established, her pregnancy therefore constitutes her physical undoing in addition to her conceptual reconstitution. On one level, therefore, the restitution of the body’s capability to conceive which therefore indicates the reversal of the physical damage that resulted from her rape and abortions is itself harmful since it connotes her death. Similarly, Anaïse’s position as a mother figure to Félicia leads to a similar outcome, eliciting her desire to accompany her ‘daughter’ on the latter’s journey to the sea to recover her *bon anj*. Deconstructing Félicia’s madness in reclaiming this from the sea, both women must then submit to death in order to be reborn (*Fado*, 96).

On another level, however, Anaïse/Frida’s conceiving is an illustration of the *marasa twa* and Anaïse’s ultimate reconstitution of her self. The *marasa twa* are the tripartite twin *lwa*, with the twins born together considered sacred and powerful together and the third twin, the one born afterwards called *marasa dosou/dosa*, is ‘believed by many Haitians to be even “stronger” [...] than the twins themselves’ (Courlander 1960, 32). The dualities that run throughout *Fado* – Anaïse/Frida, the spurned wife/whore, the bourgeois/city slum, life/death, Ezili Dantò/Ezili Freda – are all indicative of the *marasa*, a point Anaïse makes most clearly near the novel’s close when she calls Frida ‘ma sœur jumelle, mon autre moi-même’ before

referring to 'le secret des *marassa*' (109).⁸⁷ As the most closely and commonly identified of the two Ezilis, both complementary and contradictory, Dantò and Freda already form a type of *marasa*, while, as Houlberg (2005, 19) notes, Ezili Dantò with Anaïse in her arms is herself associated with the *marasa* as the *lwa* of motherhood. However, 'le secret des *marassa*' is embodied by the *marasa twa*, the *dosou/dosa* who comes afterwards and in the case of *Fado*, binds these together in a manner that renders the two more than the sum of their parts. This *marasa twa* is the child Anaïse/Frida conceives, an entity to which she refers as a *mystère*: 'je sentais que mon sang, ma chair, mes os, mes cheveux nourrissaient un mystère' (72).⁸⁸

Bellegarde-Smith (2005b, 11) cites the well-known Haitian formulation with regard to the *marasa* in his introduction to *Fragments of Bone*: 'one plus one equals three.' In *Fado*, the dual subjectivities that dwell within the body of Anaïse are drawn together by the both of them conceiving and both choosing to administer and take the poison provided by l'Empoisonneur. Although the vial itself is described as constituting and containing 'le chemin secret qui relie les *marassa*' (104),⁸⁹ it is an external object that represents the *marasa twa* developing in Anaïse/Frida's womb. Discovering it in her bathroom cabinet in the final chapter of the book, upon grasping it Anaïse connects directly with the unborn child,

Un arc-en-ciel inattendu me traverse de part en part et distille dans ma poitrine un bonheur presque insupportable. Mais bien vite les couleurs se brouillent, diluées en une masse rouge, un ectoplasme sanguinolant qui bouge en moi, m'absorbe de l'intérieur. La fiole vit entre mes mains. Je repose mon front contre le miroir du petit meuble. Je me regarde jusqu'au fond de mon abîme. (108)⁹⁰

⁸⁷ 'my twin sister, my other self'; 'the secret of the *marassa*'.

⁸⁸ 'I felt that my blood, my flesh, my bones, my hair were feeding a mystery'.

⁸⁹ 'the secret path that joins the *marassa*'.

⁹⁰ 'An unexpected rainbow shoots right through me, secreting a happiness in my chest that becomes almost unbearable. But quickly the colours fade, diluted in a red mass, a blood-coloured ectoplasm that moves inside me, absorbs me from the inside. The vial is alive in my hands. I rest my forehead against the mirror of the small unit. I look at myself, to the bottom of my interior abyss.'

Addressing Frida directly through the *marasa twa* and seeing her via the mirror against which she rests her forehead, Anaïse then asks, ‘connais-tu enfin le secret des *marassa* [...]?’, before repeating the words l’Empoisonneur uttered to Frida, ‘Je tiens dans ma main la vie et la mort, la délivrance et la damnation’ (109).⁹¹ This third entity – the unborn child, the vial and the poison, the alternative notion of motherhood, the collapsing of the bourgeois neighbourhood and the city slum – is therefore the secret of the *marasa*, and it is only at this point, the novel’s close, that the persona of Anaïse comes to realise this with clarity at this moment of ‘intense introspection’, looking ‘to the bottom of my abyss’ and seeing the image of herself, Frida and the unborn child reflected in her mind’s mirror as one. As such, while *Fado* does explore these dualities as critics have highlighted, the outcome is in fact the embodiment of the *marasa twa*, that one plus one equals three, and the reconfiguration of these as represented in the third entity, the *dosou/dosa*, is the most propitious of all. Moreover, this notion is reflected in the structure of *Fado*; the novel is written in thirty-three chapters and it is in the last of these that Anaïse addresses Frida (and the reader) as ‘tu’, asking, ‘do you know the secret of the *marassa*?’. The tripartite twins are therefore explored and their secret posed to the reader in the final chapter which, if enumerated, would be headed ‘33’, a double-digit number comprised solely of the figure three.

This chapter will now turn to its final section to look at the duality of life and death and how, within the context of Vodou, this is represented in *Fado* with respect to Anaïse/Frida. Framing the novel as one ‘construit sur le principe thématique de la dualité’, Vété-Congolo (2010a, 914) describes the presentation of Anaïse/Frida as a ‘peinture de la femme assassinant l’homme après la trahison et pour la libération’.⁹² Although this is indeed the case (which will be discussed below), the clearest exploration of this concept within the novel itself is the

⁹¹ ‘do you finally know the secret of the *marassa*?’; ‘In my hands I have life and death, deliverance and damnation’.

⁹² ‘constructed on the thematic principle of duality’; ‘portrayal of the woman killing the man after her betrayal and for her freedom’.

abovementioned analysis Frida provides of the reasons for which the unnamed wife kills her husband who is cheating on her. Having been rejected and replaced by a prostitute, the wife has been left with the children without monetary assistance from her husband and also a sense of wounded pride (38; 40). However, as Frida concludes, 'Elle l'a tué parce que le désir était mort entre eux et qu'il en poursuivait le fantôme dans le centre d'une autre. [...] C'est la femme en elle qui a tué, pas la mère. Elle a tué le plaisir, celui dont il la sevrerait, pour que l'autre n'en jouisse plus' (40).⁹³ Deprived of the pleasure they shared but aware that he was able to find that with another woman, the wife is constrained within a male-dominated construct that allows her husband to obtain elsewhere that which he no longer felt he could find at home, but denies her that same opportunity. Her reaction is to attempt to dismantle the phallogocentric framework in which she feels trapped by removing the sole agent within it, her husband. However, although she does achieve this and therefore her liberation, by doing so in a manner that destroys the framework without providing an alternative does not therefore allow the wife to reconfigure the construct, but rather she remains subject to it despite the physical absence of the central focus. In this instance, there is no transformation of the framework, just a reaction against it.

To a certain extent this critique can be applied to Anaïse/Frida, who kills both Léo, because he is about to leave her again, moving abroad with his wife and son, and Bony, due to his replacing her with Natacha, the new, younger prostitute. In this situation, Anaïse/Frida acts as Ezili Freda would, exacting revenge against her lovers for having spurned her once again. However, Mars offers a more complex reading in this instance, using the concept of death in Vodou to present an alternative construct in which Anaïse/Frida can continue to undermine this framework in a fashion that does not solely constitute a reaction against it, although this

⁹³ 'She killed him because the desire between them was dead and because he sought its ghost in another woman. [...] It's the woman in her who killed him, not the mother. She killed pleasure, that which he denied her, in order that the other would no longer experience it'.

alternative does necessitate her own physical demise. Dispatching Léo and Bony to ‘la mort’ and ‘damnation’, Anaïse/Frida departs for ‘la vie’ and ‘délivrance’. However, as noted above, continuing to live would require Anaïse/Frida either to give birth to her child, thus reinscribing her within the restrictive construct she has sought to undermine, or have an abortion, thus subjecting her body once again to butchery and dismemberment. Her only option, therefore, in order to maintain her sense of self that has been reconstituted through her exploration of her sexuality, is to depart in a death that would constitute life, a damnation that would be deliverance. In this fashion, as Vété-Congolo (2010a, 914) concludes, she remains between the two.

In her foreword to the third edition of *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* – itself the *dosa* of the three editions –, Michel (2010, xviii; xxvi) underlines that the death of a Vodou initiate is the beginning of

his or her voyage of return to Ginen, [...] the realm of the unborn and the afterlife, where ancestors who have passed from this life to the next reunite with those not yet born [...]; where the conjoining of spirits—old and new—creates a seamless tapestry of past, present, and future that is then brought to this earth to shield and strengthen the living.

In returning to Ginen in this fashion, Anaïse/Frida manages to continue to symbolically undermine the hierarchy that she challenged through her embodiment of Ezili Freda and the *marasa twa*, although it required her departure from the physical world. Furthermore, in so doing she ties together the alternatives she has delineated through her body with the spirit world, symbolically linking the seat of the world of the *lwa* with her struggles and providing a construct in which women can be invested with agency and thus continue to challenge male privilege that has divided womanhood into discrete spaces in Haitian society. Anaïse/Frida was not able to prevent her physical demise as to do so would be to accept the re-fracturing of

the self, and it is this self that is signified by the *marasa twa* that she conceives. Consonant with Zulé in *Del rojo* and to a certain extent with María Antonia, death for Anaïse/Frida does not constitute the imposition of male domination however, but rather the choice not to submit to it.

An important element of this journey and the entity which binds Vodou and fado, life and death, Ginen and Haiti together is the sea, described by Jean-Charles (2011, 175) as ‘un lieu de contradiction, de complexité et de confort.’⁹⁴ Inherently related to the passage of the soul to Ginen, which ‘free from the cosmic force of the *Lwa*, will reside one year and one day in the water before returning to the land’, the sea also represents death itself and new life (Michel 2010, xviii-xix; Jean-Charles 2011, 175). Its link to both of these is evident in Mars’ *Kasalé* as water precipitates Gran’n’s death and is the space of conception for Sophonie and Athanaël’s daughter, while in Roumain’s *Gouverneurs de la rosée* it accompanies Manuel and Annaïse’s conception of their child.⁹⁵ In *Fado*, it is also shown to fulfil both of these roles. While neither Frida nor Anaïse is depicted taking the poison given to Bony and Léo, their deaths are marked by their final appearances closing with their departure to the sea, accompanied by ‘un fado, en sourdine,’ sung by Amália Rodrigues (109).⁹⁶ After serving Bony his poisoned coffee, Frida muses that ‘Elle s’en va dans un instant avec Félicia refaire à l’envers la route de la mer, jusqu’à Port-à-l’Écu’ (107), while the novel closes on Anaïse closing her eyes, behind the lids of which ‘danse le bleu des vagues qui m’emportent vers Port-à-l’Écu’ (110).⁹⁷ The site of Félicia’s father’s zombification and her subsequent

⁹⁴ ‘a place of contradiction, complexity and comfort.’

⁹⁵ Vitiello (2011, 371) has described *Kasalé* as ‘une réponse, féminine, à *Gouverneurs de la rosée*’ [*a feminine response to Gouverneurs de la rosée*], highlighting the way in which it serves to move the ‘le point de vue principal sur l’histoire, sur les gens, sur le devenir de la nation, de la communauté’ [*the principal focus on history, on the people, on the future of the nation and of the community*] from Manuel to Annaïse.

⁹⁶ ‘a fado, playing softly’.

⁹⁷ ‘She leaves in a moment with Félicia to retrace the sea route, to Port-à-l’Écu’; ‘dances the blue of the waves which carry me to Port-à-l’Écu’. The waves create a further link between Anaïse’s death and fado, as the

haunting by him as she was shipped over to the mainland from Île de la Tortue as a *restavèk*, the sea at Port-à-l'Écu has since held Félicia's 'bon ange' prisoner and so has been the cause of her persistent nightmares regarding the fact. For Félicia, then, confronting the sea in death will allow her *bon anj* to also make the journey to Ginen and release her from her torment. Doing so with Anaïse/Frida, the trio then form a further instance of the *marasa twa*, reinforcing the mother-daughter bond between Anaïse/Frida and Félicia, thus validating the alternative notion of motherhood formulated through the protagonist's actions in contrast to the rejected 'natural' hierarchy.

Furthermore, the sea is shown to be integral to Anaïse/Frida's being when she states, 'Je porte en moi la mer de Port-à-l'Écu' (the homophonic nature of the words 'mer' and 'mère' concomitantly reinforcing Frida's role as mother to Félicia – the only character related to Port-à-l'Écu – and the fluidity of this concept of motherhood referenced above, the notion of maternity as related to the bountiful sea, and the link between motherhood and death through the sea which Anaïse/Frida herself emphasises) (96).⁹⁸ Embodying fado as she does, itself intrinsically related to the sea, Anaïse/Frida's body is therefore represented as a space in which Vodou and fado can come together thus rendering each other more complex, providing the context in which the patriarchal constructs that impose strict dichotomies can be challenged and further complicated. In so doing, the sea then signals the possibility for Anaïse/Frida's sense of self to be reconstituted through the multiple ways in which her fractured body is knit together. As Jean-Charles (2011, 164-5) has emphasised, Benítez-Rojo and Gilroy both focus their theories of the Caribbean and diaspora on the notion of bodies of

undulating rhythms of the music itself is likened to the movement of the waves, as stated above (Holton 2002, 112).

⁹⁸ 'I carry the sea of Port-à-l'Écu inside me'. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989, 38) highlights the association between the homonyms *mer* (sea) and *mère* (mother) and therefore the fluidity of the concept, writing, 'Liquid/ocean associated with woman/mother is not just a facile play on words inherited from nineteenth-century Romantics [...]. Motherhood as lived by woman often has little to do with motherhood as experienced by men. [...] Mother [...] of all wo/mankind, she is role-free, non-Name, a force that refuses to be fragmented but suffocates codes (Cixous).'

water, be it the Caribbean Sea or the Atlantic, with a key point of convergence between them being the possibilities the sea offers for plurality and multivalence. However, in keeping with her conclusion regarding the image of water in Haitian fiction, the sea in *Fado* does not represent ‘une contre culture noire moderne’ as it does for Gilroy, but rather it is polysemous and ‘l’imagerie de l’eau est une façon évocatrice de découvrir les sommes de possibilités’ (Jean-Charles 2011, 165; 176).⁹⁹

In conclusion, the female body in *Fado* is presented as the site of interaction between the physical and spiritual worlds as in other works in this thesis, but more importantly it serves as the space in which the male-dominated dichotomies regarding female identity can be challenged and undermined within a context that is itself hybrid. Interweaving the seemingly disparate contexts of fado and Haitian Vodou, Mars’ narrative manages to draw together the history of a European musical genre and an African-derived religious tradition in Haiti, which have their points of convergence, to complicate the presentation of each and render both more complex. Delineating a spiritual context which resonates both with the protagonist and in different socio-political contexts in Haiti and across each of the cultures it comprises – Haitian, Brazilian, West African, Portuguese –, *Fado* ties these together in a manner reminiscent of Montero’s four novels in chapter two and offers an environment which is able to accompany the traversing of numerous interrelated physical and conceptual spaces. The author encapsulates fado and Vodou within her protagonist’s body, and then employs a threefold approach whereby the body, music and religion each signify the crossover between the discrete subjectivities of Anaïse and Frida, the spurned wife and the whore, the bourgeois professional and the denizen of the city slum. In bringing them together, *Fado* then places the other in continual interaction with the self to the extent that this distinction no longer exists

⁹⁹ ‘a modern black counterculture’; ‘the imagery of the sea is an evocative way to uncover the multitude of possibilities’.

and both become the self. In so doing, the protagonist is able to produce meaning and effectuate a reconstitution of the fractured sense of self – represented by the dismembered body – by recognising that it comprises several ‘mes’. Achieved through her exploration of her sexuality within this hybrid spiritual context, Anaïse/Frida appropriates agency in areas in which she has been oppressed and restricted. As such, Mars seeks freedom for her protagonist but recognises that this ‘does not result simply from rejecting patriarchal configurations of female identity’ (Sloan 2000, 38). Importantly, however, Mars does not write a novel which presents these issues in an uncomplicated fashion; the patriarchal frameworks are still in place in the society the author depicts. Nevertheless, in spite of the ways in which male privilege is demonstrated to remain in force and the fact that the protagonist’s physical demise is unavoidable, the negotiation of the different spaces that Anaïse/Frida manages to traverse and the constructs in place which she challenges offer a sense that Mars’ protagonist is in fact able to collapse the phallogocentric framework at least in part.

CHAPTER FIVE

DESTRUCTIVE MASCULINITY, VODOU AND THE STATE

Ils ne connaissent, disiez-vous, que la force ? Bien sûr ; d'abord ce ne sera que celle du colon et, bientôt, que la leur, cela veut dire : la même rejaillissant sur nous comme notre reflet vient du fond d'un miroir à notre rencontre. (Jean-Paul Sartre 1961)¹

In the previous three chapters, this analysis has focused for the most part on the possibilities offered to female characters in the texts studied within a worldview framed by Vodou and Santería. This chapter, however, offers a counterpoint to the discussion that highlights the manner in which women simultaneously deconstruct, reinforce and subvert patriarchal frameworks by examining the alignment of Vodou with destructive masculinity through the state, focusing on the dictatorship of François Duvalier as a pertinent example and context.² Drawing together religious and political authoritarian power into a single entity which he embodied, Papa Doc incorporated Vodou – the traditional locus of resistance – into his regime, thereby removing the space which potential detractors could inhabit and using the religious tradition to suppress opposition. In conjunction with this, the regime was predicated on a gendered hierarchy in which violent repression by the state and its apparatus – most notably the Tonton Macoutes – was presented as masculine (and any opposition therefore as feminine), a framework presided over by the dictator as the omnipotent embodiment of masculinity. The imposition of power by Duvalier, either in person or via intermediaries, has been framed in these gendered terms, examples of which highlight the constructed nature of

¹ Sartre 1991 [1961], 47. ‘You said they understand nothing but violence? Of course; first, the only violence is the settler’s; but soon they will make it their own; that is to say, the same violence is thrown back upon us as when our reflection comes forward to meet us when we go toward a mirror’ (Translation by Constance Farrington in Sartre 1990 [1963], 15).

² Reference will also be made to Jean-Claude Duvalier’s regime, most notably in the previously analysed work of Mayra Montero.

gender within this power relationship and exemplify the notion of destructive masculinity. The analysis that follows examines two principle themes: François Duvalier's subsumption of nation, state and religion (Vodou and Catholicism, and to a lesser extent Protestantism) into a single masculine entity; and the manner in which fictional renditions of the regime explore the notions of destructive masculinity and sexuality to demonstrate the effects of the dictator's use of Vodou to negate any possibility of resistance and opposition, thereby focusing power in a singular, male-gendered individual. The three main texts analysed are Marie Vieux-Chauvet's *Folie* (third novella in her Haitian trilogy *Amour, Colère et Folie*), Franck Fouché's *Général Baron-la-Croix ou Le silence masqué* and Kettly Mars' *Saisons sauvages*.³

Although this analysis draws on notionally historical or biographical works written about the Duvalier regime, it does not seek to debate the merits of the fictional over the factual or vice versa, or compare notions of form and veracity. As Avery Gordon (2008 [1997], 26; 81), among others, has emphasised, the distinction between fact and fiction is blurred: the representation of experienced events is mediated and constructed, while fiction pertaining to such events draws on these accounts, reconstructing and mediating them in order to incorporate them into the text. Here, then, the biographical monographs referenced provide historical and cultural background with which the novels and plays can be read, while the fictional texts portray an experience of the regime which conflates the various levels of interaction between both the spiritual and physical and the state apparatus and individual.

³ Although Fouché's *Général Baron-la-Croix ou Le silence masqué* was written and published in exile in Canada, it has not been excluded from this analysis of Haitian literature and theatre by virtue of its thematic links to Fouché's earlier *Bouqui au paradis* (as Coates (1996, 258) has noted) and the pertinent manner in which it ties together with Chauvet's *Folie* in particular. Produced relatively soon after his move into exile, the play has been described as missing 'the proverbs and riddles' of his earlier *Bouqui*; however, 'the paraphernalia of Vodun and Carnival abound' with the protagonists as known figures from Haitian folklore and Vodou (Coates 1996, 258-59).

The association of the political establishment with religious ideologies and/or institutions – either explicit through profession of belief or practice, or implicit through measures such as greater formal acceptance of hitherto marginalised religious practices – was not a new phenomenon in post-independence Haiti or indeed the post-colonial Caribbean when it was employed by François Duvalier. In spite of the role Vodou was regarded to have played in the Haitian Revolution, the newly independent republic continued the norm imposed by the former colonial power – which the latter ostensibly rejected during its own revolution – and declared itself to be officially a Catholic state, a status quo that has remained in force despite the documented practice of Vodou by Dessalines, the later legal recognition of Vodou by Faustin Soulouque, as well as its practice and/or espousal by subsequent presidents and politicians.⁴ In the wider Caribbean, the colonial practice of association between the political establishment and Christian religious institutions – be they Catholic or Protestant – has also continued, serving to align, symbolically at least, the state with these religious ideologies.⁵ A case in point is the election in 1990 of the then Catholic priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the office of president in Haiti, known for his resistance against Jean-Claude Duvalier’s regime in its twilight years and the remnants thereof through his espousal of liberation theology. Moreover, this alignment with the symbolically Western religious movements – that is, mainstream Catholicism and Protestantism – illustrates a non-espousal, in official terms at least, of those traditions linked to African heritage in the Caribbean, and therefore the latter’s

⁴ The official status of Haiti as a Catholic state has been discussed in the introduction to this thesis, at which point the incorporation into the constitution of Vodou as a state-sanctioned religion in 1986 and the increasing influence of the Protestant Church throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been outlined. Moreover, the role of Vodou in the Haitian Revolution has also been examined, particularly the doubt cast by Geggus (2002) on the veracity of accounts surrounding Boukman and the Bois-Caïman ceremony. Despite these doubts, the role Vodou is ascribed within the popular imaginary is what is important, as has been noted. Furthermore, the association of the Republic of Haiti with Catholicism has also been discussed.

⁵ For further discussion of the alignment of politics and Christianity – in particular Catholic liberation theology and Protestantism – throughout what Haynes terms ‘the Third World’, including Latin America and the Caribbean, see his 1994 volume, *Religion in Third World Politics*, pp.98-121, and L. James’ (2000) book chapter, “Text and the Rhetoric of Change”, in *Religion, Culture, and Tradition in the Caribbean*, pp.143-166. A pertinent example in contemporary Caribbean politics is that of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, whose Hindu cultural upbringing has been counterpointed with her baptism into the Christian church as an early adolescent. Her recent trip to India in January 2012, during which she bent down and touched the feet of then President Pratibha Patil in a gesture of respect, provoked much discussion of her heritage in the media.

political marginalisation. In Haiti, this has been illustrated by the recognition of the African influence on popular culture evidenced in the increasing amount of literature, theatre and music that drew on these elements, while official culture – relating the perspectives and actions of the mulatto elite, especially with regard to politics – was much more oriented towards a Western, be it European or North American, ideal.

As a result, although François Duvalier also did not enshrine his alignment with Vodou in law, the manner in which he incorporated it into his dictatorial establishment, thereby exercising authority over it, differentiates this context from those previous and contemporary to it. Although Dessalines is said to have practised Vodou and – as Johnson (2006, 423-24), among others, notes – has become a spirit associated with Ogou, he did persecute vodouisants and this religious tradition ‘was not part of the indigenizing process of state-making [Dessalines] envisioned’. Under Duvalier, however, the distinction between Vodou and the state was blurred; Vodou and its practitioners became both ‘constitutive’ of the state ‘and a cipher of it, but always without official recognition’ (424). As such, the first section that follows will explore this conflation of Christian and Vodou religious traditions with the notion of the Haitian nation in the figure of François Duvalier.

Duvalier, Vodou and the nation

In her recently republished analysis of Haiti under the Duvalier regime, *Haiti: A Shattered Nation* (originally published in 1988 as *Haiti: The Duvaliers and their Legacy*), Elizabeth Abbott (2011, 140) cites the *Catechism of a Revolution* that François Duvalier ordered to be printed in which he presents himself as an embodiment of the nation:⁶

⁶ Abbott (2011, 12) has described her book as ‘a narrative told from the perspective of individual Haitians’ that ‘is not a scholarly book’, though ‘many of the stories in it are the stuff of primary historical material.’ Intended for non-Haitians, it is the product of her bibliographical research and interviews she conducted at the time, made possible in part by her status as the wife of Joseph Namphy – and therefore the sister-in-law of Lieutenant General Henri Namphy (interim head of government immediately after Jean-Claude Duvalier fled) – and her job

“Who are Dessalines, Toussaint, Christophe, Pétion and Estimé?” went the new catechism.

“Dessalines, Toussaint, Christophe, Pétion and Estimé are five founders of the nation who are found within François Duvalier.”

“Is Dessalines for life?”

“Yes, Dessalines is for life in François Duvalier.”⁷

Rewriting the catechism thus, Duvalier inscribes himself as divinely appointed, encapsulating the essence of the nation through his embodiment of its five founding fathers as Christ embodies the essence of God the Father. Furthermore, in so doing he also binds the notion of the Haitian state to himself, thereby stating in effect that he is the nation, an assertion echoed in Mars’ *Saisons sauvages* by Roger, the brother of the protagonist.⁸ Moreover, although the catechism follows the format of that of the Church, Duvalier also ties Catholicism together with Vodou through his reference to Dessalines – also a *lwa* – separately from the others, conflating nation and religion and inscribing himself as the personification of them all. In order to examine this process as a context for the subsequent literary analysis, this section will therefore consider the manner in which Papa Doc sought to embody and thereby align the notions of power, nation and Haitian religious traditions.

In 1963, Papa Doc declared, ‘I am an immaterial being’, presenting himself as divinely appointed in the Christian tradition while placing himself alongside Henri Christophe and

reporting for Reuters News Service (8). Due to the nature of the work some critics, such as Fatton Jr. (2002, 63), have noted that in places ‘it is difficult to ascertain the complete accuracy of Abbott’s [...] rendition’, thereby questioning by implication its complete reliability. However, such reservations have not prevented the book from being consistently referenced as a text that offers an insight into the workings of François and Jean-Claude Duvalier’s regimes, the purpose for which it is cited here. The revised version published as *Haiti: A Shattered Nation* is the work’s third edition.

⁷ This catechism also shares the format of the catechism of the antisuperstition campaigns of the 1940s, cited by McAlister (2006, 88). As such, Duvalier further undermines the Catholic Church by reincorporating Vodou into the catechism through his inclusion of Dessalines.

⁸ Roger states, ‘En fait, depuis Duvalier, la notion de gouvernement remplace celle de l’État. Donc, Duvalier étant le chef du gouvernement, c’est lui l’État’ [*In fact, since Duvalier, the notion of government has replaced that of the State. Therefore, Duvalier being the head of the government, he is also the State*] (40).

Dessalines, the latter of whom had entered the Vodou pantheon and the essence of both of whom Duvalier claimed he embodied (Abbott 2011, 120; Diederich and Burt 1969, 217). Publishing in the same booklet as his *Catechism of a Revolution* a rewritten version of the Lord's Prayer which opened with 'Our Doc, who are [*sic*] in the National Palace, hallowed be Thy name in the present and future generations' (Abbott 2011, 140), Duvalier publicly reiterated – as the dictator Rafael Trujillo had in the neighbouring Dominican Republic – his embodiment of the divine and therefore his position as divinely appointed. Duvalier (1969, 330) later reinforces this appointment in his *Mémoires d'un leader du Tiers Monde*, where he recalls the manner in which the rebels of Jeune Haïti were crushed in 1964 with a reference to Christ's cleansing the temple of the money changers who had made it a 'den of thieves': 'Nous sommes entrés dans ce temple, et nous avons fustigé et chassé les vendeurs pour vous dessiller les yeux'.⁹

Having previously studied and published on Vodou as an ethnologist, Duvalier importantly also capitalised on his position as an *houngan* while fostering the idea that as president he 'was one with, was possessed by, was Baron Samedi, incorporating the master of life and death into his own person' (Johnson 2006, 438). Staging himself theatrically as this Gede *lwa*, Papa Doc made a 'great show' of being ridden by his *mèt tèt*, at which times he would present information he had gleaned from his network of spies as knowledge passed to him by the *lwa* and thereby 'willingly cultivated his own image of the omniscient voodoo priest' (Brown 2010 [1991], 95; Ferguson 1988, 52). Although spirit possession is necessarily performative and therefore inherently 'theatrical' – as explored in chapter two of this thesis with detailed

⁹ 'We entered the temple and thrashed and chased out the merchants in order to open your eyes'; Christ's cleansing of the temple can be found in each of the four gospels, Matthew 21:12-17, Mark 11:15-19, Luke 19:45-48, and John 2:13-16, and his use of the term 'den of thieves' – drawn from Jeremiah 7:11 – is found in the former three, the Synoptic Gospels (King James Version). Furthermore, Abbott (2011, 244) also states that in 1981 Jean-Claude Duvalier introduced the 'Credo of Jeanclaudism', a litany which began 'I believe in Jeanclaudism living and wise.' She describes this in terms of Jeanclaudism being the New Testament of Duvalierism. While not suggesting that this is untrue, it should be noted that this reformulation does not seem to have been noted in other sources. Claims of veracity aside, this does show that the belief held by Papa Doc that he was divinely appointed was perpetuated, in the popular imaginary at least, by his son and chosen heir.

reference to Bell (2009 [1992]), Drewal (1992) and M.A. Clark (2005) –, what is important at this juncture is the suggestion implicit in Brown’s and Ferguson’s observations that Duvalier was purposefully manipulating Vodou in the process of creating this image. While it is not unusual to present similar characteristics in one’s personality or appearance as one’s *mèt tèt* – indeed, similarities in temperament at least are not uncommon at all –, the idea that a vodouisant would capitalise on this association with a particular *lwa* to the extent of consciously propagating an impression that s/he and the *lwa* were one suggests that the adherent may be one of the few who ‘*pran poz*’, that is, ‘act disingenuously as if possessed’ (Brown 2006, 13).¹⁰ As such, while the dictator’s ‘pro-Vodou’ credentials, in Richman’s (2012, 274) terms, are not in question, his motivations for these certainly are. Abbott (2011), Johnson (2006), Richman (2012) and Ferguson (1988) have all suggested that Papa Doc propagated a ‘myth of promotion’ with regard to Vodou, developing a ‘reputation not only for “practicing Vodou” but also for incorporating the practices and priesthood in his ruthless politics’ (Richman 2012, 274). While it would not be fair to question the legitimacy of his links to Baron Samedi within the context of Vodou belief and practice nor indeed any influence the *lwa* may have had in his regime (especially given that Papa Doc, like Dessalines, has become a *lwa* himself, called Lwa 22 Os (Lwa 22 Bones)),¹¹ various observers – academics, Haitians interviewed by Abbott, authors and playwrights, among others – have concluded, to a greater or lesser degree, that Duvalier appropriated the religious tradition and aligned himself with Baron Samedi, keeper of the cemetery who ‘stands at the point where the

¹⁰ *Pran poz* is the phrase used in Haitian Vodou for those who are considered to be “faking” a possession – that is, pretending that one is mounted by an *lwa* –, a phenomenon recognised as possible in many African-derived religious traditions in the Caribbean in addition to Vodou, Santería included. For further discussion in reference to Vodou see Brown 2006, and with regard to Santería, see Hagedorn 2010.

¹¹ François Duvalier regarded twenty-two as his lucky number due to numerous important events falling or deliberately scheduled for that day of the month. The first of these was his election to the presidency. For further discussion, see Laguerre (1989, 113-14, 123; 1982, 106) and Abbott (2011, 122-123). Papa Doc’s affinity for this number is parodied in Haitian diasporic author, playwright and academic Frantz-Antoine Leconte’s *La République*, with it being used recurrently when referring to amounts or number of people in Le Leader’s presence, and it is even the age of Le Leader’s son.

land of the living intersects the land of the dead', in order to gain and maintain political power (Brown 2010 [1991], 368).

Duvalier's presentation of himself as both nation and spiritual entities incarnate is referenced in numerous fictional texts which draw on the events of this period. Fouché's *Général Baron-la-Croix*, described by V. Clark (1992, 784) as 'satirical biography', overtly parodies his declarations to this effect. The play is subtitled as 'une tragédie moderne en deux calvaires, vingt-huit stations et une messe en noir et rouge',¹² thereby incorporating the idea of the dualism embodied by the protagonist, le Chef, in the double reflection of Calvary and the fourteen stations of the cross, before completely enmeshing the Catholic and Vodou traditions in the final mass which has been transformed from the Easter mass celebrating the resurrection of Christ to an apocalyptic mass in the national colours of Duvalierist Haiti which le Chef is unable to control. This dualism of both the oppositional powers in Christianity and the mix of this with Vodou is further underlined in the XVIII^e Station with the observation of a passerby: 'Mon cher ami, [...] aujourd'hui Dieu et Satan marchent la main dans la main comme des frères jumeaux. Quant aux dieux vaudous, n'en parlons pas. Bons comme mauvais, ils dansent ensemble, font l'amour sous le même péristyle' (72).¹³ Associating Papa Doc with the Gede spirit Baron-la-Croix through le Chef's embodiment of this *lwa*,¹⁴ the abovementioned *Catechism for a Revolution* is countered in the XIX^e Station at the end of the first *calvaire*, entitled *Un credo athée*,¹⁵ in which an alternative revolutionary creed is recited disavowing the 'mythes inventés par la peur [...] paroles des faussaires qui derrière leur

¹² 'a modern tragedy in two calvaries, twenty-eight stations and a mass in black and red'.

¹³ 'My dear friend, [...] God and Satan now walk hand in hand like twin brothers. As for the Vodou gods, let's not talk about them. Good and bad, they dance together, make love under the same *peristyle*'.

¹⁴ Baron-la-Croix has variously been described as the brother of Baron Samedi (Déita 1993, 197), another avatar of Baron Samedi (Hurstun 1990 [1938], 214), or simply another name for Baron Samedi (Bourguignon 1969, 188). The two are intimately related Gede spirits, but by writing Duvalier as Baron-la-Croix Fouché has further interwoven Christianity with Vodou through the symbol of the cross.

¹⁵ 'An atheist creed'. Interestingly, the play was written prior to the publication of Baby Doc's *Credo of Jeanclaudism*, referenced above.

masque de justiciers crachent sur leur peuple mépris [...] la danse des ombres sur le corps à demi éteint de la vie' (74).¹⁶ Le Chef asks Baron-la-Croix to accord him power for two thousand years, once again referencing the perception that Duvalier believes himself to be divine, which, when ridiculed by his advisors, leads to their arrest and execution. Le Chef's appointment as a deity is also shown to have been bestowed by the *lwa* himself, who accords this divine right by saying, 'Tout chef est un dieu en puissance' and describing him as 'un dieu qui s'ignore' (16).¹⁷ Furthermore, Jean-Claude Duvalier is seen to be divinely appointed too since it is the *lwa* who begets le Chef's son rather than le Chef himself, which then also makes an explicit link between Baby Doc – François Duvalier's heir – and the Gede *lwa*.

Although le Chef perceives himself to embody Baron-la-Croix – at the only point in the play at which Le Chef's name Dokossou is spoken, he replies, 'Je m'appelle Baron-la-Croix !' (20-21) –,¹⁸ importantly he is never mounted by the *lwa*, only juxtaposed with him through the latter's disembodied, nasalised voice.¹⁹ An implicit critique of Duvalier's presentation of himself as Baron Samedi is therefore posed, since despite le Chef's interactions with his *mèt tèt* and the help the *lwa* offers, a distance is maintained between the two entities. In spite of this, le Chef does dress as Baron-la-Croix and his interpellation of the *lwa* for help in his installation as dictator mirrors the purported summoning of the especially mighty and malevolent spirits from Trou Foban to reside in the Palais National (Abbott 2011, 95), an

¹⁶ 'myths invented through fear [...] words of the fraudsters who behind their masks as upholders of the law spit on their despised people [...] the dance of the shadows on the body whose life is half extinguished'.

¹⁷ 'Every chief is a god in the making'; 'a god who doesn't know himself'. The translation of 'chef' as 'chief' (or le Chef's title as 'Great Chief') is that offered by Coates in her 1996 article, "Folklore in the Theatre of Franck Fouché". Furthermore, the perceived divine status of Duvalier is also parodied in Leconte's (1998, 30) *La République*, in which Le Leader is described as an 'Apôtre de la Révolution et père salvateur de la République' [*Apostle of the Revolution and salvational father of the Republic*]. When Obéry, a rebel, speaks ill of Le Leader near the play's close, he is cautioned by his mother for blaspheming, a charge to which he responds: 'Blasphème ! C'est le mot juste. J'oubliais que je parlais d'un dieu' [*Blaspheme! That's the right word. I'd forgotten I was speaking about a god*] (124).

¹⁸ 'My name is Baron-la-Croix!'

¹⁹ Although the nasalised voice is characteristic of the Gede, this is a further explicit link in the script between Duvalier and Baron-la-Croix, and therefore le Chef (*Général*, 15). Furthermore, it is symbolically relevant to call upon the Gede to help in matters of government since they are said to organise themselves in a system of government with barons and ministers, therefore the link with politics is already in place (Déita 1993, 218).

event which took hold in the popular imaginary as illustrated in *Saisons sauvages* when Raoul Vincent, head of the Tonton Macoutes, states:

Papa Doc lui-même avait attendu trois mois, après sa proclamation comme président d'Haïti, avant de prendre logement avec sa famille dans cette demeure écrasante. Il lui avait fallu tout ce temps pour exorciser des couloirs les esprits de toute nature convoqués par ses prédécesseurs et y installer les siens.²⁰ (229-30)

In Fouché's earlier *Bouqui au paradis*, the playwright's critique of the regime is framed as a series of four 'mensonges' (lies) and one 'vérité' (truth) in which the protagonists are Bouqui and Malice, two figures from Haitian folklore.²¹ Bouqui is repeatedly duped by Malice in a scheme to extort money from him by means of Vodou, the latter, it transpires in the first tableau of 'Première vérité', being in the employ of Maître-Terre. Although more general in its association of Duvalier with a misappropriation of Vodou than *Général Baron-la-Croix*, this earlier play serves to outline a critique that runs through other of Fouché's works and, as will be demonstrated, becomes a common theme in the accounts and fictional renditions of the period: the somewhat opportunistic association of the regime and Duvalier in particular with this religious tradition.

Abbott (2011, 54) suggests that having observed what Vodou was in the present – the perpetuation of the African past – and what it had been in the past – the inspiration for the Haitian revolution –, 'it was only a short step for Duvalier to extrapolate to the future, and to what vodoun could do for him.' The pragmatism herein implied, however, does not necessarily undermine the extent to which the dictator's implicit profession of faith was truthful, an issue Johnson (2006, 426) addresses when he relegates 'the division between "real"

²⁰ 'Papa Doc himself had waited three months after having been proclaimed President of Haiti before moving with his family into that dominating residence. He had needed all that time to exorcise from its hallways the spirits of all kinds invoked by his predecessors and to install his own.'

²¹ *Bouqui au paradis* was first written in Kreyòl in 1960 as *Bouki nan paradi*, while Fouché was still resident in Port-au-Prince. Following the playwright's exile to Canada, it was translated into French in Montreal in 1967 and published by Les Éditions de Sainte-Marie in 1968 (*Bouqui*, 137; Coates 1996, 256).

religion and the specious “use of” religion [...] to venues outside academe’ since ““real belief in” versus mere “use of” the religion [are] ultimately intractable questions’. By presenting himself as both divinely appointed and an embodiment of Baron Samedi, Papa Doc therefore manages to align both ‘religious power and national authoritarian power’ (422), and carefully manage the manner in which both he and his government were perceived, that is, as a president who ‘simultaneously honors Vodou’s cultural significance, claims total allegiance to the Vatican as a marker of Haiti’s political modernity, and contributes to his citizens’ awe of his terrifying and mystifying persona by claiming divine characteristics’ (Heath 1999, 38). This deliberate juxtaposition and perceived promotion of the two religious traditions was recognised by Duvalier (1969, 145) himself, who ‘soulignai[t] le rôle historique du vaudou comme facteur d’unité spirituelle’ while noting ‘en même temps comme fait définitivement acquis l’appartenance du peuple haïtien à la civilisation latine et aux croyances du christianisme.’²² Subsuming Vodou, Catholicism and, as has been argued most recently by Richman (2012, 274-77), Protestantism into the state thus, Papa Doc completes his conflation of the religious and political with the nation, thereby ensuring he is able to control them all as will now be demonstrated.²³

Presenting himself as divinely appointed by the Christian God, a personification of Baron Samedi within Vodou, the embodiment of Haiti’s forefathers and therefore the nation itself,

²² ‘underlined the historical role played by Vodou as an agent of spiritual unity’ while noting ‘at the same time the Haitian people’s affiliation to Latin civilisation and to Christian beliefs as a well-established fact.’ It should be noted that Geggus (2002, 76-77), in reference to Laguerre’s 1989 *Voodoo and Politics in Haiti*, has questioned the characterisation of Vodou as a unifying factor under Duvalier, suggesting that it would have also fractured wider society. This does not, however, undermine the argument that Vodou and Catholicism were juxtaposed within the concept of the nation.

²³ Richman draws on the work of Courlander and Bastien (1966), Conway (1978) and Romain (1986) in her assessment of Protestantism and the Duvalier regime. Moreover, the links between the three religious traditions and their oversight by Duvalier is demonstrated in *Saisons sauvages* as an observation able to be made by those under the regime: prior to his incarceration, Daniel writes – admittedly from his communist perspective – in his diary entry of 1st November 1962, ‘Pendant ce temps catholiques et vaudouisants se livrent une guerre larvée tandis que le mouvement protestant s’insinue sournoisement dans l’arrière-pays’ [*At this time Catholics and Vodouisants are engaged in a latent war while the Protestant movement is underhandedly worming its way into the hinterlands*] (83).

and the sole rightful head of all state apparatus, Duvalier was then able to consolidate his position of power by knitting all of these together in a single entity, namely himself. In contrast to those such as Fanon and his contemporaries who called for a break from colonial rule through the recognition of political and cultural plurality in the Caribbean, Papa Doc sought to establish a regime that symbolically drew heavily on that imposed by the colonial powers since, although they elected him president, the general Haitian population were divested of any political and religious power unless they participated in, and therefore ascribed to the politics of, the regime. By writing *Catechism for a Revolution* and rewriting the Lord's Prayer, along with his acceptance of various titles including 'Apostle of National Unity', Duvalier portrayed his 'brand' of national unity as 'irreproachable' and 'sacrosanct', a process Ferguson (1988, 49) has termed 'supernatural messianism'. When faced with the resistance of Catholic bishops appointed by the Pope, dissenting prelates were forcibly removed from both their positions and Haitian soil, causing further tensions with the Vatican. Re-establishing this relationship was dependent on recognition of the right enshrined in the 1860 concordat of the Haitian president to appoint all bishops and archbishops, subject to papal approval, a right reiterated by the official protocol signed by the papal delegation sent to Port-au-Prince in July 1966 (Abbott 2011, 147; Lora 2003, 1342-48).²⁴ Papa Doc had therefore reaffirmed that the Catholic Church could legitimately operate in Haiti, but

²⁴ In her article, Richman (2012, 275) incorrectly states that, 'In 1966, [...] the Vatican capitulated to Duvalier's demand to abrogate the 1860 concordat and allow Haiti the right to name its own priests,' citing erroneously as her source the 1988 edition of Abbott's *Haiti: The Duvaliers and Their Legacy* (p.381). As noted above, the 1966 Protocol signed between Duvalier and the Vatican instead reiterates the 1860 concordat which allowed Haiti to name its own bishops and archbishops; it decrees: 'Conformément au prescrit de l'Article IV du Concordat intervenu le 28 Mars 1860 entre la République d'Haïti et le Saint-Siège, Monsieur le Président à Vie de la République nommerait au siège actuellement vacant et à ceux qui le deviendront par démission des Titulaires, des Ecclésiastiques auxquels Sa Sainteté le Souverain Pontife s'engage à accorder l'institution canonique, après les avoir trouvés en possession des qualités requises par les Saints Canons' [*As prescribed in Article 4 of the Concordat agreed on 28 March 1860 between the Republic of Haiti and the Holy See, the President for Life of the Republic will appoint to the currently vacant seat and to those that will become vacant due to the resignation of their incumbents, clergymen to whom His Holiness the Pope undertakes to accord canonical office, after having found them in possession of the qualities required by Holy Canon Law*] (Lora 2003, 1344). This right was later renounced by Jean-Claude Duvalier on 8 August 1984, although the amendment recognised the right of the Haitian government to object on political grounds to the Vatican's nomination and that 'à tout moment, la consultation susdite sera effectuée avec la plus grande réserve' [*at all times, the abovementioned consultation will be conducted with the utmost discretion*] (see Lora 2003, 1624-26).

simultaneously restricted any political commentary it could make by aligning the prelacy with the state and removing direct extra-territorial involvement therein. With regard to Protestantism, Courlander and Bastien (1966, 56) conclude that Duvalier's promotion of the development of the Protestant Church in Haiti, thereby undermining both Vodou and Catholicism, indicates that 'the relationship between Duvalier and religion [...] should be approached from the standpoint of the relations between church and state.' For his part, Conway (1978, in Richman 2012, 274) posits that Papa Doc's welcoming of Protestants had the effect of people being drawn away 'from an allegiance to the Catholic Church without themselves presenting a monolithic front to the government.' Reducing the external influence of the Church thus, the dictatorial regime both limited the potential for resistance from this important outside power and consolidated its own grip over each of the religious traditions.²⁵

In conjunction with undermining the influence of the Church on his regime and appropriating Vodou to present himself as a divine entity, the manner in which Papa Doc incorporated the already extant nationwide network of Vodou temples and practitioners into the state apparatus and the image he portrayed of the *lwa* participating in his regime enabled him to further cement and maintain his hold over the nation. He established a nationwide militia answerable directly to him, officially known as *les Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale*,²⁶ but more commonly referred to as the *Tonton Macoutes*. This sobriquet itself is significant as it refers to the 'bogeymen of Haitian folk belief who prowled at night in search of bad little boys and girls whom they thrust into their *macoutes*, the straw satchels peasants carry' (Abbott 2011, 100). However, the Tonton Macoutes are also associated with Zaka (also known as Azaka or often Kouzen Zaka (Cousin Zaka)), a *lwa* often affiliated with Gede but with distinct characteristics. *Lwa* of agriculture, 'he wears a straw hat, a blue denim shirt, trousers with

²⁵ Such caution was ultimately shown to be prudent given the involvement of the Catholic movement of liberation theology in the unrest leading to the deposition of Jean-Claude Duvalier. See: Hurbon 2001, 118-19; Lawless 2002, 42-43; Nérestant 1994, 207-45.

²⁶ National Security Volunteers.

one leg rolled to his knee, and a machete attached to a strap placed about his waist', an outfit similar to the denim uniforms and sunglasses of the Macoutes (Desmangles 2010, 199).²⁷ Brown (2010 [1991], 185) regards the identification of the two as heavily ironic given that the 'stories of corruption, intimidation, and violence that surround the Makout' are quite the opposite of the 'gentle spirit' that is Zaka. Desmangles (2010, 199), however, makes an intriguing comparison between Gede and Zaka:

unlike Gede, Zaka's speech is neither eloquent nor his gestures clever enough to incite laughter. Gede speaks defiantly with bold vulgarity, whereas Zaka is inarticulate [...]. Gede is most often boisterous whereas Zaka is passive and quiet. In short, this unsophisticated and gauche "peasant Pan" (Deren 1972, 110) is the sort of character whom Gede would ridicule.

Symbolically, therefore, the relationship between the *lwa* mirrors that between their homologous figures in the dictatorial state – Baron Samedi (a Gede spirit) and Duvalier, and Zaka and the Macoutes respectively –, whereby the Macoutes are seen to be in a subservient position and less learned than the President for Life. Furthermore, Desmangles (2010, 199) continues to underline a closer affinity between 'the Haitian peasant' and Zaka than between the former and Gede since, 'although Gede produces laughter by clowning, his presence creates a sinister atmosphere which no laughter can obscure.' This then serves to reinforce the hierarchy within the Macoutes which Abbott (2011, 100) describes as a 'giant-bottomed pyramid with most Macoutes at the bottom and a few Duvalier fanatics as commanders.' As many of the literary texts examined here will demonstrate, it is the proximity between Vodou and the state coupled with that between the Macoutes and the general population that is represented as the most common interaction between the dictatorship and the majority of Haitians at the time. While the somewhat removed figure of Duvalier was sinister and

²⁷ Sunglasses are associated with the Gede rather than Zaka, as Brown (2010 [1991], 185 n.5) highlights. Ramsey (2011, 251) writes that the Tonton Macoutes also wore red kerchiefs which 'indexed [...] the *kako* armies who resisted U.S. invasion in 1915', a point noted earlier by Trouillot (1990, 190).

represented fear, the pervasive climate of fear that infiltrated communities was enforced by – and therefore most closely related to – the Macoutes who circulated, and often lived, among the people they intimidated. In short, they were ‘staged as being “of the people” through the imagery of the most populist loa, even as they were tools of repression’ (Johnson 2006, 430 n6). This then constitutes a further important aspect of Papa Doc’s duplicitous use of vodou iconography as he symbolically links the agents of his regime to the popular Gede, therefore subsuming the popular with the state by means of this religious tradition. Furthermore, the recruitment of volunteers from the community rendered the space in which vodou ritual is performed – the community itself – one now occupied by the regime, thereby further negating the possibility for Vodou to continue as a site of resistance.

Moreover, due to the Tonton Macoutes’ proximity to the wider Haitian population, in fictional renditions of the period they come to be representative of Duvalier in their positions as the point of interaction with the regime and also become associated with the Gede. As such, while Zaka is distinct from the Gede and Baron Samedi, in practice the Tonton Macoutes are depicted as exhibiting aspects of both groups of *lwa*, peasants for the most part who symbolically represent the Gede by becoming part of the state apparatus headed by Baron Samedi. One such example is le Gorille (the Gorilla), *chef de section* in Chauvet’s *Colère* which, although purportedly set during the American occupation of Haiti, clearly critiques the Duvalierist state and the violence meted out by it. In this novella, le Gorille is the head of the militia, clad completely in black, who occupy the Normils’ land. In order to secure its return, Rose, Louis Normil’s daughter, must submit to le Gorille which results in her repeated sexual violation by the Macoute. During one of their daily encounters, le Gorille confides to Rose that previously he was ‘un mendiant pouilleux’ before he became a figure of authority, ‘un mendiant méprisé, honni par les inaccessibles têtes de saintes de ton espèce’

(253).²⁸ As a Macoute, le Gorille represents the violent nature of the Duvalier regime, becoming associated with the Gede in the process – as do the Macoutes in general across the works analysed here –, and thus the sinister side of the Gede is foregrounded as a result. Consequently, while it may appear at first that it is a critique of the Macoutes that is most prevalent in works like *Amour, Colère et Folie* and *Saisons sauvages*, this also serves as a critique of Duvalier by means of their association with him and his status as representational of the regime as a whole.

Mars foregrounds this proximity in *Saisons sauvages* through the thoughts of Raoul on his frequent visits to the National Palace. On his way to the presidential residence, he reflects, ‘Avec ses hommes et femmes habillés de l’uniforme de gros bleu, Duvalier ne craignait rien. Ils portaient la toile rude de Papa Zaka et symbolisent la force tellurique du dieu paysan’ (227).²⁹ Importantly in such a discussion of the alignment of Vodou and the state, Raoul continues, ‘Houngans et manbos étaient devenus des auxiliaires précieux du pouvoir, convoqués souvent en consultation au palais national au même titre que maires, préfets de police et chefs de sections rurales’ (227-28).³⁰ In his study of the incorporation of the network of *houngan* and *manbo* into the Duvalier regime, Laguerre (1989, 102; 118) states that ‘[t]he two Duvalier administrations appropriated the political aspect of Voodoo’ and ‘brought the Voodoo church openly into the political process’.³¹ This ‘recruitment of voodoo priests as espionage agents’ is nothing new, as Laguerre (1993, 138) later contends, but rather ‘a common phenomenon throughout Haitian history.’ The process of ‘Macoutization’, to

²⁸ ‘a flea-ridden beggar’; ‘a beggar, despised, shunned by haughty little saint’s faces like yours’ (Translation by Rose-Myriam Réjouis and Val Vinokur in *Vieux-Chauvet* 2009, 245. All further translations of *Amour, Colère et Folie* from this edition).

²⁹ ‘With his men and women dressed in navy blue uniform, Duvalier feared nothing. They wore the coarse linen of Papa Zaka and symbolised the earthly power of the peasant god’.

³⁰ ‘Houngan and manbo had become the precious aides of power, often summoned as advisors to the National Palace, in the same capacity as mayors, police chiefs and rural police chiefs’.

³¹ While Laguerre’s choice of words here might be considered problematic, such as his reference to a notion of a ‘Voodoo church’, his underlying argument has been accepted for the most part by subsequent scholars.

borrow Abbott's (2011, 126) terminology, therefore saw all the religious frameworks already in place subsumed – to a greater or lesser degree – by the dictatorial state, as non-Haitian Catholic dissenters were expelled to be replaced by handpicked bishops, Haitian Protestant pastors, it has been claimed, joined the Macoutes while North American missionaries avoided involvement in political affairs, and *houngan* and *manbo* across the country also enlisted (Richman 2012, 275; Abbott 2011, 101). Vodou priests – male and female – were also invited into the palace and as Mars underlines above, served as advisors in addition to informants and religious practitioners. This continued under Baby Doc, with the invitation of a group of *houngan* and *manbo*, including the current spokesperson for Vodou on the national stage, Max Beauvoir, invited to the Palace in January 1986 to advise the President in the midst of the popular unrest.³²

In this manner, Papa Doc conflates *houngan* and Macoute and thus, 'le père spirituel est devenu père fouettard' (Laroche 1998, 87),³³ an assessment that can apply to both the Vodou priest who is a Macoute and the President himself, as an *houngan*, spiritual father of the nation and the 'bogyman' each Macoute represents. In so doing, this religious tradition, presented since before the revolution – and thus far in this thesis – as a locus of resistance, is dominated by the very organ that feared such opposition, the government as embodied by Duvalier. In his exploration of Afro-Creole cultures in the Caribbean, Burton (1997, 6) draws on de Certeau's distinction between resistance and opposition, seeing the former as contestation from outside the dominant system and the latter as contestation from within that system. If Vodou has indeed functioned as resistance in these terms – an African-derived black religious tradition based in Kreyòl-speaking communities versus the Western-oriented

³² The meetings Beauvoir and others had with Baby Doc are represented in Montero's *La trenza de la hermosa luna*, in which the main *houngan* for Gonaïves under Papa Doc is seen as completely acquiescent to the latter's demands while his son, Papa Marcel, *houngan* in the narrative present of the novel, seems to have a complex relationship with the regime whereby he has links to the Macoutes but also supports the removal of Baby Doc.

³³ 'the spiritual father became the bogyman' (lit. 'the whipping father').

outwardly Christian French-speaking mulatto elite –, then conceptually its incorporation into the state apparatus by Duvalier only permits it a potential position of opposition which is then able to be negated as the ‘dominant order’ can ‘recuperate’ it, as Burton (1997, 8; 252-56) argues.

This “nationalisation” of sorts – a term importantly not synonymous with promotion –, occurring on several fronts as has been outlined, also conceptually undermined another characteristic of Vodou (and other related African-derived religious traditions) that has formed a central tenet of the analysis offered in previous chapters: its status as a locus for female agency and participation. While not restricting participation to men, the association of nationalism with masculinity is a well-established idea in the field of masculinity studies, and such an association therefore aligns those religious traditions associated with and subsumed by the nation as part of the process of nationalism with the notion of masculinity.³⁴ Scholarship has equally underlined that nationalists tend to liken the nation to a male-headed family unit which may subordinate women although they are the symbolic mothers of the nation (see McClintock 1991 and Skurski 1994); the nation thus perceived is a construct in which women’s roles continue to be defined by the father figure.³⁵ Regarding François Duvalier, he embodies the notions of *père spirituel*, apostle of national unity and immaterial representation of Baron Samedi (himself the epitome of masculine sexuality presiding simultaneously over the realms of sex and death) in a single entity intimately linked with violence and destruction. As Trouillot (1990, 179) succinctly summarised in reference to Duvalier’s totalitarian regime, ‘If the nation could be reduced to the state, if the state could be reduced to the Executive, if the Executive was only the chief of state, then the chief of state was the nation’, this a process which ‘necessitated violence without limit’. It is to this

³⁴ For an appraisal of scholarship in this area and the association of nationalism and masculinity, see Nagel 1998.

³⁵ As will be demonstrated below, Duvalier’s regime rendered those it subordinated as conceptually gendered feminine, and errant members of this subordinated class were subjected to violence.

violence and destruction through Vodou as appropriated by Papa Doc's regime that this analysis now turns.

Violence, destruction and state terror

The notion of nationalism as masculine and the perception of the nation as a male-headed household are necessarily bound up with concepts of power and violence. As has been noted, women have been aligned with the nation as the symbolic mothers of the nation or as the idea of the physical nation, which is then subordinate to the masculinised institutions of the state and nationalism (Nagel 1998, 254). Dominated thus, although, as N'Zengou-Tayo (1998, 118) and Bergan and Schuller (2009), among others, have demonstrated and as has been considered elsewhere in this thesis, women are the 'pillar[s] of society' in Haiti, they are simultaneously subjected to the power accorded through the apparatus of the nation, itself conceptualised as subsumed by Duvalier, which from the perspective of the omnipresent dictatorship is therefore necessarily gendered masculine.³⁶ In her discussion of power and violence, Arendt (1970, 41-56) argues that these concepts, although opposites, are intimately connected, with violence unsustainable without power to undergird it and although '[v]iolence can destroy power[,] it is utterly incapable of creating it' (56). By means of explanation, she writes: 'The extreme form of power is All against One, the extreme form of violence is One against All. And this latter is never possible without instruments', since '[e]verything depends on the power behind the violence' (42; 49). For a totalitarian regime, this power base is 'the secret police and its net of informers' (50). With regard to masculinity, Kaufman (1995 [1987], 14) argues that '[t]he construction of masculinity involves the construction of "surplus aggressiveness"', thereby inscribing the perception of masculinity within a notion of

³⁶ The gendered dichotomy of the Duvalierist regime enforced through destructive masculinity forms will be considered in detail below.

men's violence.³⁷ In her discussion of patriarchy, bell hooks (2004, 18) also draws masculinity and violence together, writing that the patriarchal system 'insists that males are inherently dominating [...] and endowed with the right [...] to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence', especially over females. As a result, patriarchy 'supports, promotes, and condones sexist violence' (24), which when applied to a regime predicated on a perception of itself as a gendered dichotomy then associates domination – and therefore violence – with masculinity and subjugation with femininity.³⁸ Those totalitarian regimes – the extreme form of violence in Arendt's conceptualisation, that is – of which the Duvalier dictatorship is an example, remain gendered masculine therefore, not only through the association of the concept of nation it embodies with masculinity but also as a result of the notion of violence as inherently intertwined with that of masculinity when considered within this patriarchal construct.

Moreover, not only is this power and violence therefore conceptually perceived as masculine, the necessary gendered nature of the relationship between those wielding such power and those subjected to it is also constructed as a dualism, that of 'activity and passivity, masculinity and femininity' (Kaufman 1995 [1987], 16-18; hooks 2004, 18-19). In so doing, notions of masculinity held by any of those subjected to this violence are thereby negated as they are emasculated and, from the regime's perspective, their masculinity is violated and destroyed. This is not to suggest that femininity is the destruction, and therefore absence, of masculinity, but rather that the notion of masculinity as perceived by those in power is conceived out of violence and within the dualism of those who violate and those who are violated, the former are masculine and the latter are therefore gendered feminine. As Charles (1995, 158) highlights in reference to state manipulation of gender categories and ideologies

³⁷ Kaufman (1995 [1987], 13) calls this notion the 'triad of men's violence', which he contends is violence: 1) against women; 2) against other men; and 3) against the self.

³⁸ De Lauretis (1989, 240) also underscores this link between violence and the notion of gender, describing the representation of the former as inseparable from the latter.

in Haiti, 'the repressive state can use gender symbols and discourses as a central element in asserting power and domination', itself a process evident elsewhere in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Returning to the idea of violence and totalitarian regimes, the destruction inherent therein reaches its peak when such a regime dominates through terror (Arendt 1970, 54). Having destroyed all opposition, in such a situation violence destroys power and therefore attacks the very base on which the regime is predicated: 'the police state begins to devour its own children, [...] yesterday's executioner becomes today's victim' (55). Terror is then the illustration *par excellence* of the constructed nature of the gendered dichotomy of state power and violence, as those gendered masculine as part of the regime are emasculated and become gendered feminine as part of the process of their destruction. It is this compendium of violence, terror, abuse of power and appropriation of the state and nation, each framed as tools of those gendered masculine within the dichotomy outlined above, that will be referred to as destructive masculinity, a notion very much present in the literary texts analysed below.

First considering this concept in reference to the above-cited historical and biographical monographs and drawing it together with Vodou, Abbott (2011, 95) describes Duvalier as exhibiting what has been formulated here as destructive masculinity through the inherently violent notion of 'mastery': 'In vodounesque Haiti, Duvalier knew he had to do more than propitiate some spirits. If he were to succeed in gaining complete mastery of his people, he needed Haiti's most powerful spirits by his side.' Furthermore, she later writes, 'As profoundly important as his mastery of Haiti's spiritual world was, Duvalier never neglected brute physical force', which he imposed through his network of Macoutes unhindered by 'the eunuch army' (166). Papa Doc has therefore been described as both manipulating – and

therefore violating – the image of the *lwa* in Haiti and abroad and violently oppressing the Haitian people.³⁹

For their part, Diederich and Burt (1972, 357) describe what in Abbott's (1991, 81) terms was Duvalier's 'harness[ing] the great forces of evil to assist him in his quest for absolute power' as 'the most outstanding job of zombifying people'.⁴⁰ While this is not a claim that the dictator has zombified the population in the manner in which the process is conceptualised by the Bizango, Diederich and Burt do use the popular image of the *zonbi* portrayed as emblematic of Vodou in North America and beyond – as evidenced by it constituting the original impetus for Wade Davis' research in Haiti, famously depicted in his books *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1997 [1985]) (later sensationalised in Wes Craven's (1987) film adaptation) and *Passage of Darkness* (1988) – to evoke an image of complete subservience to the regime.⁴¹ Déita (1993, 199) has described Baron Samedi as the *lwa* responsible for, and able to perform, zombification, symbolically significant given Papa Doc's association with this *lwa*. Moving into fictional renderings of the regime moreover, Similá, Macoute *bòkò* in *Del rojo de su sombra*, is said to have long had *zonbi* under his jurisdiction,⁴² and Mars'

³⁹ Within Haiti, Duvalier's association with Baron Samedi undoubtedly served to enhance the dictator's image as the figure who controlled death. However, as Brown (2010 [1991], 360) observes, Gede 'presides over the realms of sex, death, and humor', the former juxtaposed with the rumours of Papa Doc's impotence in later life (one of the themes which forms the basis of *Général Baron-la-Croix* (Coates 1996, 258)), and the latter unlikely to have been foregrounded. Outside the country's borders, as many publications, novels and films were to attest, the image of Vodou presented was one which linked 'the "barbarism of the Duvalierist political regime" with "the 'diabolic' character of this 'black sect'" (Ramsey 2011, 251, citing Gérard Pierre-Charles, *Radiographie d'une dictature*).

⁴⁰ Abbott has presumably revised her implied demonisation of Vodou in this regard since this quotation, taken from the 1991 edition of her biographical monograph, has been deleted from the 2011 edition.

⁴¹ As Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert (2011, 151-53) underline, in spite of Davis' work, the perception of the *zonbi* as having had his/her *ti bon anj* captured by a *bòkò* and therefore constituting an empty vessel under the latter's command persists today. They describe the image of the *zonbi* as 'symbolic of the Haitian experience of slavery, of the separation of a man from his will, his reduction to a beast of burden at the will of a master' (153). Furthermore, this image of the *zonbi* is also to be found in Haitian cultural production, since, as René Depestre (in Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 2011, 153) argues, 'The history of colonisation is the process of man's general zombification. It is also the quest for a revitalizing salt capable of restoring to man the use of his imagination and his culture'.

⁴² As established in chapter two, although *Del rojo* is set temporally during the *dechoukaj* that followed the fall of Jean-Claude Duvalier's dictatorship, Similá's status as a *bòkò* and his long-standing relationship with the Macoutes permits a comparison to be drawn between him and the Papa Doc regime.

protagonist Nirvah describes Haitians under Duvalier as, ‘Nous sommes déjà devenus des zombies. Pour vivre une vie en apparence normale, il ne faut pas avoir d’opinion, il ne faut pas se révolter contre l’arbitraire, contre le terrorisme d’État’ (*Saisons*, 96).⁴³ The image of the *zonbi* as the destroyed individual referenced by Depestre is personified in Marie’s description of her mother Nirvah, subjected to the psychological manipulations and sexual whims of the *chef des macoutes* Raoul Vincent, as ‘comme un fantôme, elle n’a plus de substance, elle déambule dans la maison avec l’air de chercher quelque chose, mais elle ne trouve jamais rien’ (178).⁴⁴ Destroyed by those working for Duvalier, Nirvah has been subjected to the zombification she earlier criticised as she unsuccessfully sought the release of her detained husband by attempting to fight the state apparatus from within by means of a sexual liaison with Raoul.⁴⁵

Appearing in the same year as *Saisons sauvages*, Antonin’s (2010) film *Zonbi candidat à la présidence, ou Les Amours d’un zonbi*, written by Gary Victor, critiques the idea of Duvalier having zombified the nation even further with a group of Port-au-Prince’s political elite deciding to nominate Pierre Zephirin, a newly escaped *zonbi*, to the presidency.⁴⁶ Ultimately unsuccessful in their scheme as Pierre withdraws his candidacy, the premise of the film is succinctly communicated in one of its opening scenes by a pastor who questions the validity of the *zonbi* giving a press conference: ‘Jodi a zonbi a ap bay konferans de près. Kilè n ap

⁴³ ‘We have already become zombis. In order to lead a life that appears normal, you mustn’t have any opinions, you mustn’t rebel against the despotism, against the terrorism of the State’.

⁴⁴ ‘like a ghost, she is devoid of all substance, she wanders around the house as if looking for something but never finds anything’.

⁴⁵ The alignment of destructive masculinity and sexuality will be explored in detail below.

⁴⁶ G. Victor (2007, 43-55) has explored the idea of zombification and politics elsewhere, notably in his short story *Nuit de chance* in which Kerou, senatorial candidate, makes a pact with a *bòkò* in order to get elected and ends up becoming a *zonbi*. However, as Victor (2007, 55) satirically notes at the story’s close, ‘dans un pays où la folie est la norme, personne ne s’en rendit vraiment compte’ [*in a country where madness is the norm, no one really realised*].

jwenn fren to kote n ap tonbe a? Kilè tenèb ap disparèt sou peyi a?’⁴⁷ Although the film sees Pierre resist the impositions of both the politicians and Baron Samedi, the question regarding the possibility for opposition (contestation from within) to this image of the zombified nation continues to resound throughout.⁴⁸

Such a situation in which the use of Vodou becomes politically expedient in order to obtain a position of power, as suggested in G. Victor’s *Nuit de chance*, is one of the main themes running through his earlier novel *Clair de manbo*. Hannibal Serafin returns to Haiti from exile in North America seeking to be elected President, styling himself as ‘le Président des Générations Futures’ with a string of other titles reminiscent of Duvalier (53).⁴⁹ In order to do so, he is advised that he should propitiate the *lwa* Agwe through *manbo* Madan Sorel, but the local *bòkò* Djo Kokobe, banished from the community by means of a *pwen*, sees this as an opportunity to become the local rural police chief and so intimidates Hannibal into ensuring he obtains this position in exchange for Djo’s assistance. On the one hand, therefore, Vodou in this novel is presented as a means of intimidation intimately related to politics, although, as becomes apparent, there is space for opposition through Vodou in the community, manifested by the cosmic battle between Djo and Madan Sorel which results in both of their deaths, that of the latter presented as sacrifice.⁵⁰ When isolated, however, Djo’s intimidation of Hannibal takes the form of an overnight siege of Hannibal’s residence, during which the latter fears for

⁴⁷ ‘Today the *zonbi* is giving a press conference. When are we going to find the means to stop falling to the depths we are? When will darkness disappear from over the country?’ (02:12).

⁴⁸ Having been framed in a Protestant religious setting, the question could be regarded as either opposition or resistance depending on how close one regards the continued relationship between the Protestant church and the Haitian state to be.

⁴⁹ ‘the President of Future Generations’. When asked in a dream ‘Que feras-tu de nous [...] quand tu seras Président d’Haïti?’ [*What will you make of us [...] when you become President of Haiti?*], Hannibal focuses on the certainty of his presidency and responds in the self-aggrandising manner often associated with Duvalier, proclaiming himself ‘Hannibal Serafin le Rédempteur, le Libérateur, le Civilisateur, le Sauveur, le Bienfaiteur, l’Homme Providentiel, l’Homme Ultime, l’Homme du Pays profond, l’Homme de la Majorité Nationale, le Réconciliateur’ [*Hannibal Serafin the Redeemer, the Liberator, the Civiliser, the Saviour, the Benefactor, the Man of Providence, the Supreme, the Representative of the Heartlands, the Man chosen by the National Majority, the Reconciler*] (*Clair*, 53).

⁵⁰ This notion of sacrifice on the part of a *manbo* for her community has been discussed in relation to Zulé in *Del rojo de su sombra*. Madan Sorel’s sacrifice can be perceived in much the same manner.

his life and believes that the protection of Agwe he enjoys to be ineffectual, resulting in his acceptance of Djo's terms (120-24). The violent siege carried out by the *bòkò* then represents a microcosm of the larger siege of the nation by Duvalier,⁵¹ whereby the embodiment of masculinity terrorises the doubly feminised resident – as the object of masculine violence simultaneously identified with the domestic – who is confined by the four walls of his violated abode. Emasculated thus, the only way for Hannibal to reassert the masculinity he believed he had reinforced through ensuring his project of installing himself as supreme leader of the nation is to join forces with the violator in order to do so. Vodou is therefore portrayed as both the mode and means through which destructive masculinity is employed to ensure control over the state and its people.

The notion of siege then leads to the concept of terror often used in descriptions of François Duvalier's regime, in biographical and historical accounts and fictional texts alike. Abbott (2011, 117-140) entitles one of the eleven chapters of her work directly discussing the Duvaliers 'The Height of the Terror', while Trouillot (1990, 169), Nérestant (1994, 173-176), Scharfman (1996, 234), Joseph (2007, 145) and Ferguson (1988, 91), among others, all directly reference the notion of terror under the dictatorship.⁵² In the literary domain, le Chef in *Général Baron-la-Croix* maintains his hold on power by eliminating the advisors who suggest that he sounds like a mythomaniac when presenting himself as a god (as Baron-la-Croix told him he was) and that he should work for the good of his people (26). Baron-la-Croix's advice, however, is that 'La force seule est vraie. L'histoire en mains, on peut dire

⁵¹ Joseph (2007, 149) uses this notion of Duvalier laying siege to the nation in her discussion of writing under dictatorship and Chauvet's *Amour, Colère et Folie*.

⁵² Ferguson (1988, 91), however, questions the prevalence of terror since, curiously, he appears to divorce fear and hopelessness from terror itself, therefore suggesting the latter is only physical destruction which 'was infrequently used against the ordinary Haitian' rather than incorporating into the concept the fear of such destruction and the hopelessness engendered by the use of terror on its avowed victims.

que la force est le sésame de la politique. Avec elle, le mot impossible n'existe plus' (18).⁵³ The *miliciens*, his 'escouade de la Terreur', are themselves dressed as Gede spirits, named 'gouverneurs de la mort' and described as *loups-garous* ("werewolves", with the emphasis placed on their ability to transmogrify from otherwise indistinguishable members of the community into ferocious animals (Anatol 2000, 49)); that is, they are Duvalier's Macoutes (*Général* 35).⁵⁴ In keeping with Arendt's notion of terror as complete violence which destroys power and therefore itself, in the play's final scene, entitled 'Messe en noir et rouge' which collapses Catholicism, Vodou, politics and madness into one, the notion of 'le Pouvoir' onto which le Chef has clung so tightly is destroyed by the Apocalypse brought upon them by Baron-la-Croix, the source of the power le Chef believes he has wielded (119-21).⁵⁵ Impotent in the face of this all-consuming last act of violence, le Chef yells to his petrified wife that the Silence – emblematic of his reign and which he had destroyed in a bid to maintain his power – is returning to subsume the very notion of power it enforced. Le Chef and his wife, gripped with terror, then freeze as the silence falls and the macabre laugh of Baron-la-Croix rings out for the last time.

The terror instituted by Duvalier and the Macoutes as agents of this terror coalesce to illustrate in *Saisons sauvages* an important theme with regard to the Duvalier regimes: 'De temps en temps la révolution', embodied by Papa Doc as exemplified above, 'dévore l'un de ses fils, semant le trouble et la confusion dans le cercle des proches', Nirvah observes (172).⁵⁶ Moreover, terror becomes self-perpetuating as, in an effort to avoid becoming the victim of

⁵³ 'Violence is the only truth. With history in hand, it can be said that violence is the key to politics. With violence, the word impossible no longer exists'.

⁵⁴ 'squadron of Terror'; 'masters of death' ('gouverneurs' has been translated as 'masters' in order to remain consistent with the English translation of Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée* as *Masters of the Dew*). Hurbon discusses the presentation of the Macoutes as *loups-garous* during the *dechoukaj* in his 1987 book, *Comprendre Haïti: Essai sur l'État, la nation, la culture*.

⁵⁵ 'Mass in black and red'; 'Power'.

⁵⁶ 'From time to time the revolution', embodied by Duvalier as exemplified above, 'devours one of its sons, sowing the seeds of uneasiness and confusion among those in the innermost circle'.

violence, ‘la délation est devenue le sport national’ thereby potentially deflecting the arbitrariness of destruction under terror onto another individual (189).⁵⁷ However, by its very arbitrary nature, as Nirvah underlines, no one but the man administering terror – ‘le fou au pouvoir’ – can escape it since he ‘obéit souvent à d’occultes pulsions ou à de simples lubies et peut faire disparaître du jour au lendemain son serviteur le plus fidèle’ (189).⁵⁸ By embodying all the organs of government and the nation – religious traditions included – and thereby the epitome of masculinity, Duvalier also manages to remain above such arbitrary acts of violence as the blame for the terror imposed by his agents falls upon them rather than the President: Maxime Douville, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, ‘n’en veut pas à François Duvalier, ni aux macoutes, encore moins aux militaires’ for the execution of members of his family during the *vêpres jérémiennes*, ‘[t]oute sa haine se porte sur [...] le principal exécuteur des basses œuvres de la dictature’, Raoul Vincent (250).⁵⁹ By subsuming all loci of resistance into the state, embodied by himself, and promoting denunciation of one’s colleagues and members of the community through a climate of terror, Duvalier is presented in *Saisons sauvages* as above the reproach of even the ministers affected by his brand of destructive masculinity, these men who can see the workings of the regime. As noted above, Arendt concludes that terror destroys its power base and therefore begins to destroy itself; Abbott’s (2011, 121-22) assessment of Graham Greene’s (author of the celebrated novel *The Comedians*, set in Haiti under Papa Doc) surprise at Duvalier’s perceived longevity as architect of such a regime would therefore appear warranted: ‘In retrospect, what most astonished Greene was that Duvalier survived Duvalierism. “I little thought that Papa Doc would survive to die a natural death years later.”’ In reference then to *Saisons sauvages* in particular, it would seem that when the state violence employed by the Duvalierist regime is

⁵⁷ ‘informing has become a national sport’.

⁵⁸ ‘the madman in power’ – can escape it as he ‘often acts on secret impulses or on nothing but a whim and from one day to the next can make his most loyal servant disappear’.

⁵⁹ ‘doesn’t hold a grudge against François Duvalier, nor against the Macoutes, even less against the military’ for the execution of members of his family during the *vêpres jérémiennes*, ‘[a]ll his hate is directed at the principal executor of the dictatorship’s dirtiest work’, Raoul Vincent.

considered in terms of masculinity and femininity, there exists the continued threat of subjection to feminisation through the destruction of one's masculinity. This then foments the desire to reassert one's masculinity through the easiest form of destruction, that is, of a colleague on an equal footing (as shown here) or of citizens outside the framework of power, as will now be explored.

The notion of terror with regard to the Macoutes and the wider Haitian population has been highlighted as a key theme in Chauvet's *Amour, Colère et Folie* by numerous scholars (including, among others, Dayan (1991; 1996; 2011), Scharfman (1996), Jean-Charles (2006) and Kalisa (2009)). In his discussion of terror in the trilogy, Scharfman (1996, 234) highlights the manner in which the regime fractured society by rendering impotent any organisation that might promote opposition:

The other [...] is watching me, but never to share anything. S/he is there, threatening to denounce me without me knowing. In terror paranoia reigns: all solidarity is forbidden. [...] In Chauvet's world gone mad, power afflicts, inflicts violence arbitrarily [...].

The fracturing of society reaches as far as the family unit, which risks decimation should any member be accused of plotting against the regime. As *père spirituel* and father of the nation, symbolically Duvalier occupies a position of distant but omnipresent patriarch whose authority is then imposed by his agents, the Macoutes.⁶⁰ In reference to *Colère* and its female protagonist Rose, Jean-Charles (2006, 7) writes,

⁶⁰ Although not the focus here, it is important to note that the representation in fiction of dictators and dictatorships by those who impose the will of the state – here the Tonton Macoutes – and with whom the wider population interact rather than by depicting the figure of the dictator him/herself is not an uncommon phenomenon in literature from Latin America and the Caribbean (particularly from the 1950s to the 1970s), as Cuban critic Roberto González Echevarría (1985, 64-85) has demonstrated. In the case of the texts analysed here, the links between François Duvalier and his 'bogeymen' have been further consolidated through the symbolism of Vodou, the participation of the Macoutes in the Duvalierist state and nation-building which itself is embodied by Papa Doc, and the participation of the Macoutes in state-sponsored violence in order to propagate terror. As such, while the Macoutes are not Duvalier in person, they are agents of the state he embodies and contribute to the image presented of Duvalier by means of his state apparatus.

under the conditions of terror fear obliterates the option of consent within this model; that is, Rose's actions are motivated by fear and must be viewed in the context of *la terreur*, during which the private lives and belongings of Haitian citizens no longer belonged to them.

This appropriation of citizens' 'private lives and belongings' extended to their own bodies, all of which were systematically violated and destroyed. Given the focus of this section on destructive masculinity and Vodou, Chauvet's third and least analysed novella, *Folie*, will form the majority of the analysis offered as it constitutes the point of the trilogy at which violence and destructive masculinity coupled with Vodou become absolute. However, by means of introduction and exposition of these notions in the two preceding novellas, this discussion will now turn to Chauvet's *Amour* and *Colère*, texts that have comparatively received much more of critics' attention.

In her article seeking to underscore the effect of state terror on the female protagonists of *Amour* and *Colère* – Claire and Rose respectively – and therefore on Haitian women in general under the Duvaliers, Chancy (2004, 310) has criticised as oversimplistic the assertion that Claire and Rose gain agency through their associations with Ezili and described Chauvet's 'vision' in her trilogy as 'ha[ving] a depth charged with a realism that cannot be dismissed or subsumed under an analysis that merely shifts the ground from character to god, or from story to myth.' However, as Dayan (1991, 240) has argued, analysing *Amour* and *Colère* through the characterizations associated with Ezili 'goes beyond any false dichotomizing, as she prescribes and responds to multiple and apparently incoherent directives', presenting complex narratives of Haitian women's lives in which the individual and the *lwa* come together rather than the mythological masking rendering the women's lives invisible through the latter being romanticised or mythologised, as Chancy (2004, 309-10) charges. The 'dualité' which Claire sees in herself – daughter of a practitioner of the black

religious tradition of Vodou but fervent believer in the white Catholic faith, sexually active in her dreams and fantasies but still a virgin at the age of thirty-nine – is indeed a reflection of two avatars of Ezili: sensual *lwa* of love and sexuality as the *mulâtresse* Ezili Freda, fierce revolutionary warrior who is said to eschew men despite presiding over the realm of motherhood as the black Ezili Dantò, both associated with different incarnations of the Virgin Mary (Dayan 1991, 240-41). However, Dayan has also described Claire's *dédoublement* as that of Ezili Freda and Ezili Je Wouj, the latter the old, stooped, Ezili who schemes therefore representing the element of women to be 'abhorred' (240). As the agent of state terror, Calédu, the local Macoute chief, keeps a stranglehold over the community, whipping Dora Soubiran's genitalia so fiercely she can barely walk a week later (*Amour* 37), summarily executing Jacques le fou in the street in front of the procession for the Feast of the Virgin (46-48), and violating Claire both in her dreams with his 'phallus énorme' which becomes a knife to murder her and with his gaze when he sees her in public (125-26; 147).⁶¹ In his position, therefore, Calédu reinforces the subjugated status of the population, fracturing both the community and Claire's family unit, and ultimately violating her in her dreams and by sight. In this first novella, Chauvet's protagonist manages to revolt against this patriarchal authority, taking the knife given to her by her sister's husband as a love token – Dayan suggests the same knife represented as piercing Ezili's heart in the *lwa*'s *vèvè* – and stabbing Calédu. In so doing, 'this violent phallic gesture', Scharfman (1996, 240) concludes, 'allows Claire to become the aggressor, both father and Calédu, thereby destroying the whip, the rape, [...] the cruelty to which she had been subjected.' However, as Larrier (2000, 104) observes, Claire's subsequent return to her locked room undermines this 'act of resistance', this a symbolic appropriation of masculinity, as any position of power she gained is immediately negated by her confinement and then Rose's enforced subjugation to the regime which follows in *Colère*.

⁶¹ Claire's dreams often depict her physical and/or sexual violation; the following morning she ponders: 'Combien de fois ai-je été poursuivie par des taureaux enragés, par des bêtes immondes, par des monstres qui, tous, voulaient me violer ou me tuer ?' [*How many times have I been chased by mad bulls, by low beasts, monsters, all wanting to rape or kill me?*] (126; Translation: Vieux-Chauvet 2009, 121).

If Ezili is present through Claire's duality in *Amour*, Dayan (1991, 247) suggests that Rose's story is that of 'the Virgin, Mary Magdalene, or Saint Theresa' which 'recalls Erzulie, the goddess cursed by the Church as whore but whose generosity knows no bounds.'⁶² Only daughter in the Normil family, Rose accompanies her father – at his behest – to lodge an official complaint against the government's occupation of the family's land, which, by her rejection of her father's prohibition and therefore her submission to le Gorille alone, results in her abovementioned repeated sexual violation as a form of payment in exchange for the plot that has been taken.⁶³ Rose's body therefore becomes 'annexed' to the land thereby converting her from a person into property, an object which Dayan (1991, 243) concludes, recalling 'the legend of "Sor Rose" or "Sœur Rose"', then must be 'ravished' in an image of 'woman's passivity or submission [...] necessary for the ideology of nation building to be effective.' Duvalier's project of nation building – that is, a personal fiefdom over which to wield power – is no different, it requires those gendered feminine to be passive and submissive. However, Rose's willing submission to her violation and subsequent liberation she perceives as a result of it has been described as her obtention of a form of power oppositional to masculine violence (see, for example, Dayan 1991, 248; Mayes 1989, 86; Orlando 2003, 107). This is the very notion that Jean-Charles (2006, 7-8) critiques above when she writes that terror negates the possibility of consent since, in spite of any perceived opposition through Rose's portrayal of her ordeal, it still constitutes the masculine destruction of the feminine through rape 'because of the conditions under which she "agrees" and the circumstances of each encounter.' Perceived in this manner, Rose's experience sees not only her body destroyed but also the violation of her psyche; as Scharfman (1996, 240-41) posits,

⁶² The reiteration of Ezili's identification by the Church as a whore and subsequent denigration has continued with the recent publication of Gregory Toussaint's *Jezebel Unveiled* in 2009.

⁶³ Although Rose enters into this agreement knowingly, the question remains whether or not Rose willingly decides to subject herself to le Gorille's sexual violation – or indeed if she is able to give consent in such a situation –, as has been explored by Jean-Charles (2006), referenced below.

she suffers degradation but at the same time becomes ‘an active, complicit collaborator in this degradation’. The violence she is subjected to is therefore not ‘gendered violence as a tool to *avoid* other forms of violence’ (own emphasis), but rather gendered violence which both represents and forms part of other forms of violence, as well as being complicit with them (as Jean-Charles (2006, 7; 7-16) has argued). In Dayan’s (1991, 243) terms, ‘Chauvet [...] reveals that [Rose’s] violation is *always* sexualized, and that it has been accomplished not only by the black intruder, but by her mulatto family’ also, this in spite of her family not being active participants in the acts of sexual violence to which she is subjected (original emphasis). Moreover, in the context of this wider discussion of destructive masculinity, the violation of individuals and family units by the state is both sexualised and gendered violence. In *Amour* and *Colère*, the narratives have focused on female protagonists violated by male aggressors who represent the state; in *Folie* this final notion is also destroyed as the male protagonist is feminised in a context in which ‘degradation, claustrophobia, paranoia, and derangement reach their paroxysm’ (Scharfman 1996, 243). It should be noted that male characters in both *Amour* and *Colère* are feminised by means of state violence; for example, Jacques le fou is killed by Calédu in *Amour* and Rose’s father and brother are positioned as in opposition to the regime during their struggle to regain their land in *Colère*. However, it is in *Folie* that this theme is foregrounded through René, its protagonist.

As outlined above, critics analysing *Amour*, *Colère* et *Folie* have focused for the most part on female protagonists and the manner in which they are inscribed within, and to a certain extent subvert, patriarchal norms. Furthermore, for the most part, these analyses concentrate on the first two parts of the trilogy, with few looking closely at *Folie* in any detail.⁶⁴ In this regard, this section focuses on the manner in which the male protagonist of *Folie*, René, is subjected

⁶⁴ A notable exception to this is Laroche’s (1984) *Trois études sur Folie de Marie Chauvet*, and the more recent lecture by Colin Dayan (a.k.a. Joan Dayan) entitled “The God’s in a Trunk, or Chauvet’s Remnants”, given at Barnard College, New York, on 21 November 2011.

to the gendered violence outlined above in a context of Vodou explicitly interwoven with Catholicism. Emasculated by means of the Duvalier regime's destructive masculinity, René occupies a dehumanised space in which the notion of violence extends through the physical and psychological to the very structure of the narrative and its context. In contrast to *Amour* and *Colère*, in which the reader witnesses the continual decay of each of their narrative contexts, in *Folie* society has fractured to such an extent that the sieges placed in the first two novellas have long been in place come the last. Holed up in a stinking shack with his two friends (later joined by a third) – all poets –, René narrates the story of their ultimate demise at the hands of the Macoutes in a Haiti in which the divisions between the physical and spiritual, reason and insanity, human and animal have completely collapsed.⁶⁵ Convinced of their persecution by 'les diables' – the devils –, who are the Macoutes, René confines the starving group of poets to this tiny space where, blocked off from the outside world, honey that has been offered to the *marasa* is the only source of nourishment and, with water rationed, *kleren* the only liquid to slake one's thirst and stave off hunger.⁶⁶

Beginning with the interweaving of Vodou and Catholicism, therefore, this is evidenced most clearly with the perceived omnipresence – in the street or in their hideouts – of *les diables* who patrol the town. In the first of his three essays, Laroche (1984, 21-22) points to the polyvalence of the term although he does not explore it further: 'Si tout comme [René] une bonne proposition [*sic; proportion*] d'Haïtiens adopte volontiers un langage catholique et parle de diables[,] il n'est pas sûr que ce langage chrétien ne recouvre pas souvent une symbolique vodouesque.'⁶⁷ While the *diables* are indeed described as those often figuring in

⁶⁵ It should be noted that the overlap of reason and insanity in *Folie* is distinct from that suggested by critics as the main theme in Mars' *Fado*. In *Fado*, possession by Ezili was permitted and enabled Anaïse to reconstitute her sense of self. Conversely, here the blurring of the two is the result of the René's violation by those associated with the regime and the *lwa* by means of Duvalier.

⁶⁶ *Kleren* is cheap, unrefined white rum.

⁶⁷ 'Like [René] a good proposition [*sic; proportion*] of Haitians voluntarily adopt a Catholic form of speaking and talk of devils[,] it is not certain that this Christian language does not often conceal Vodou symbolism.'

the Western imaginary, ‘tout noirs avec des cornes et une queue rouge’ (*Folie*, 355),⁶⁸ it should also be noted that in Kreyòl the term *djab* encapsulates both this concept and the notion of an “evil” spirit in Vodou. Although obviously written in French – ‘a pure French, “le français de France”’ Scharfman (1996, 230) contends –, the novella (and the trilogy as a whole) includes various terms derived from Kreyòl such as *cocobés* (cripples), *simples* (ritual actions and/or gestures associated with Vodou) and *bon ange* (*bon anj*), for example, none of which are footnoted in the 2005 Zellige edition. As such, while the words are indeed French and terms such as *diable* convey the meanings commonly understood in ‘le français de France’, it would be fair to suggest that they also incorporate the meaning ascribed to them in Haiti, in this case, a repetition of the inscription of this novella in both the Catholic and Vodou traditions. Indeed, the repeated denomination of the Macoutes as *diabes* is prefaced in *Amour* and *Colère*: Jacques le fou calls Calédu ‘Satan’ (46) and the Macoutes driving in the stakes which separate the Normils from their land are dressed completely in black (165) (Dayan (1991, 243) makes this more explicit and terms the latter ‘devils’). In addition to this, Laroche (1984, 23-25) deconstructs the notion of the *marasa* – invoked by the ‘*plats-marassas*’ in the shack with René and his friends – in a particularly illuminating fashion, underlining how this concept exists between four poets all looking towards the *métropole* with regard to their artistic production: Jacques and André are *frères de sang*, a twinning broken by Jacques’ death during the siege, André and René are *frères de nationalité* when perceived in comparison to Simon (a Frenchman), and René and Simon are *frères de l’âme*, given the similarities seen between the two by Jacques and André. As such, while they are writing in what they perceive to be a French tradition, notions associated with Vodou define their existence, both as brothers and as victims of the *diabes/djab*.

⁶⁸ ‘all black with horns and red tails’ (Own translation. Réjouis and Vinokur have altered the meaning slightly, writing ‘all black with red horns and tails’ (347)).

Educated out of the Vodou and Kreyòl his black mother bequeathed to him by the French Catholic sisters and brothers at the schools he attended, René considers his relationship with the *lwa* as one of expediency, ‘Autant amadouer les loas et les mettre aussi de mon côté’ (301).⁶⁹ However, in a context in which the regime – in this case, a *noiriste*, nationalist dictatorship portrayed as an embodiment of Vodou – seeks to crush anything perceived as outside of its control, René’s orientation towards France in education and poetry, itself the impetus for the creation of the ‘Confrérie de poètes fous’ as Commandant Cravache denotes them (323),⁷⁰ identifies him as a target for elimination. As such, whether *les diables* really are roaming the streets and laying siege to the poets’ shack is not what is important, the offensive the regime is leading is against the ideas the poets potentially write about in their work. The wife of le Chef in *Général Baron-la-Croix* describes the nature of this oppression thus,

Ce sont des exaltés, les poètes. Ils sont plus à craindre qu’aucun autre pour la paix de la cité. Je ne redoute pas tant un revolver dont on arme la main malhabile d’un ignare qu’un seul chant de révolte de ces poètes maudits. En un rien de temps ça peut vous ameuter une foule et vous mettre le feu aux poudres.

[...]

On ne sait jamais ce qu’ils cachent derrière leur tête de fous, ces intellectuels. (105-106)⁷¹

In this instance the only poet left in the city – described as harmless by the functionaries of the regime – is shot on the orders of le Chef as a precautionary measure while his case is investigated. As poets, René and his group of friends in *Folie* and this single remaining poet, victim of Fouché’s le Chef, represent an elite educated in an education system oriented

⁶⁹ ‘Might as well wheedle the *loas* and have them on my side as well’ (291).

⁷⁰ ‘Brotherhood of mad poets’ (314).

⁷¹ ‘Poets, they’re fanatics. They are to be feared more than any other with regard to maintaining calm in the city. I dread a revolver in the clumsy hand of an ignoramus less than a single call to revolt from those damned poets. In no time they can stir up the crowd and ignite a rebellion. [...] You never know what they’re hiding inside those crazed heads of theirs, those intellectuals.’

towards France, if not physically situated within its borders. On one level, therefore, this conflict between the nominally postcolonial state and the Francophone poet reiterates that outlined by Fanon (1952), among others, in *Peau noire, masques blancs* between the Antillean who rejects what France represents and the one who returns from France having completely adopted the former coloniser's ways. However, in this context of a violent dictatorial state which seeks to eliminate that which it cannot both circumscribe and control, the poet here constitutes a source of either resistance through his articulation of ideas from outside or opposition by expressing ideas not sanctioned by the state. As illustrated in both of these works, the mere potential for non-adherence is enough to warrant elimination: the unnamed poet in *Général Baron-la-Croix* is said to be harmless while the four friends in *Folie* have not produced anything worthy of wider recognition.

Moreover, the targeting of the intellectual perceived to reside outside the control of the state serves to further underscore Duvalier's duplicitous use of Vodou and Catholicism, whereby his explicit alignment of religion and state and his imposition of a violent dictatorial regime are themselves reminiscent of the colonial period, while his appropriation of Vodou in order to remove this religious tradition as a possible site of resistance aligns his otherwise symbolically Western-oriented regime with that which the coloniser rejected: the influence of Africa. While it is not the purpose of this analysis to question the extent to which Duvalier's practice of Vodou was an expression of genuine belief, the manner in which he conflated it with the abovementioned notions and apparatus associated with the coloniser and used it as a means to impose a destructive, masculine-gendered regime suggests that the persecution of the intellectual – represented here by the poet – focused more on the latter's potential to fall outside the control of the state rather than there existing a conflict with the regime's above-cited ideological stance. This is illustrated by René, an individual who recognises his dual heritage – French and Kreyòl, Catholicism and Vodou – and therefore seemingly embodies

the influences upon which Duvalier draws, yet he is still targeted by the dictator through his Macoutes due to the potential threat he poses as one who might articulate an alternative idea of the Haitian nation. *Folie* opens in the throes of battle, with René momentarily imagining his poetry as his weapon: ‘Je vais, drapé de majesté ancestrale, ouvrir d’un coup de pied cette porte et marcher jusqu’à eux. Dessalines ! Pétion ! Toussaint ! Christophe ! J’appelle à l’aide nos héros indomptables’ (300).⁷² Drawing on the forefathers of the Haitian state just as Duvalier did, he recalls that through poetry, ‘enfermé dans le Parnasse haïtien’, he sought to create ‘un Dieu bien haïtien, moitié blanc, moitié noir, mélange de Christ et de Legba [...], pour, à coups de machette imaginaires, tracer le sentier de la liberté [...] et gravir l’inaccessible colline du rêve’ (300).⁷³ However, as he has articulated at the novella’s outset, this is but a dream and poetry is not a weapon he can use as it is incompatible and therefore forbidden by those who wield power. In this manner, Chauvet reinforces the idea that persecution in *Folie* focuses on the dichotomy imposed by the Duvalierist state which rejects any construction of the nation through pluralism as Duvalier himself is that nation. For the regime, there are those who form part of the state apparatus and those positioned outside – and therefore against – it, formulated in other terms as those gendered masculine and those rendered feminine.

This omnipresent threat because of the group’s status manifests itself as René’s perception that they are constantly under siege, attacking the site of the only weaponry he once considered his own: his sanity (one example of the *folie* to which the title refers). Within the context of the trilogy, any limited amount of agency that Rose might have had within the constraints placed upon her by her being forced to act as she did in *Colère*, such as any element of freedom she perceived that she gained through her actions, is completely negated

⁷² ‘By the glory of our forebears, I’m going to do it, kick the door open and walk up to them. Dessalines! Pétion! Toussaint! Christophe! I call on our indomitable heros for help’ (290).

⁷³ ‘shut away in my Haitian Parnassus’; ‘a truly Haitian god, half-white, half-black, a blend of Christ and Legba [...], to hack a path to freedom with an imaginary machete [...] and climb the unreachable hill of dreams’ (290).

here as René's psychological state worsens due to the incessant onslaught from the *diables* he believes are hounding him because of his self-professed vocation. Duvalier's regime and its omnipresence has created such a climate of terror that the mere threat of violence – the presence of Macoutes in the street – is enough to completely destroy any possibility of rationality.

One example of the blurring of the distinctions between reason and insanity is René's concern for the corpse lying in the street, which he reiterates on several occasions through the novella. Initially convinced that he saw the *diables* shoot the man in front of him, René then believes it must be Saindor, the owner of a bodega by the sea, before questioning whether it is the body of a dead dog when he runs out to get water and coal. Never sure whether it is in fact Saindor or just a dog, it is only after René runs out into the street and throws a Molotov cocktail which results in his arrest that an outside voice states, 'Hou ! comme ce cadavre de chien pue !' (357).⁷⁴ More important than whether the body is that of Saindor or just a dog is the fact that the situation has dehumanised René and the other poets to such an extent that the corpse could be either. Referring to this passage, Dayan (2011) asks, 'does the distinction between human corpse and animal carcass matter?'; at this point destruction has reached such a level that man and dog are equivalent (Scharfman 1996, 244). As a result, not only is René's body violated through starvation, the restrictions placed on his freedom of movement and finally his execution, his entire sense of self is destroyed as the notion of personhood is no longer a defining characteristic that differentiates him from an animal. Not only has Duvalier's destructive masculinity gendered René feminine through its violation of his body and mind therefore, it has completely dehumanised the other to such an extent that, as Marty (1997, 153) concludes, in this literary context the very fact of being alive becomes a plot against the state. It is here, then, that terror begins to attack itself as Arendt's theory requires: as keeper

⁷⁴ 'Ugh, that dead dog over there stinks!' (349).

of the cemetery presiding over the transition between life and death as well as the space in between, Baron Samedi embodied by Duvalier, helped by his *djab*, begins to attack life, the very power base upon which his position is predicated. For without life there can be no death, and without death, no cemetery.

This destruction of the fabric of the regime is further represented by the manner in which Chauvet writes her text. *Amour* is written as a series of journal entries, Mayes (1989, 83) posits, and *Colère*, as is apparent, in the format of book chapters. The first book of *Folie*, however, seems to consist of lengthy streams of consciousness punctuated by dialogue between the four poets, while the second begins with the breakdown of even this narrative structure into a script detailing their arrest before ending with what amounts to a transcription of their interrogation and execution, both from René's perspective. Drawing together Fanon's call for nation building through cultural production in the Caribbean with the notion of nationalism as gendered masculine, the conflict depicted in this novella could be perceived as one between two forms of masculinity, both seeking to delineate an idea of nation. However, from the perspective of the dictatorship, there is no alternative form of masculinity to that which it has itself espoused, that is, the destructive masculinity examined here. Other concepts of masculinity are negated since those not subscribing to Duvalierism are subjected to violent repression, fail in their assertion of an alternative and become gendered feminine. As established, *Folie* demonstrates that any potential for René's poetry, or that of his group, to counter the dictatorial state is nothing but a dream; their sporadic attempts to do so fail in the face of state terror which attacks their sanity, and the agents of which ultimately kill them.⁷⁵ Interestingly, the manner in which René's death is recounted returns to the complete marriage of Vodou and Catholicism in this novella and reiterates the poets' failure to counter

⁷⁵ Although Jacques dies in the shack, this is shown to be the result of the siege in place against the poets by the *diabes/djab*, agents of the state.

the Duvalierist regime. Likening it to the crucifixion of Christ, René is executed at the hands of the *diabes/djab*, and at that point implores the Christian saviour, ‘fais que notre mort serve à quelque chose et empêche nos noms de sombrer dans l’oubli’ (382).⁷⁶ At the height of his *folie*, René’s death also becomes a moment of prescience: the downfall of the Duvalier dynasty would indeed come at the hands of those that both Papa Doc and Baby Doc had sought to silence and dominate, the emasculated army, the Catholic Church, the representatives of Vodou, and most importantly, the Haitian population itself. Perhaps, as suggested in *Général Baron-la-Croix* – a play itself having been described as prophetic –, when faced with complete destruction ‘[l]a folie parfait, c’est la sagesse’ (18).⁷⁷ However, in the narrative present, René’s death further illustrates his failure to assert an alternative notion of masculinity and of nation, as by calling on Christ and drawing a parallel between the manner of their deaths, René symbolically inscribes his death into François Duvalier’s narrative of the nation since the latter has presented himself as the embodiment of the Christian God in addition to Baron Samedi. In this novella, then, Chauvet depicts not only the rendering of René as feminine and the destruction of the notion of personhood through terror, but also the negation of any alternative form of masculinity and the collapse of the division between the realms of the dead and the living for a regime that presents itself as presiding over this distinction. Having symbolically destroyed the feminine, the prediction is then that the course of terror will lead to its self-destruction.

Destructive masculinity and sexual subjugation

The destructive masculinity reinforced through Vodou discussed above is an important element in *Saisons sauvages*, with Raoul in his position of Secretary of State in charge of the Macoutes depicted from the outset in a position of masculine authority over a female

⁷⁶ ‘let our deaths mean something and don’t let our names become lost in oblivion’ (373).

⁷⁷ ‘[p]erfect madness is wisdom’.

petitioner upon whose vulnerability he preys. Having been kept waiting for four hours and ten minutes, when Nirvah is admitted to the Secretary of State's office, she addresses him as *Son Excellence*, immediately reinforcing the gendered hierarchy which he has already begun to exploit. Nirvah is acutely aware of this, that '[s]on pouvoir peut me sauver ou me détruire', but also that she is 'dans la pire situation où peut se retrouver un citoyen du pays[, e]n butte à la colère légitime de l'autorité absolue' (15).⁷⁸ This absolute authority upon which the regime is predicated is inherently gendered, and is a construct which can be imposed irrespective of an individual's sex (though, it is worthy of note that the majority – though by no means all – of those participating in the state apparatus were indeed male). With regard to women within this framework, Charles (1995, 140) writes,

The Duvalierist state [...] restructure[d] and redefine[d] gender roles and representation with two constructed categories of women: a reappropriated historical gender symbol represented by a rebellious slave woman, Marie Jeanne, who as a new constructed category [...] became an integral part of the state paramilitary forces; and, parallel to the new "Marie Jeanne," another woman—the enemy of the state and nation. Women who were not loyal to the Duvalierist cause were defined primarily as subversive, unpatriotic and "unnatural."

The first category, of which Madame Max Adolphe became emblematic in her role as commandant of Fort Dimanche, has, at least in the literary works studied here, been subsumed by the singular presentation of those state apparatus in which they participated (such as the Fiyèt Lalo), most commonly represented in these fictional accounts as *miliciennes* (or in the case of *Général Baron-la-Croix*, just as 'la Femme' – the wife –), if differentiated at all. The second category, however, are those such as Yvonne Hakime-Rimpel, raped and left for dead as a result of her outspoken opposition to Duvalier's politics (Abbott 2011, 93), or Mars'

⁷⁸ 'his power can save me or destroy me', but also that she is 'in the worst situation in which any citizen of the country could find him/herself[, f]acing the legitimate anger of absolute authority'.

protagonist Nirvah, disloyal to the regime solely by association. It is the targeting of the latter group that Trouillot (1990, 167) contends differentiated Duvalierist violence from that of previous regimes in Haiti, that is, ‘the complete disappearance of the protection traditionally conferred by femininity’ since ‘[e]veryone knew—and François Duvalier wanted it known—that women could fall victim to state violence. The unusual became the principle.’⁷⁹ Furthermore, as is the case with Nirvah and her children, ‘political innocents’ – women, children and old people (Charles 1995, 139) – became legitimate targets despite any relationship to a political suspect being ‘nonpolitical’; claims that links to suspects were “‘just” familial, friendly, religious, or social’ were no longer a defence (Trouillot 1990, 168).

In such a climate in which gender polarises the positions of violator and violated, corporeal markers of femininity become potential sites of violation if associated with the subservient, as Nirvah notes when she rejects the idea of asking the Secretary of State to use his toilet: ‘Je n’ose pas lui rappeler que j’ai un corps, un appareil urinaire, une vulve. [...] Je ne le veux pas m’imaginant dans la pièce à côté, vulnérable et dénudée. Cette fonction de ma féminité me semblerait dans cet instant une faiblesse, une menace contre mon propre corps’ (*Saisons* 17).⁸⁰ Nirvah fears that reminding Raoul Vincent that she is a woman would increase the risk of his raping her, rape under Duvalier often being, Jean-Charles (2006, 5) states, ‘a punishment for political dissidence or simply a recreational activity for the Tonton Macoutes’ (though such a categorisation of rape as ‘simply a recreational activity’ is seemingly antithetical to the Duvalierist project since it would serve to reinforce the climate of terror by virtue of constituting arbitrary violence). The regime’s use of sexuality as a means of subjugation, particularly in contexts where it is aligned with Vodou, will be the focus of this

⁷⁹ Charles (1995) also discusses this phenomenon in her article cited above.

⁸⁰ ‘I daren’t remind him that I have a body, a urinary tract, a vulva. [...] I don’t want him imagining me in the room next door, vulnerable and semi-dressed. At this moment, this element of my femininity seemed a weakness to me, a threat to my own body’.

section which will draw it together with the notion of destructive masculinity already examined.

As noted, the sexual violence meted out by male Macoutes over female citizens, central to Chauvet's *Amour, Colère et Folie*, is a recurrent theme in fictional works exploring Haiti during the Papa Doc and Baby Doc years. While Mars inscribes her novel in a tradition that has stretched from Chauvet's seminal novel in 1968 to the present day, incorporating other works analysed here such as Montero's *Del rojo de su sombra* and G. Victor's *Clair de manbo*, a notable way in which *Saisons sauvages* differs from the others mentioned here is by the open-ended nature of her female protagonist's fate; in these other novels the female protagonists are either depicted as dying – such as Rose in *Colère*, Zulé in *Del rojo* and Madan Sorel in *Clair de manbo* –, or their death is implicit – having killed the *chef de section* Claire is unlikely to escape the same fate in *Amour*, while Cécile's execution is implied at the end of *Folie* –. *Saisons sauvages*, however, ends with Nirvah and her family halted at a Macoute roadblock on their way to the Dominican border, and the reader is not told of the outcome. In this regard, Mars responds to the question of her not depicting a 'personnage de victime héroïque' by stating, 'Les victimes héroïques sont mortes sous la dictature. Je m'attache surtout à comprendre ceux qui y ont survécu' (Tortel 2010),⁸¹ a project which she effectuates through the character of Nirvah. As will become apparent, this character's experience of sexual violence develops in a manner very similar to that of Rose in *Colère*, but then as a mother whose violator falls out of favour with the regime, her story continues beyond the point at which Rose dies.

For both Macoute chiefs in *Colère* and *Saisons sauvages*, raping adolescent virgins is a way in which they impose their power, not only through violating their bodies sexually and

⁸¹ 'The heroic victims died under the dictatorship. What I seek most is to understand those who survived it'.

possessing them for the first time, but also by destroying the notion that respectability is tied to a daughter's virginity and concomitantly the idea that parents can protect their children. Le Gorille, the epithet used for the Macoute chief in *Colère*, checks that Rose has not lied about being a virgin when he first meets her, then, dripping with sweat to the extent she already felt defiled, '[i]l s'enfonça en moi d'un seul coup terrible, brutal et, aussitôt, il râla de plaisir' (252).⁸² In comparison, immediately after Nirvah leaves Raoul's office, he ponders, 'Mme Leroy venait faire appel à son pouvoir. Son pouvoir. Une drogue dont il ne pouvait plus se passer à présent. [...] Il gardait une collection de mouchoirs tachés du sang de jeunes vierges qu'il dépucelait en les violant' (*Saisons* 25),⁸³ and possessing Nirvah, representing all that he despises, is what he desires most (26; 89).

However, both Rose and Nirvah see their sexuality as the only means with which they can attempt to obtain what they want: the return of her father's land in the case of the former, and the release of her husband in that of the latter. As Jean-Charles (2006, 7) intimates above, although other critics have suggested that Rose – and therefore by association other women – can ostensibly give her consent in such circumstances and therefore seem to retain an element of agency, the nature of the climate of terror negates any notion of agency since there is no other option. Agency can only be gained therein if the balance of power shifts and these women can begin to engineer the situation to their own advantage. With both Rose and Nirvah, this is not presented as possible.

Moreover, even if Rose and Nirvah regard their use of their sexuality as a means to obtain what they want, as the narratives progress it is clear that the process of repeatedly being subjected to the destructive masculinity that both men put into practice has ramifications

⁸² '[h]e rammed himself into me in one rough terrible thrust, and immediately groaned with pleasure' (244).

⁸³ 'Mrs Leroy came to appeal to his power. His power. A drug he could no longer do without. [...] He kept a collection of handkerchiefs stained with the blood of the young virgins he deflowered by raping them'.

which reach beyond their physical bodies. In *Colère* the reader witnesses Rose's decline as her daily submissions to le Gorille – who, when she whimpers in pain, promises 'Je t'ouvrirai jusqu'à ce que mon poing y passe', and whose hands she can feel 'sur mon corps[,] dans mon corps, fouillant ma chair sans vergogne' – destroy her resolve (252-53).⁸⁴ Already dead – she states this repeatedly –, by the end of the chapter in which her ordeal is recounted she has become a '[p]anthère lascive et insatiable' compared to him, 'un pauvre chien [...] qui [...] adopte l'attitude d'un loup[, ...] qui aboie et qui mord pour prouver qu'il est autre chose qu'un chien' (260).⁸⁵ As such, the end of the month sees her both physically and psychologically destroyed as her response to her rape has gone from resistance through passivity to contemplating the possibility of sexual pleasure were the situation different to finally her self-perception as an animal alongside him.

Nirvah's experience goes beyond that of Rose's as she recognises that she is deriving pleasure from her sexual relationship with Raoul, a pleasure 'qu'il m'a injecté nuit après nuit, dans le froid de la chambre, en prenant possession de l'endroit et de l'envers de mon corps, en me violentant souvent. Les dimensions insoupçonnées de la volupté que j'ai trouvées dans la soumission à cet homme' (*Saisons* 211).⁸⁶ Raoul therefore conceptually replaces her incarcerated husband due to the intense pleasure he elicits in her, however the image of her complete destruction is portrayed when she physically craves his sexual violence despite in her mind knowing she wants to reject it. Upon his return from the *vêpres jérémiennes*, during which time he took the opportunity to propitiate his *Iwa* Sogbo, Nirvah confronts Raoul about

⁸⁴ 'I'll open you up until my entire fist goes in', and whose hands she can feel 'on my body[, i]nside my body, shamelessly probing my flesh' (245).

⁸⁵ 'a lascivious and insatiable panther'; 'a poor dog [...] who turns into a wolf[...] who barks and bites to prove that he's something other than a dog' (252).

⁸⁶ 'that he injected into me night after night, in the cold of the bedroom, possessing my body from the front and from behind, often raping me. The unsuspected depths of intense pleasure that I've found in my submission to this man'.

whether he was sexually abusing her children too.⁸⁷ Flying into a rage, he denies any interest in her son and bombards her with a series of questions about her daughter without answering any, forcing her to look at their image in the bathroom mirror as he yells at her and saps her life with his eyes: ‘Comment as-tu pu ne pas voir une chose aussi énorme se passant là, sous tes yeux ? Ou bien est-ce qu’il n’y a rien à voir ? [...] Est-ce que je la force, est-ce que je dois la brutaliser, ou en veut-elle aussi ?’ (244).⁸⁸ Confused and physically restrained, Nirvah feels Raoul’s erect penis pressing against her buttocks and the turmoil in her stomach, ‘Je ne veux pas lui céder mais je ne pourrai pas dire non à mon corps. Raoul se détache de moi enfin. Je me retourne vers lui, lui tends mes bras [...]. Mais il s’éloigne en regardant sa montre. Sans un regard il me laisse’ (245).⁸⁹ In an image of complete subjugation (the opposite of María Antonia’s defiance as depicted at the end of Hernández Espinosa’s play), Nirvah is rejected having been lied to about his sexual relationships with her children and rendered complicit in her entire family’s denigration; in keeping with Scharfman’s (1996, 241) observation with regard to terror in *Colère*, Nirvah is also made to believe she is responsible for her family’s abuse and humiliation. This episode in which her ideas of being in control of her body and of being able to protect her children are destroyed follows Raoul’s return from the region of Grande-Anse where he imposed the state’s authority in Jérémie by massacring opponents of the regime and their families and propitiating his *mèt tèt*. Initially reinvigorated by both events – especially the ceremony for Sogbo from which he leaves feeling invincible – and describing Nirvah and her children as his real family (224-25), Raoul senses that his position within the regime and with Nirvah is in danger when he visits

⁸⁷ Desmangles (2010, 203) describes Sogbo (or Sobo) as the *lwa* of thunder and lightning, who in his Petwo manifestation is often violent and potentially destructive, even to the extent of ‘caus[ing] death to persons who harbor [him].’ Interestingly, following Raoul’s propitiation of his *lwa*, he is shown to fall increasingly out of favour with the regime which does indeed result in his death.

⁸⁸ ‘How could you not have seen something so terrible happening here, right in front of your eyes? Or is it that there isn’t anything to see? [...] Do I force her, do I have to hit her, or does she want it also?’

⁸⁹ ‘I don’t want to give in to him but I won’t be able to say no to my body. Raoul finally breaks away from me. I turn around towards him, hold my arms out to him [...]. But he moves away, looking at his watch. Without even glancing at me, he leaves’.

François Duvalier at the Palais National for the first time upon his return, a prospect that would see his masculinity challenged. However, reliving the events in Jérémie by recounting them to Nirvah sees him reenergised, he is calmed by this reiteration of his masculine status and it is at this point that she confronts him about her children. As such, in spite of the imminent threat to his status within the state apparatus, the moment of his most violent outburst resulting in Nirvah's destruction (explored in more detail below) directly follows the point at which his masculinity as a destructive agent of the Duvalierist regime is reinforced, coupled with his propitiation of his *lwa*.

This destructive nature of male sexuality is also shown in *Del rojo* and *Clair de manbo*. Firstly, in *Del rojo* Similá's semen is seen as deleterious; Zulé is warned against sleeping with him and the resultant pregnancy ends in miscarriage. Furthermore, the manner in which he has sex with her – although it is consensual – is described in violent terms, 'Similá Bolosse la destazó así mismo, como se destazaban los careyes de la costa, la revolcó sobre los taburetes derribados y la sometió mil veces, haciéndola besar la tierra' (91).⁹⁰ In coming to Zulé's *batey*, Similá is not only seeking to cure the sores he carries but rather to forge an alliance between his *gagá* – and by extension his *ounfò* near Lac de Péligre – and Zulé's in order to secure a route by which to traffic the narcotics passing through post-Duvalierist Haiti. Unsuccessful in his attempts to forge such an alliance, Similá then seeks to destroy Zulé in battle, bathing in the blood of a hundred goats in order to propitiate Lokó Siñaña and bringing his band of Macoutes with him (34-37). As Burton (1997, 229, drawing on Yonker 1988, 154) suggests in relation to *rara* – closely related to the Haitian-Dominican tradition of *gagá* –, the very notion of battle between rival groups is 'a "magical mirror" for the operations of power in Haiti, not just in the sense that it evinces " [...] the motivation to compete violently

⁹⁰ 'Similá Bolosse slaughtered her just as turtles on the coast are slaughtered, he conquered her among the overturned stools, he subdued her a thousand times, making her kiss the ground' (Montero 2002, 73).

for dominance” [...,] but that it is situated at the crossroads’ where Vodou and political power intersect. In this context, therefore, although Similá does not manage to cow Zulé and she dies at the hand of Jérémie Candé mounted by Carfú, the destructive masculinity bolstered by Vodou with which he attempts to render her subservient is a direct inheritance from the Duvalierist state via his participation as a Macoute.

With regard to Djo Kokobe in *Clair de manbo*, he is also a malevolent *bòkò* who seeks to subjugate and destroy Madan Sorel both out of revenge and to remove any opposition to the terror he intends to impose on the region over which he has been made police chief. Calling the *manbo* to him by attacking with a poisoned axe the sacred mapou which serves as her link to Ginen and the *lwa*, Djo Kokobe demonstrates that he has no reverence for the *lwa* who reside in and commune with the physical world through this tree, while also symbolically aligning himself both with the Church’s war on Vodou which on one front focused on cutting down this sacred tree and with the destructive effects of deforestation in Haiti (such as flooding, landslides and poor soil quality) to which the felling of mapou for charcoal has contributed (Rodman 1954, 68). Physically maimed by Djo’s actions as she is viscerally connected to the mapou, Madan Sorel meets him at the base of the tree where he forces her to prostrate herself and beg for mercy before detailing the manner in which he is going to rape her. In so doing, he seeks to render her physically and spiritually subservient and becomes enraged when she suggests he is both fearful and impotent when presented with her naked body. His masculinity injured thus, he throws himself on her and upon penetrating her, seals both their fates: to die at the hands of the *vèvè*, Djo’s soul to burn and Madan Sorel to rise in communion with the *lwa* and the spirit of the *vèvè*. As such, Madan Sorel’s and Zulé’s sacrifices in order to protect their respective communities can be seen to be of a similar vein, whereby they are both destroyed by notions of masculinity associated with power and the

Duvalier regimes but in so doing come to represent the possibility of survival for those left behind.

Returning to Nirvah's denigration in *Saisons sauvages*, upon submitting herself to Raoul in order to save her husband she is reduced to the roles she fulfils: wife, sexual partner/whore and mother. From the moment she does so however, the destructive nature of Raoul's masculine sexuality, notably more potent after his offering to Sogbo and his campaign in Jérémie on behalf of Duvalier, will destroy her in each of these roles. As outlined above, from the moment at which sex with Raoul becomes pleasurable, Nirvah no longer considers herself a faithful wife. As a sexual partner likened to a whore, Nirvah is also destroyed. Visiting her neighbour Solange – a *manbo* and a prostitute – earlier in the novel, Nirvah is told, 'Les fougounes des femmes, [...] c'est comme la faïence. Une fois lavées, elles redeviennent neuves. Nous ne gardons pas de trace, pas de marque dans nos corps' (125);⁹¹ after burning her husband Daniel's journal to prevent his further incrimination, she also states, 'mon sexe est de faïence, [...] il est comme neuf une fois que je le lave' (174).⁹² However, as becomes apparent, Raoul's sexuality is also deleterious and Nirvah's vagina does not become like new each time she washes it with the marks left on her psyche shown to be indelible; there is a disjunction between her body and mind whereby the former yearns to be violated and appears to act of its own accord while the latter rejects this corporeal desire. At this point, in the absence of proof to the contrary, she gathers her strength to be a mother to her children. However, having permitted Raoul access to her house she has also exposed her children to the danger he poses: he has repeatedly raped Nirvah's daughter Marie, who conceives, has a botched abortion which then threatens her life, and in a curious sense of recreating Greek mythology, he violates Nicolas' innocence by gaining his confidence through tutoring before

⁹¹ 'Women's pussies are like earthenware. Once they are washed, they become new again. No trace remains, our bodies are not marked'.

⁹² 'My genitals are made of earthenware, [...] once I wash them they are like new'.

making of him ‘son garçon d’amour’ (203-204).⁹³ Shown to be incapable of fulfilling the roles by which she has defined herself throughout the novel thus, Nirvah and her family’s survival hinges on their escape at which point she is fighting for their very existence, an escape that may also have been unsuccessful since they are stopped only a few miles from the border. In short, therefore, Raoul’s noxious masculine sexuality reinforced through his association with the regime and Vodou succeeds in destroying Nirvah completely, and although by inference from Mars’ above-cited statement Nirvah and her family survive the dictatorship, the question remains as to with what sense of self they manage to do so. Will Nirvah be able to wash these experiences away as she suggests when she asserts, ‘Je laverai chaque jour ma fente avec de l’eau et du savon et des feuilles de petit-baume’?⁹⁴ Mars does not provide an answer.

Finally, this analysis returns to the notion of terror and its self-destruction. Consistent with the Duvalier regime’s appropriation of Vodou as a means to enforce terror and destructive masculinity, Raoul seeks the help of his *lwa* Sogbo to enable him to overcome what he perceives to be Nirvah’s own protection at the hand of the Gede. Although she has visited Solange who herself serves Déméplè,⁹⁵ Nirvah has resisted the protections offered for both her and her children.⁹⁶ Nirvah explains the fit Raoul suffers when he touches her as epilepsy, an explanation Raoul rejects, saying that ‘elle ne relevait pas seulement de la science

⁹³ ‘his boy lover’.

⁹⁴ ‘I will wash my slit every day with water and soap and candlewood leaves’.

⁹⁵ Solange states that Déméplè is a *nago* spirit (52), a group of *lwa* which Rachel Beauvoir (2003, 87) describes as ‘Lwa ki sòt peyi Nigeria [...] Nago yo, se lwa ki renmen lagè, yo vyolan anpil’ [*Lwa who have come from Nigeria [...] the Nago are lwa who like war, they are very violent*].

⁹⁶ Nirvah does however visit Solange for a cleansing bath after having burnt Daniel’s diary and thereby fully aligning herself with Raoul (161). During the bath Nirvah interacts with the *lwa*, which she describes as ‘délivrance’ [*deliverance*]. Furthermore, Solange warns Nirvah of impending death based on the notion that death may claim an animal as he lies in wait for a person, and one of Solange’s chickens dies after visiting Nirvah’s yard (233). In the context of this analysis, therefore, Mars can be regarded as careful to portray the restitutive aspects of Vodou when it remains within the realm of the feminine; it is only presented as destructive per se when aligned with the masculinity of the regime.

médicale' and therefore necessitated a sacrificial offering to Sogbo (103-104).⁹⁷ It is following his return to Chardonnières to propitiate the *lwa* that his abuse of Marie and Nicolas is discovered and the other ministers in Duvalier's cabinet seek to discredit and undermine him. Despite his increased level of protection, he is still vulnerable to attack from an individual he perceives as serving Gede – Nirvah – and one who embodies Gede through Baron Samedi – Duvalier –. As such, although Vodou can serve to reinforce destructive masculinity and sexuality in the context of the Duvalier regime, in *Saisons sauvages* it cannot help when an individual loses their status as gendered masculine and is therefore placed in opposition to the dictatorship. In the strict dichotomy created where resistance is impossible as one cannot reside outside the control of the state and opposition from within is crushed, propitiating one's *lwa* can only be of benefit from within this construct. As such, Vodou can support the violence meted out by the Duvalier regime by reinforcing the notion of destructive masculinity, but once an individual is gendered feminine within the dualism inherent in representations of Duvalierist Haiti, any power accorded by Vodou is negated. Furthermore, in *Saisons sauvages*, as in other texts analysed here, a belief in the power of Vodou by those within the regime when it is separated from the context of masculinised imposition of power through violence is portrayed as a source of self-destruction. Raoul, le Chef in *Général Baron-la-Croix* and Djo Kokobe all believe their power to be bolstered by their interactions with Vodou and the *lwa*, but this confidence leads them all to attack the fabric of the system itself which then leads to their downfall.

In conclusion, therefore, this analysis has demonstrated how, when viewed through the lens of destructive masculinity, literary renditions of state violence in the context of François Duvalier's regime have underlined the gendered nature of the framework of dictatorial power and have capitalised on the appropriation of Vodou and Catholicism by the dictatorship to

⁹⁷ 'it didn't only come under medical science'.

explore the gendered violence inherent in the climate of terror created under Papa Doc in greater detail. Collapsing the spaces of the dead and the living as Duvalier did by presenting himself as the embodiment of Baron Samedi, these works have emphasised how Duvalier's subsumption of the traditional locus of resistance since the revolution negated the possibility for resistance and allowed him to use the same religious framework as a means to crush opposition. Conflating religion, nation and state into the single figure of himself, Duvalier became synonymous with his regime which his bogeymen, the Macoutes, came to symbolise due to their status as the agents of the state with whom the wider population interact. Furthermore, the gendered hierarchy of power upon which the notion of destructive masculinity is predicated illustrates that in spite of the fact that the overwhelming majority of those wielding power were male, being of this sex did not prevent the feminisation of those considered opponents and therefore their subjection to physical and psychological gendered violence in the same manner. The regime has also been associated with a notion of destructive sexuality whereby the imposition of sexual violence by those in positions of power is seen as deleterious, undermining in *Amour*, *Colère* and *Saisons sauvages* at least any sense of agency the women subjected to it perceived they had. Finally, not even membership of the state hierarchy could ensure one's safety from emasculation and therefore the subjection to violence; in accordance with Arendt, the imposition of terror propagated the demise of the very agents of terror. As Sartre stated in 1961 in his Preface to Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* and Fanon explained in the same volume, the violence suffered under colonialism would be reflected and imposed by those educated in the nations that imposed that colonialism. The step that Duvalier took that went further than his predecessors was to recognise religious traditions as sites of potential resistance and therefore to eliminate this possibility by absorbing them into the state. Appropriated thus, Vodou no longer constituted a locus of resistance but rather a part of the repressive state framework which has been coupled in literature with the notions of destructive masculinity and sexuality to explore the

experiences of Haitians under the fixed dichotomy – Duvalierist or subversive, masculine or feminine – imposed by the Duvalier regime.

CHAPTER SIX

UNTIL DEATH...: SEXUALITY, DEATH AND THE SACRED

When considering the notion of sexuality in fictional texts from the Caribbean, the contemplation of death as an intertwined concept is inescapable. As evidenced in each of the works analysed, the two both depend on and influence each other, either through their juxtaposition or, more intimately, by framing and informing the other thus rendering both notions more complex. Drawing these two themes together from the preceding chapters for specific consideration, this final chapter will examine the interweaving of death and sexuality in the texts, focusing in particular on the context of Santería and Vodou. It will then consider the fashion in which these concepts have been theorised from a European perspective, demonstrating that such a framework in the context of African-derived religious traditions in the Caribbean is more complex than those proposed by major theorists of these ideas in Western traditions, such as Georges Bataille and Jean Baudrillard. Finally it will turn to the multiple forms in which death can be manifest, exploring the key notions of prostitution, motherhood, rape and sacrifice in the works studied. As such, the chapter will illustrate the importance of using these literary and theatrical texts as a source of knowledge regarding the perception of death and sexuality in the Caribbean in order to complicate these male-oriented perspectives.

Most overt in works such as *Del rojo*, *María Antonia*, *Fado* and *Clair de manbo*, in which the female protagonists' deaths form part of the discourse regarding their sexuality, death and sexuality are essential to the narrative in the other texts analysed: in *Como un mensajero* Aída's impending demise is directly related to her sexual relationship with Caruso, while in *Saisons sauvages* Daniel Leroy's prolonged incarceration leads to his symbolic death due to his wife's decision to effectively replace him with the minister in charge of the Macoutes. In

this latter instance, the protagonist maintains a sexual relationship with the minister, which then results in her own symbolic death both as a victim of rape who ends up desiring her attacker and as a mother unable to protect her children from his sexual advances.

The figure of death is often personified in narratives framed by African-derived religious traditions such as Santería and Vodou, interacting directly with individuals, as it does in *María Antonia*. The protagonist's encounter with Ikú personified as Cumachela upon entering the *manigua* in the fourth *cuadro* is an indication of her inescapable death and her conflict with the paternal authority of death, yet, importantly, this scene takes place immediately after María Antonia has put an *amarre* on Julián having heard that he will leave Cuba to box abroad and just before she meets Carlos, with whom she explores the possibility of a life together and who later murders her. Framing the scene with her sexuality thus, María Antonia and Cumachela also explicitly juxtapose the former's sexuality with death by referencing it while María Antonia interrogates Ikú/Cumachela and contemplates leaving Julián. Just as her physical demise is inescapable, so is the failure of her relationship with Julián which contributes to it: as an *hija de Ochún*, María Antonia's rejection and abandonment by her lover, an *hijo de Changó*, is inevitable (Martiatu 2004a, 51). Stabbed in the vagina by the spurned and emasculated Carlos, María Antonia's death collapses the notions of death and sexuality, as does Julián's murder at the hands of his lover María Antonia. Furthermore, Cumachela conflates these concepts herself, embodying Ikú and referring to her 'machos' who are coming to dance with her – the *íremes* that appear with her in the eleventh *cuadro* after Julián's murder –, later relating her sexual exploits in the *bar de los muelles* to Julián and the party gathered with him. It is this coexistence and close interaction of death and sexuality within the context of Santería and Vodou that will now be examined.

In her analysis of the Gede, Brown (2010 [1991], 360-61) observes that they are the spirits who ‘preside[...] over the realms of sex, death and humor’, which she later describes as ‘the great social levelers’. Often symbolised by an erect penis, skull and/or cross – the latter indicative of the tomb but also the crossroads between life and death –, the Gede reside in the cemetery and represent, through the conflation of these symbols and spaces, the notion in many African-derived religious traditions in the Caribbean that sex and death are two sides of the same coin (Beasley 2010, 43; Smith 2012, 125; Brown 2010 [1991], 357; 368).¹ This link between the Gede, sex and death has been discussed in chapter five in relation to destructive masculinity and state terror, a key element of which is the use of sexual violence as a means of subjugation by the Macoutes as agents of the state apparatus under the Duvalier regimes. Importantly, however, when considered outside of this context, the Gede are not solely agents of domination and destruction, but rather represent the interplay between two visceral and transitional experiences expressed elsewhere in the Vodou pantheon.² Notably, the multiple avatars of Ezili include Ezili Freda and Ezili Dantò – both associated with sexuality as demonstrated throughout this thesis – alongside Ezili Mapiang, each of whom are linked with death to varying degrees through their respective characteristics: Ezili Freda is vengeful, Ezili Dantò, a warrior and a mother, Ezili Mapiang, pernicious and corrupt. In Santería there is a similar correspondence among the *orisha*, especially Ochún, Yemayá and Oyá. The first two, like Ezili, have formed an integral part of this thesis and have different *caminos* associated with sex and the dead: Ochún, *orisha* of love and sexuality, is ‘relacionada con los muertos’

¹ The association of Gede with a ‘*gwo zozo*’ (‘big cock’, Brown’s (2010 [1991], 358) translation) has been highlighted by numerous scholars, Brown included. Interestingly, with regard to the plastic arts, in a paper entitled “El arte y el Vodú en Haití” at the 29th Festival del Caribe in Santiago de Cuba in July 2009, Grete Viddal provided an overview of the prominence of the *gwo zozo* as symbolic of the Gede in the work of the Atis Rezistans sculptors on Grand Rue in Port-au-Prince. Most recently, Katherine Smith’s (2012) book chapter “Atis Rezistans: Gede and the Art of Vagabondaj”, developed from her paper presented at the 2008 conference “Obeah and Other Powers” at Newcastle University, explores the work of this artists’ collective and includes discussion of the *gwo zozo* and its significance. Equally, the symbolism of the *gwo zozo* as an attribute of Gede is referenced in Cosentino’s (1995) “Envoi: The Gedes and Bawon Samdi”.

² The transitional nature of death in Vodou and Santería will be discussed below.

and ‘afligida junto al *Ikú*’ as Ochún Awé, while Yemayá, *orisha* of motherhood, is associated with the dead both through her role as a mother and as Yemayá Asesú, the latter of whom ‘[r]ecibe las ofrendas en compañía de los muertos’ (Bolívar Aróstegui 1990, 118; 96).³ Oyá, keeper of the cemetery and *orisha* who governs death, is the jealous wife of Changó who, in one *patakí*, is enraptured by his wife’s slender and mature body to the extent that, once rescued from Ikú by Ochún, he turned down the *orisha* of love to ‘descansar en los brazos de Oyá’ (Cros Sandoval 2006, 248; Lachatañeré 1992, 23-26).⁴ As such, the close relationship between death and sexuality evidenced throughout the novels studied is grounded firmly in the way they interact and coexist within the context of African-derived religious traditions.

In addition to understanding the interplay between these two concepts, it is also important to frame the idea of death itself in these works within the context of Santería and Vodou. For a santero or vodouisant, death is no less inevitable than for anyone else, a fact highlighted by the continual passage of time in *Como un mensajero* where Aída’s impending death prompts the transcription of her story by her daughter, who then passes it on to the outside world when she herself is nearing death, or by the many María Antonias that Hernández Espinosa and Herrera have seen and continue to see on the streets of Havana, each continuing in her own way the struggle of those who have preceded her. However, in the framework of these religious traditions, death does not constitute a finality rendering an individual no longer able to interact with the physical world as it so often does when seen from a European or North American perspective, but rather it marks an individual’s transition between the connected physical and spirit worlds. In reference to Santería, Martiatu (1984, 43) writes, ‘La muerte es un cambio no un fin. Los muertos pasarán a ese plano “infrahumano” que no los saca del

³ ‘associated with the dead’ and ‘mourning alongside Ikú’; ‘receives offerings in the company of the dead’.

⁴ ‘rest in Oyá’s arms’ (Lachatañeré 2005, 41).

mundo, sino que los lleva a seguir entre los vivos pero en otra condición.’⁵ Similarly, in Vodou the dead journey to Ginen, ‘where ancestors who have passed from this life to the next reunite with those not yet born’ and the spirits ‘past, present, and future [... are] then brought to this earth to shield and strengthen the living’ (Michel 2010, xvii; xxvi). This notion of death as a transition is reinforced by the symbolism that forms part of initiation into both religious traditions, most notably the period of seclusion from the outside world during which a novice symbolically dies, is re-born and then is presented to the religious community as a new member of their respective *ilé* or *ounfò* (Martiatu 1984, 43; Cros Sandoval 2006, 98-99; Brown 2006, 15-16). The ceremonies performed upon and following the death of a santero or vodouisant, disassociating the practitioner’s spirit from his/her body and propitiating both the spirit of the deceased and his/her *orisha de cabecera* or *mèt tèt* by means of offerings, reinforce this notion of transition and signal the next stage in an adherent’s religious experience. While death does connote the demise of the body and its physical yielding to the paternal authority of Ikú or Gede, inherent within this process is the progression of the spirit into a space from which it can influence both the physical and the spiritual, the living and the dead.

The symbolism of death as a transition and as replicated in initiation interconnects with ideas of sexual initiation and the transition in an individual’s life and experiences that this involves. Like death, such a transition is associated not only with the violence inherent within sex but also with that brought against a woman’s body in this first sexual act, evidenced on a physical level by the piercing of the hymen and the blood that is often shed as a result. However, in the instances detailed in chapters four and five with reference to *Fado*, *Colère* and *Saisons sauvages*, for some of the female characters having sex for the first time involved additional

⁵ ‘Death is a change, not an end. The dead will move on to this “infrahuman” plane which does not remove them from the world but rather permits them to remain among the living in another form.’

violence – in these cases that of rape – which further connects sexuality with death. With regard to Carlos in *María Antonia*, his first sexual experience was also aligned with death as it was the reward offered by his father when he killed the neighbourhood bully, evoking in him feelings of loss and bereavement as he had been forced to act in a way that he thought he was able to avoid in order to secure his *hombría* in the eyes of his family and the community. In the process, death becomes inseparable from Carlos' acquisition of an approved masculinity, thus derived from a violent sexuality.

Theorising death and sexuality

When considered through the lens of Afro-Caribbean spirituality, the conceptualisation of death and sexuality is one that in some ways augments the manner in which they have been theorised from a European perspective, but in others both troubles and contests it. First, it is important to note that death and sexuality are both visceral experiences centred on the body, tying them together in space with the corporeal experiences involved in African-derived religious traditions in the Caribbean. Second, there has long been a conceptual link between the two, as Foucault (1990 [1985], 127; 133-39) has illustrated by drawing on Ancient Greek philosophy; the sexual act was not perceived as a solely positive experience, it was also seen as 'prefiguring the death of the individual', although this same act – linked to a form of sexuality as a mode of reproduction – might enable the individual to 'in a sense escape death'. For Bataille (1987, 101), on the one hand sexual activity and death are associated through the idea that 'l'affaissement consécutif au paroxysme final est tenu pour une « petite mort »', with death 'le symbole du retrait des eaux qui suit la violence de l'agitation'.⁶ On the other, he defines *érotisme* (most commonly translated as 'eroticism') as a distinct form of sexual

⁶ 'exhaustion following the final paroxysm is thought of as a "little death"', with death 'the symbol of the retreating waters after the violence of the storm' (translation by Mary Dalwood in Bataille 1986, 100. All further translations from this edition).

activity independent of sex for the purpose of reproduction;⁷ although children may result from erotic pleasure, eroticism itself is a form ‘*qui ne peut servir à rien*’ (Bataille 1976, 12, original emphasis).⁸ The subjective experience of eroticism therefore brings together pleasure – which is the ‘antipodes’ of ‘l’angoisse de la mort et la mort’ – and the ‘avant-goût [...] de la mort’ given by the depression that follows orgasm (103).⁹ Bataille frames the interaction between eroticism and death as one linked by the continuity they represent in comparison to the discontinuity of individuals, a symbolic link that for Baudrillard (1976 237; 241 n1) is forged through their exchange of energies and mutual excitement of each other separate from the biological link between sex and death created in reproduction.¹⁰ Constructed thus, the division between life and death, reproduction and eroticism is the basis of a power framework in place in Western and Western-oriented societies that depends on the disruption of an exchange between the former two (see Baudrillard 1976, 221-26).¹¹ Manipulating the interaction with death through its prohibition then permits control over secondary divisions drawn along the same lines, such as ‘soul and body, masculinity and femininity, good and bad’, a dichotomy from which power emerges (Bronfen and Goodwin 1993, 17). The division among the populace and control over it is an essential element of understanding the manner in which death formed a part of the Duvalier regimes and the narratives depicting them explored in chapter five.

⁷ For the 1986 edition in English of Bataille’s *L’Érotisme*, the title is translated as *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* despite the fact that *érotisme* is translated as ‘eroticism’ in the text. The original 1962 translation was entitled *Death and Sensuality: a Study of Eroticism and the Taboo* (Bataille 1986, 4). This discussion will employ ‘eroticism’ as the term found most commonly in translations and criticism of Bataille, while the wider concept of sexuality incorporates eroticism within it.

⁸ ‘*which cannot serve any purpose*’ (translation by Robert Hurley in Bataille 1991, 16. All further translations from this edition). In *L’Érotisme*, Bataille (1987, 105) posits ‘plus la jouissance érotique est pleine, moins nous sommes soucieux des enfants qui peuvent en être l’effet’ [*the fuller the erotic pleasure, the less conscious we are of the children who may result from it*] (Bataille 1986, 102)].

⁹ ‘antipodes’ of ‘the anguish of death and death itself’; ‘foretaste of death’ (Bataille 1986, 102).

¹⁰ For the English, see Baudrillard 1993, 155; 190 n23.

¹¹ In the English translation, see pp.144-48.

Before examining this notion in further detail, it is necessary to consider the gendered nature of the alignment of death and sexuality. In the introduction to their edited volume *Death and Representation*, Bronfen and Goodwin (1993, 5) cite the title to Philippe Ariès' 1976 volume *L'homme devant la mort* (lit. 'Man before death') as indicative of Cixous' later conclusion that in the oppositional male-female binary man is associated with life and woman with death.¹² Continuing on to reinforce this viewpoint, the editors elaborate on the relationship between death and the female body outlined by Freud and conclude that Western male-dominated cultural frameworks position death and women as 'radically other to the norm, the living or surviving male subject' (13). It is this alignment between death and that which is designated as feminine that is evidenced in the texts explored in chapter five. Framed within the imposition of a strict gender-based dichotomy by the dictatorial regime, these texts illustrate how the dictatorship relegated individuals considered to be outside the state apparatus to an inferior female-gendered status and maintained power over that division by means of state terror and violence. Those occupying this subordinate position were branded as antithetical to the professed aims of the regime – 'other to the norm' in Bronfen and Goodwin's words – and therefore contagious as a potential threat to authority; as a result, from the regime's perspective they were already considered dead. When Nirvah petitions Raoul Vincent for the freedom of her husband at the beginning of *Saisons sauvages*, Daniel Leroy – incarcerated for communist activities – becomes a bargaining chip for the minister. Already as good as dead from Raoul's point of view since he has no intention of releasing him, Daniel's death is symbolically reiterated by his physical absence throughout the entire novel, Nirvah's burning of his diary which is the only tangible evidence of his existence in the text and her replacement of him with Raoul. In a similar fashion, in *Folie René* – portrayed as gendered feminine within the abovementioned male-female dichotomy – is incarcerated and

¹² The English translation of Ariès' volume is entitled *The Hour of Our Death*.

ultimately executed. Turning to Rose, the protagonist of *Colère*, her fate is sealed the moment she accompanies her father to lodge a claim for the return of her father's land, a fact her brother Paul understands as soon as it is decided.¹³ In addition to her imminent death as related to her sex, the association between Rose and death itself is reinforced when she describes le Gorille – already subhuman in name – as having become a dog who follows her around since she has negated his status as a human being through their daily sexual encounters. Furthermore, it is her daily rape by le Gorille that provides the impetus for Paul's attempt to kill him and for their father's successful orchestration of the Macoute chief's murder. While not wishing to suggest that these indicate Rose's sexual agency as some critics contend (a position criticised by Jean-Charles (2006)), it should be recognised that they do exemplify a further instance of the alignment between those gendered feminine and death from the perspective of the regime.

In both the context of Afro-Caribbean spirituality and the European theoretical framework death is an inherently violent concept. Although a transitional process in Santería and Vodou, death is always violent to a certain degree since it requires the demise of the physical body which, upon becoming a corpse, is testament to the violence every person is destined to suffer (Bataille 1987, 47). Moreover, as Habermas (1987, 230) among others emphasises, this inherent violence is found in sexuality as it is in death, which Bataille (1987, 64; 1976, 88) contends draws the two together in a climax of excess, fuelling erotic ardour alongside the anguish that forms a part of both eroticism and death. In her analysis of the role of women in Bataille's theorisation of eroticism, Guerlac (1990, 92; 93) highlights that the erotic object possessed by the male erotic subject 'must be not only a woman, but a woman as object,' that

¹³ When Paul learns of his father and sister's decision, he instructs her with the prophetic phrase, 'Ne joue pas trop des fesses, [...] ça pourrait te coûter cher' [*'Don't wiggle your ass too much, [...] it could cost you dearly'*], controlling his anger born from knowing what will happen to her until they leave, at which point it boils over (177; translation from Vieux-Chauvet 2009, 170).

is, a prostitute whose passivity is required. This urge to possess the erotic object is also linked with death: though possession itself ‘ne signifie pas la mort[, ... s]i l’amant ne peut posséder l’être aimé, il pense parfois à le tuer : souvent il aimerait mieux le tuer que le perdre’ (Bataille 1987, 25).¹⁴ Such a compulsion to kill the woman who cannot be possessed sexually is important when examining the deaths of Zulé in *Del rojo* and of María Antonia (though in the latter case, María Antonia contests Bataille’s gendered framework when she kills Julián).¹⁵

The character of Zulé has multiple interactions with death at various points throughout her life: as a child her two brothers, mother, grandmother and stepmother drowned on separate occasions in the river at the foot of the Mayombe Hill, and again after she had been promised to the *gagá* at Colonia Azote, she asked Coridón to work her eyes in order for her to descend to the world of the dead (21; 72-76). Upon becoming *manbo* of her own *gagá* at Colonia Engracia, Zulé is associated with Gede Nibo (keeper of tombs) through her status as *dueña de la sociedad*, in the position of which she is sought out by a Dominican man searching for his wife who has been turned into a *zonbi* and taken to Peligre Lake on the Haitian side of the border (Deive 1988, 139; *Del rojo* 157-61). Already aligned with death in this manner, Zulé exemplifies the coexistence of the realms of the living and dead in Vodou and contests the power construct posited by Baudrillard, demonstrating that the interplay between the two rather than their division can serve as a source of power, channelled in this instance through a female Vodou priest. As demonstrated in chapter two, Zulé’s death itself at the hands of Jérémie Candé mounted by Carfú and associated with Ogún Ferraille is a complex event with

¹⁴ ‘does not imply death[, ... i]f the lover cannot possess the beloved he will sometimes think of killing her; often he would rather kill her than lose her’ (Bataille 1986, 20).

¹⁵ In so doing, María Antonia pays the price for rejecting the gender-based framework that permits male dominance to the extent of death with her own demise. However, by acting in this manner the protagonist destabilises these very notions reinforced by the society in which she lives, troubling the gender-based theorisations of death outlined above.

multiple overlapping meanings. The notion of sacrifice referenced before and contained therein will be considered below; here the focus will be on the manner in which this illustrates Bataille's observation regarding the murder of the unobtainable erotic object.

The moment of Zulé's death at the culmination of the *gagá's* Easter procession is framed by her repeated sexual rejection of Jérémie Candé, whose sexual fantasies she has long encouraged, and her refusal to form an alliance with her former lover and current adversary Similá, whose child she aborted a few weeks after his departure from Colonia Engracia. While the scene has also been written as a conflict between the *lwa* as shown in chapter two, it must equally be viewed in terms of a struggle between two men and the woman who is, or represents, the object of their desires and who refuses to acquiesce to either of them. With regard to Jérémie Candé, Zulé denigrates him on a sexual plane by encouraging his voyeurism and expression of passion through masturbation while repeatedly disparaging them as 'cosas de chino', a denial of sexual agency that must be recognised as a contributing factor to his reasons for murdering her in spite of the fact he is her loyal *sèvitè* (108).¹⁶ For Similá, Zulé represents the object of his desire as *dueña* of the *gagá* with which he seeks an alliance, a fact reinforced by the sexual relationship they have maintained and the juxtaposition of his goals: religious and sexual union in order to ensure political hegemony.¹⁷ However, the severing of any possible ties between the two *societés*, prefigured by the aforementioned abortion, signifies Similá's inability to realise his aims on the religious, political and sexual planes. Rejected thus, his violence towards Zulé on the battlefield and promise to kill her is directly linked to his desire for the territory she represents in order to secure a smuggling route through the *bateyes* of the region. Consequently, it should be viewed as the result of the

¹⁶ 'things Chinamen do' (90). An important factor is also his desire to protect the *gagá* from an alliance with Similá, as demonstrated in chapter two.

¹⁷ When Zulé visits Paredón in her search for the Dominican's wife, she and Similá again have sex prefaced by a discussion regarding the alliance Similá seeks and Zulé rejects (162).

escalation of tensions provoked by her denying him the chance to possess her once again and to seal the alliance that she embodies.

In reference to María Antonia, her death is a direct consequence of Carlos' violent reaction to her public rejection of him. In this final scene of the play, Carlos announces his arrival at the *toque* for Ochún by shouting '¡María Antonia! [...] ¡Vengo a buscarte!', a statement of intention that quickly leads to violence when María Antonia refuses to submit to the male authority he has attempted to assert (1037).¹⁸ With no intention of leaving, María Antonia responds to his threat '¡Yo soy muy macho pa' que te burles de mí!' – a repetition of Yuyo's earlier line delivered in similar circumstances – by dancing for Ochún and declaring provocatively, '¡María Antonia tiene sed, sed de hombre! ¡Traígame un jarro lleno de hombres!' (1038).¹⁹ Conflating the notions of death and sexuality evident throughout the play thus, her declaration mimics Christ's penultimate utterance before his death – 'I thirst' – and subsequent provision of vinegar to drink, formulating it as a proclamation of her sexuality and sexual agency, while her dance constitutes both one of death and a performance of her sexual agency as the erotic subject.²⁰ Beginning with the dance, María Antonia courts death by drawing Carlos – charged by Ikú with murdering her – into a position from which he can only react by killing her. Countering his machismo with her *hembrismo*, she begins to 'bailar retadoramente' for Ochún, removing her clothes, fully aware that it was her embodiment of the sensual, sexual and defiant nature of her *orisha de cabecera* expressed through her sexuality that had led to Batabio's declaration of her impending death.²¹ Rightly foreseeing

¹⁸ 'María Antonia! I've come to find you!'

¹⁹ 'I'm too much of a man for you to make fun of me!'; 'María Antonia thirsts, thirsts for a man! Bring me a pitcher filled with men!'

²⁰ The reference to Christ's penultimate words from the cross is found in the gospel according to John 19:28, which then fulfils the scriptural prophecy in Psalm 69:21 regarding the furnishing of vinegar to drink. This account does not appear in the three Synoptic Gospels.

²¹ 'dance defiantly'.

that María Antonia's dance and accompanying verbal provocations would result in her physical demise, La Madrina prays to Yemayá and the other *orisha* for *aché* and their blessing for her *ahijada*, further underlining the protagonist's actions as a dance of death.²² María Antonia's invocation of Ochún in this manner, culminating in Ochún's mounting of her *caballo*, also constitutes a possession performance through the propitiation of the *orisha* and invitation for her to manifest herself, as outlined in chapter three. Importantly however, as stated, María Antonia's dance constitutes an erotic performance of her sexual agency as the subject of desire, displacing Carlos from his position as the male erotic subject and claiming it herself. Although Carlos' reaction is to destroy her by stabbing her in the vagina, this male domination does not negate the agency she exercises at the same time, both through her provocative dancing beforehand and the final image of defiance she displays afterwards. As a result, María Antonia's death is framed in terms of the murder of the unobtainable erotic object and as punishment for defying male hegemony, both within a context of Santería. However, as illustrated above, the intertwining of sexual agency as inextricable from her death enables the protagonist to destabilise the gender-based construct that has castigated her thus. It is to the imposition and subversion of patriarchal frameworks governing sexuality as interwoven with notions of death that this chapter now turns.

Binding motherhood, sex and sacrifice

As outlined in chapter four, the concepts of motherhood and prostitution have often been rendered discrete within the phallogocentric order which has long governed the 'meanings borne by the feminine' in literature drawing on male-oriented societal constructs (Franco

²² The translation of the term *ahijada* in English is 'goddaughter', while La Madrina is 'godmother'. However, as the woman who raised María Antonia in the absence of her parents, the relationship between La Madrina and the protagonist is also similar to that of a mother and daughter.

La Madrina prays to 'Yemayá Olókun, madre de agua' [*Yemayá Olokun, mother of the waters*], pleading: 'wanaché ilé wanaché abalonké wanaché aina wanaché Beyi Oro. Wanaché Dáda. Wanaché taekué kaidé alabá konkido. Oloddumare!'. Cabrera (1952, 193) states that this prayer asks for *aché* and the blessing of the *orisha* and of the *Ibeyi* (twins).

1988, 507). In the texts analysed here, however, the dichotomy that formerly separated these performances and declarations of sexuality is collapsed, showing that women comprise multiple roles and sexual identities that interact with and inform each other, thereby contesting this divisive framework. This is particularly the case in texts such as *Fado* and *Saisons sauvages*, which have sought to show women traversing this divide, while other texts such as *María Antonia* have presented the mother and the prostitute as two separate but mutually dependent individuals. In *Fado*, the interplay between these two depictions of woman has been shown to be the source of Anaïse/Frida's power to knit together her fractured self. However, in this section the focus will be placed on the manner in which motherhood and prostitution are both counterpointed and drawn together through death. As will be demonstrated, the interaction of the two with each other and with death within the context of Santería and Vodou provides a space in which the spiritual and/or physical annihilation these roles connote in male-dominated theoretical models can be prevented.

The link between maternity and death has been explored in chapter four in relation to *Fado*, at which point the biblical symbolism aligning the two was underlined, most notably through Eve, mother of mankind, and Mary, mother of Jesus. In a similar fashion, as Goodwin (1993, 157) writes, there has long been an association between the prostitute and death which, though analysed and theorised by Freud, was 'already implicit' in the Bible through 'the location of the Whore of Babylon in John's apocalyptic vision of the end'. Socially marginalised and perceived as the embodiment of "'depraved" sexuality', a prostitute occupies the lowest rung on the ladder of social hierarchy, representing 'the lowlife of the city's narrow streets and slums', from where she challenges the framework of society since she moves between notionally discrete social spaces (158). Her position as the point where all levels of society converge means she is able to dissolve the divisions between them, which then confers on her a symbolic status similar to death – described by James Shirley in his

seventeenth-century poem *Death the Leveller* – as one with whom all clients are rendered equal: upon interacting with her the men are positioned on the same level, and by doing so they must recognise the same sexual desire that they each hold.²³ Consequently, a prostitute is considered within the framework of wider male-dominated society as diseased and haunting since she possesses the ability to negate privilege and status, while also constituting an external representation of the erotic self that therefore beckons men to her (Goodwin 1993, 159).

It must also be emphasised that motherhood and prostitution have both a subjective and plural nature, which these texts recognise. Ideas of spiritual and other-mothering have been delineated in chapter four, and it is on these that this discussion will draw. With regard to prostitution, in addition to the self-identifying prostitute who takes money in exchange for sex like Frida in *Fado*, the categorisation of the ‘woman’s “unchaste” body’ as that of a prostitute – a long-held tenet of phallogocentric societal frameworks which have labelled women expressing a perceived errant sexuality as whores regardless of the individual’s own perception – is evident in several of these texts, most notably *Colère*, *Saisons sauvages* and *María Antonia* (Goodwin 1993, 158). For Rose and Nirvah, those surrounding them conceive of their submission to the Macoute chiefs as a transaction of the protagonists’ sexuality – and in Rose’s case her virginity – for Louis Normil’s land and Daniel Leroy’s freedom respectively, thereby denoting them as prostitutes. However, it is important to recognise that both women are raped by their aggressors and cannot remove themselves from the destructive relationships forced upon them as part of ‘the system of terror and culture of fear that reigned under Duvalier’ (Jean-Charles 2006, 7). For her part, María Antonia, though in a different

²³ The first verse of Shirley’s poem reads: ‘The glories of our blood and state / Are shadows, not substantial things; / There is no armour against Fate; / Death lays his icy hand on kings: / Sceptre and Crown / Must tumble down, / And in the dust be equal made / With the poor crookèd scythe and spade’ (in Quiller-Couch 1919 [c1901]).

context, is likened to a common whore due to the sexuality she expresses in fulfilling what she perceives to be her role as an *hija de Ochún*, a categorisation she vehemently rejects (see below). As a result, the designation of each of these women as prostitutes is one that has been imposed due to society's view of their bodies as 'unchaste' and the sexual desire unleashed by their attackers and/or lovers, rather than their self-identification as such.

Returning to *Fado*, the reconstitutive nature of motherhood and prostitution for Anaïse through the persona of Frida has been previously analysed. Frida is clearly associated with death: having enabled Anaïse to explore her sexuality by embodying the nature of Ezili Freda, Frida poisons Bony and Anaïse, Léo, before they both swallow the poison themselves and depart for Ginen. Also associated with Ezili Dantò, upon learning of her pregnancy Anaïse exclaims 'je suis morte !' since for her motherhood would see her reinscribed into male-dominated relationships with both Léo and Bony because she would then be forced to fulfil the 'natural' role of woman – that of mother –, a role which Simone de Beauvoir and Trinh T. Minh-ha, among others, have linked to a loss of agency and death (*Fado* 89).²⁴ Importantly, the butchery Anaïse experienced as an adolescent was related to both her rape and the two abortions forced upon her, the latter of which further aligns her with the idea of death. On the one hand this is due to the deaths of the foetuses that are the result of such a procedure, on the other it is the enforced death of her own potential to bear children at the hands of her attacker when the second abortion leaves her sterile. In this way, though her refusal to become a mother can be seen as propagating the destruction that resulted from these bodily violations, Anaïse/Frida ultimately progresses to occupy a space in which her physical death in fact enables her to maintain the integrity of the spiritual self she has knit back together. In *Fado* death is therefore a complex and multivalent notion that reinforces its destructive nature with

²⁴ 'I am dead!'

regard to the younger Anaïse and her two present lovers, while offering a space in which Anaïse/Frida is able to prevent her re-fracturing by going through the process of transition that physical death in the context of Vodou permits instead of being subjected to another abortion or to the restrictive role of mother.

In *Como un mensajero*, the link between motherhood and prostitution via sexuality and death is explored through Aída's embodiment and invocation of various *camino*s of Yemayá, in addition to the way in which her practice of Santería is framed. As an expectant mother, Aída explicitly refers to the multiple avatars of Yemayá referenced above which protect Aída and Caruso's unborn daughter while Aída languishes in a cave, providing for mother and daughter alike. Elsewhere in the novel, Yemayá mounts the protagonist in order for the latter to save Caruso from drowning in the Lagoon of San Joaquín, acting in the interests of her own love for Changó, Caruso's *orisha de cabecera*. Although Yemayá's motherhood and sexuality are thereby shown to be protective, some of the witnesses Enriqueta interviews view her mother's sexuality and involvement with Santería and Sanfancón as harmful, intimating that her actions are equally those of a prostitute. One example is the pharmacist who was a suspect in the bombing; he describes Aída in a disparaging tone, recalling that the newspapers had reported Caruso as having become involved with 'una china, una medio mulata que para colmo era santera', to which he adds, 'aquella mujer, una china que lo enredó, figúrese' (106).²⁵ The distaste in his commentary for Aída and her conduct – ensnaring a married man using a mix of African- and Chinese-derived religious practices – evidences his perception of her as destructive; not only does she embody the grotesque through her hybrid racial identity which places her firmly as "other", the blame for Caruso's kidnap and subsequent demise is laid squarely with her as a result due to what the pharmacist believes were her underhand methods

²⁵ 'a woman who was half Chinese and half mulatta, and if that wasn't bad enough, she was a *santera* too'; 'that woman, with her Chinese snares. Just imagine' (translation by Edith Grossman in Montero 2000, 79).

of seducing him and the pernicious effects this had.²⁶ Corrupting and diseased, the pharmacist and those writing the newspaper he cites – indicative of the attitudes held by the members of the bourgeoisie involved in the dissemination of information – consider Aída to be symbolically, if not literally, nothing more than a whore, although she does not profess to be anything of the sort. As such, the combination of Aída’s sexuality and imminent motherhood are presented as both protective and deleterious, related to – and simultaneously bridging the divide between – motherhood and prostitution, life and death.

As noted above, in *María Antonia* the mother and the whore are counterpointed as two separate characters, La Madrina and María Antonia respectively. Similarly to Aída however, María Antonia does not describe herself as a prostitute; in fact she specifically states to the contrary in an argument with Julián: ‘Yo no soy ninguna puta de San Isidro’ (1025).²⁷ In spite of this, from the perspective of the majority of those in the community where she lives her actions are indeed those of a *puta*, for which her alignment with death and her resultant physical demise are considered to be proportionate, if not desirable. This designation of her as a *puta* – repeated elsewhere in the play, such as when Yuyo describes her as nothing but ‘una mujer [...] para hacer gozar’ (982) –²⁸ indicates the grammar of control extant in wider society that in this instance seeks to define María Antonia against her wishes, eliciting her fierce denial and violent response, but that more generally attempts to cow women into remaining within the defined spaces of particular roles such as mother or prostitute. In *María Antonia*, the protagonist’s categorisation as a whore is aligned with both her own death and

²⁶ As shown in chapter two, Aída and her daughter Enriqueta’s Chinese and black racial heritage links them with Jérémie Candé. Due to this specific hybridity they are considered as the dangerous “other”, destructive yet strangely appealing, and therefore rejected by the different levels of society.

²⁷ ‘I’m not one of those whores from San Isidro’.

²⁸ ‘a woman [...] good for screwing’.

the destruction of others, while the motherly figure of La Madrina seeks to support her *ahijada* but also participates in the restrictive framework of Santería that condemns her.

La Madrina's identification with Batabio and the punishment of death that he pronounces against María Antonia is portrayed from the play's outset when she petitions the *babalao*, 'Bórrela por dentro. Arránquela de raíz y siémbrela de nuevo' (947).²⁹ Viewing María Antonia's sexual exploits and attitude towards the *orisha* as the source of the problems which have led her to align herself with death by murdering Julián, La Madrina pleads with Batabio to forcibly remove the shadow of physical death from her *ahijada* and re-form her in an image that would be both pleasing to the *orisha* and the wider Santería and secular communities. However, such an action would constitute María Antonia's symbolic death by removing the defiance and *hembrismo* that characterise her, and so although on one level La Madrina seeks to ensure what she considers to be María Antonia's physical well-being by preventing her physical demise, on another through her petition she is supporting the very death she seeks to avoid. La Madrina is also limited by her reluctance to contradict the *babalao* as a figure of authority in Santería, a characteristic typical of her *orisha de cabecera*, Yemayá (Bolívar Aróstegui 1990, 95). As a result, rather than troubling the framework that aligns motherhood and sexuality with death as Anaïse/Frida does, La Madrina is depicted as complicit in María Antonia's inescapable physical and possible spiritual death (the latter avoided by María Antonia's acceptance of Ochún's manifestation through spirit possession immediately before she dies). The conflict between the two characters continues throughout the play, but lessens in the final scene as the immediacy of María Antonia's death becomes reality, with La Madrina assisting the protagonist in the latter's propitiation and invocation of Ochún. Nevertheless, the two never come to complete reconciliation, which itself reflects the

²⁹ 'Cleanse her from within. Pull her up, roots and all, and sow her anew'.

impossibility of harmony between Yemayá and Ochún encapsulated in the *patakí* and possession performance (as highlighted in earlier chapters).³⁰

With regard to María Antonia herself, her sexuality as similar to that of a prostitute is considered to be dangerous by many. Courted and rejected by Yuyo and Julián, she is regarded as a necessary part of their sexual lives but one to be dominated as the male subject seeks to dominate death. This is in keeping with Goodwin's (1993, 159) description of a prostitute's sexuality 'as socially undesirable and as illicitly desired', and the prostitute herself as a woman who embodies both the "other" and the erotic self that desires her. Indeed, for Julián the outcome of the relationship with María Antonia is his murder when his machismo comes into direct conflict with her *hembrismo*. Conflating different *caminos* of Ochún thus, at this point María Antonia draws her sexuality and sensuality together with death, as the *orisha* does herself.

This conflict between machismo and *hembrismo* leads to the final act in *María Antonia*, the protagonist's murder by Carlos, indicative of the link between rape, sacrifice and death. As mechanisms through which society removes women as active participants, rape and sacrifice subordinate women to men through physical domination which then connotes their symbolic or physical death. Necessarily violent and debilitating, rape is often presented as punishment in these texts, as is the case in this play. Reaching its most excessive form in the stabbing of the protagonist in the vagina, the mode of María Antonia's murder violates the very symbol of her defiance for the community, establishing for that moment complete male domination over the representation of what has been perceived as her errant sexuality. While her expression of

³⁰ This is not to suggest that La Madrina's complicity in María Antonia's death is indicative of the animosity between the two *orisha* since the context here is one of motherhood alongside sexuality rather than the clash between two of Changó's lovers.

contempt for the machismo that forces Carlos to act in this manner ensures his violent response – she tells him, as she did Yuyo, ‘¡Nunca saques un arma si no vas a usarla! [...] ¡Dale!’ (1039) –,³¹ this does not constitute a specific invitation for a violent death nor does it exculpate Carlos for violating her as he does (just as Rose’s agreement to exchange her virginity and young body for her father’s land in *Colère* does not lessen the charge of rape against le Gorille nor the destruction of her body that it entails (see Jean-Charles 2006)). For María Antonia, it is not only her body that is destroyed in this example of extreme violence, the abovementioned reduction of her to a common whore is reinforced by piercing her vagina as the essence of her being, thereby seeking to deny any notion she had of a multifaceted identity or sexual agency. In this context the manner of her death is the logical conclusion of the violence of rape: in addition to expressing publicly the complete subjugation of her as a woman, it ensures the destruction of the vehicle through which she is seen to have flouted the norms of society by exercising sexual agency in the position of prostitute ascribed to her by the community rather than remaining passive as the latter requires.

This notion of physical annihilation is evident in *Colère*, in which Rose’s violent rape by le Gorille every day for a month violates her so thoroughly that it leaves her dead at the novella’s close. As Chancy (2004, 311) concludes, although Rose is limited by the class privilege that she seeks to maintain by submitting herself to le Gorille, the ‘atrocities committed against her young body are hateful and irreversible’, leading her to lose everything, ‘including her self-respect’. The manner in which the abovementioned exchange is agreed also exemplifies the collusion of the legal institutions in the physical and spiritual annihilation of women since by accompanying her father to the lawyer’s office, the lawyer sees Rose as potential payment for the Normils’ having contradicted the state and sought the

³¹ ‘Never brandish a weapon if you’re not going to use it! [...] Go on!’.

return of their land. Her destruction and the extent of le Gorille's violence are then evidenced by her contemplation of the possibility of a long-term relationship with her aggressor, as does Nirvah in *Saisons sauvages*. As a result, for Rose it is not only her self-respect that is violated but also her humanity: at the end of Part Two of the novella she perceives herself as a 'panthère lascive et insatiable', one half of the 'couple bestial fait pour s'entendre' that she forms with le Gorille (*Colère* 260).³² Reduced to the status of a beast like he is, she descends to her inescapable death alongside him, subjugated by his violent and animalistic sexuality.

In *Fado*, the destruction inherent in rape leaves Anaïse sterile and powerless. Recalling her adolescence from the narrative present, she describes her repeated attacks and subsequent abortions in terms of butchery which fractured her body. Not only defenceless when faced with her rapist, Anaïse was also rendered unable to seek help since she did not think her father would believe her. Any agency she believed she had is negated as a result, and this experience contributes to the failure of her marriage given she cannot provide Léo with the son he desires. Noting that her sense of power as a married woman was an illusion, here at the beginning of the novel Anaïse's rape has already rendered her symbolically dead: she has sex with her husband out of a sense of 'marital duty', is unable to fulfil the role of motherhood he expects of her and, following her divorce, invites the pity of her neighbours and the unwanted flirtatious conduct of her boss. In short, her childhood experience has left her unable to fulfil the obligations placed on her by society in order to participate as it requires. It is not until Anaïse begins to explore her sexuality as an active participant that she manages to challenge the norms of bourgeois society that have designated her a failed woman, reconstituting her sense of self and refusing to be drawn back into such a framework when she conceives. Initially intertwined with her repeated violation, death is then

³² 'lascivious and insatiable panther'; 'beastly couple, made for each other' (252).

transformed via her exercising her sexuality into a transition denoting liberation from the violence to which she has been subjected and the constraints thus imposed. As concluded in chapter four, through her sexuality framed by Vodou spirituality, Anaïse/Frida bridges the divide to find life in death, deliverance in damnation.

This idea of reconstitution then leads to the concept of sacrifice and the manner in which it is presented – within the context of Santería and Vodou – as providing the possibility for redemption counter to the physical destruction that rape and male-oriented eroticism engender. Texts such as *Del rojo*, *Clair de manbo* and *María Antonia* dispute the contentions of theorists like Bataille who writes that a necessary element of sacrifice is that ‘the offering is rescued from all utility’ (in Botting and Wilson 1997, 213). For Bataille (1987, 91) the process of sacrifice is linked to sexuality not only through the association of death and sexuality along with the idea of continuity contained therein, but also in the manner in which the sacrificial victim is penetrated and laid open to the violence that is involved in the ritual, just as in eroticism a woman is the object of the violence fashioned upon her by the male erotic subject. In this framework, it is necessary therefore for the person sacrificed to be a passive woman who is denied agency as the erotic object and whose death expresses a finality that precludes any subsequent utility, since in sacrifice she passes back to the immanence from whence she came (Botting and Wilson 1997, 213). The texts studied refute this formulation of sacrifice as in each example the female protagonist exercises her agency, has maintained a link with the physical world by virtue of its coexistence with the spirit world and continues to be of use after her death. In *Del rojo*, Zulé confronts her impending death as *dueña* of her *gagá* having rejected the entreaties of members of the community to avoid a confrontation with Similá and the latter’s repeated offers for an alliance which she considers to be contrary to the interests of her *société*. Aware of the risk she faces by refusing to cede to the *bòkò* and briefly vacillating on the battlefield, Zulé’s sacrifice at the hands of Jérémie

Candé/Carfú ensures the continued independence of her *gagá* and sees her become the conduit through which the violence of patriarchal domination represented by Similá is obstructed.

This safeguarding of a *manbo*'s community through her sacrifice is found at the close of G. Victor's *Clair de manbo*, where Madan Sorel draws the *bòkò* Djo Kokobe to her *peristil* with the promise of submitting to his sexual domination after he begins to attack the mapou that links her to the spirit world. Tricking him by lying on the cloth covering the *vèvè* that is the source of her power, Djo's fate is sealed as soon as he penetrates Madan Sorel, awakening the *vèvè*, which then encompasses them both, killing them and destroying Djo's soul with its power. In an act that expresses her sexual agency and her position as both erotic subject and object, Madan Sorel sacrifices herself in order to prevent the *bòkò* presiding over the region, thereby ensuring the well-being of her lover Sonson Piripit and the wider community. Although María Antonia's death is not for the benefit of the Santería and secular communities amongst which she lives, it can be seen as a necessary step in the continuation of a struggle against male dominance and control of sexuality as posited in chapter three. Complex in its presentation since it both connotes the imposition of male authority and its subversion, her death and simultaneous possession by Ochún is framed as her physical destruction for transgressing the norms of Santería and secular society but also as the possibility that is offered to the many María Antonias who follow to further undermine the construct that requires them to deny sexual agency in the face of machismo. By means of her association with the *orisha*, she is then able to return and offer advice within the context of Santería, as depicted in Herrera's *Conversación con María Antonia (cuarenta años después)*.

Through an exploration of death and sexuality across the fictional works studied it becomes apparent that the inescapable contemplation of death alongside sexuality serves to illuminate a

discourse in Caribbean fiction that sees the coexistence of these two notions indicate possibility for women instead of complete annihilation on both the physical and spiritual planes. Based on notions of female sexual agency and of death as a transitional process, this analysis shows that fictional texts in the Caribbean reflect the complex manner in which sexuality, death, rape, prostitution, motherhood and sacrifice are formulated through Santería and Vodou. As a result, this chapter and the thesis overall have illustrated that narratives from the Caribbean such as those studied here constitute an important source of knowledge which must be taken into account when seeking to conceptualise gender and sexuality from a Caribbean perspective.

CONCLUSIONS

The six chapters of this thesis have drawn together a number of Cuban and Haitian novels and plays in order to analyse the manner in which issues of gender and sexuality are explored in these works within the frameworks of Santería and Vodou. Focusing on the central theme of the body as the point at which many discourses intersect, it has demonstrated the importance of foregrounding the voice of the marginalised when constructing a narrative that seeks to recognise women as active participants in Caribbean society and historical discourse. Rather than accepting the account preferred by the dominant voices in society therefore, this thesis shows that it is by acknowledging the plurality of experiences that such a narrative provides that the complex nature of religious, social and political life in Cuba and Haiti can truly be appreciated. Moreover, by writing works of fiction positioned within African-derived religious traditions, the authors of these texts are able to draw on a worldview that permits the collapse of divisions within concepts such as gender, sexuality and sexual identities, womanhood, space, and ideas of nation, while recognising the contiguous nature of the physical and spiritual planes, and of life and death. In so doing, they provide a complex and arguably more complete rendering of lived experience in Cuba and Haiti from the mid-twentieth century onwards in comparison to official discourse which has limited, if not written out, these narratives.

By way of drawing conclusions therefore, this final section will highlight the key themes examined as summarised at the end of each chapter and point to a further context in which they might be explored, that of literature from the Cuban and Haitian diasporas in North America. Due to the sizeable nature of this body of literary works, the discussion will draw on texts by Cristina García (1992; 1997), Raúl de Cárdenas (1999 [1994]), Edwidge Danticat (1996 [1994]; 2004), Myriam Chancy (2003), Dany Laferrière (2007 [1997]) and Stanley

Péan (2007) that specifically deal with life in the diaspora and counterpoint it with the experience of life back in Cuba and Haiti, doing so within the frameworks provided by Santería and Vodou. These popular works have been analysed in detail, but the suggestion here is that it would be instructive to plumb them for further commentary on these religious traditions in a diasporic context. This section will thereby indicate particular areas for further research while underlining the potential offered by these texts bridging these two contexts as a logical extension of those already analysed here and recognising the importance of literature written by members of what in Haiti has become known as the “tenth department”, that is, those living overseas.¹ Formulating Haitian and Cuban literature in such a fashion points to the conceptualisation of the diasporic communities as extensions of the respective nations themselves, expanding the Caribbean-wide concept of nation constructed in Montero’s novels beyond the region’s borders to the spaces inhabited by the migrants who carry the practice and cultural heritage of Santería and Vodou with them.

In addition to providing a context for the intersection of the physical and spiritual worlds, in the diaspora these religious traditions serve as a conceptual link back to the Caribbean reinforced through the holding of ceremonies and the manifestation of the *orisha* and *lwa* through possession performance in North America as in Cuba and Haiti respectively. This coexistence with those “back home” is reflected in the interactions and relationships maintained on a spiritual plane between individuals on different sides of the Caribbean Sea, such as that between Pilar and her grandmother Celia in García’s *Dreaming in Cuban*, or in the manner in which Haiti and its diaspora are conceptualised as the intertwined yet conflicting *marasa*, like in Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. García’s use of the equivalent concept to the *marasa* in Santería – the *ibeyi* – to formulate the relationship between Cuba

¹ This term was popularised following Jean-Bertrand Aristide’s return from exile in 1994, at which point Haiti had nine administrative departments. In 2003, a tenth department was created, Nippes, leading some to shift to using the “eleventh department” to refer to the diaspora. For further discussion, including the transnational nature of the Haitian state that this connotes, see, for example, Schiller and Fouron 2010.

and its diaspora in *The Agüero Sisters* is indicative of the theme running through all of these works of the multiple levels at which there is disjuncture between the two inherently linked but physically separate groups. As sisters who are *hijas de Ochún* and *de Changó* respectively, the authenticity of Constancia's visceral experience of Cuba in the diaspora – both through Santería and in the wider secular and consumerist North American context – is questioned when counterpointed with that of Reina who embodies the voluptuousness of Ochún and physically interacts with Changó while working as an electrician for the Revolutionary government. While Ochún as representative of Cuba is present and invoked by the *babalao* and Constancia in Miami, the destruction the former sees in Constancia during a *consulta* points to the problems she faces regarding her Cuban identity when divorced from everyday life on the island – presented in terms of the Santería that permeates it – and the necessity to physically return to Cuba in order to resolve these issues. The presence of Ochún in the diaspora and this fracture of the Cuban population exemplified by the Agüero sisters are also explored in de Cárdenas' depiction of the Bay of Pigs invasion in *Los hijos de Ochún*. Written as a conflict among the *orisha*, the play sees Ochún's body – indicative of the physical and cultural space of Cuba – rent by the divided spaces of Miami and Havana.

The problems and inauthenticity of living in the diaspora in this regard are also examined through the lens of Santería in García's *Dreaming in Cuban*, in which the author counterpoints Pilar's visit to a gaudy New York *botánica* with her experience of Afro-Cuba via the relationship she maintains in the spiritual realm with her grandmother Celia. This is then contrasted with Felicia's initiation and immersion in the rituals of Santería against the wishes of Celia as a way in which to not only foreground notions of authenticity with regard to the *cubanidad* of those living in Cuba in comparison with the diaspora but also to explore divisions along racial and cultural lines within Cuban society itself. In so doing, the author uses the *santera mulata*, a figure who traverses these spaces, and the marginalised and

distrusted black santero who is her *padrino* to question competing notions of what indeed constitutes Cuba through this religious tradition that forms a necessary component of Cuban culture for the diaspora and those living in Cuba alike.

One way in which the crisis of identity provoked by living in the diaspora and its mitigation through Santería and Vodou are formulated in the Haitian diasporic novels mentioned here is as multiple incarnations of the *marasa*. For Sophie in Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the spiritual doubling inherent within the twin *lwa* allows her to escape the imposition of her mother Martine's concept of Haitian identity – inherited itself from her own mother –, whereby Sophie counters the physical subjugation of having her virginity tested with the freedom that the spirit world offers through doubling. In addition to this, the multiple *marasa* pairings in the novel between Sophie, her mother and her aunt who raised her as a young child see Danticat explore the various notions of motherhood diaspora often requires – especially spiritual mothers and “other-mothers” as discussed in relation to *Fado* – that the author uses to indicate the various levels upon which identity is formulated and its necessarily complex nature. In a similar vein to Sophie's experience above, Péan uses the figures of the *marasa* and the *zonbi* in *Zombi Blues* to juxtapose those born in the diaspora with those who have lived in Haiti and draw parallels between the experiences and perceptions of political subordination, marginalisation and death under the Duvalier dictatorships and as residents of Montreal due to exile.

For each of these novelists Santería and Vodou offer a space for the transmission of knowledge regarding familial histories and experiences, Afro-Cuban and Afro-Haitian culture, and integral aspects of everyday life in Cuba and Haiti that inform an individual's perception of what it means to be Cuban or Haitian. This *conocimiento* or *konesans* – ritual knowledge gained through initiation and immersion into the rites and practices of Santería

and Vodou respectively – is shown to be an intimate understanding that can only be consolidated by direct interaction with the different protagonists’ forebears and/or close acquaintance with the Cuba or Haiti left behind. Danticat’s novels *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *The Dew Breaker* both frame this as spiritual twinning, with Ka’s father in the latter describing her as his *ti bon anj* and using their journey to Florida to lead her to an understanding of her personal and cultural history as a Haitian born in the diaspora to an exiled *Macoute*. It is this lack of *konesans* that is indicative of Old Bones’ twenty-year absence from Haiti in Laferrière’s autobiographical *Pays sans chapeau*, in which his journey to the world of the dead serves as the premise for a much wider exploration of what being Haitian signifies for him and the numerous people he meets.² As his novel illustrates, the *konesans* required to access and then return from the ‘curious other world among us’, that ‘pays où personne ne porte de chapeau’, is gained by way of a first-hand exploration of the multiple layers that comprise the Haitian worldview and a rediscovery of the protagonist’s own Haitian identity (*Down Among the Dead Men* 210; *Pays sans chapeau* 270).³

A key element to this examination of perceptions of Cubanness and Haitianness in these discrete spaces of the North American diaspora and the Caribbean across several of these novels is their evolution with each new generation which seeks to reconcile the competing elements of descriptors such as Cuban-American or Haitian-Canadian. In Chancy’s *Spirit of Haiti*, Carmen is called back from Montreal to Haiti by the *lwa* when the corporeal link between her dual cultural heritage manifests itself in the new life she carries. Having met Léah who embodies this notion of *konesans* or *conocimiento* as a blind daughter of Ochún symbolically linked to Yemayá and the Ezilis, Carmen completes the process of initiation into

² It is important to note that in Haiti the phrase ‘pays sans chapeau’ (lit. country without a hat) is employed to refer to the world of the dead. Indicative of this, the novel’s title in the translation into English is *Down Among the Dead Men* (Laferrière 1997).

³ Lit. ‘country where no one wears a hat’. In the English translation this phrase is rendered as the preceding quotation: ‘curious other world among us’ (210).

Vodou and it is at this point that she affirms to her unborn child the essential part Haiti plays in both of their identities. For Sophie in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, motherhood also draws her back to the family home in La Nouvelle Dame Marie where she is able to reach a point of reconciliation with her mother and with Haiti itself via a process of seeking knowledge from her aunt and grandmother, both spiritually and in person. Physically confronting the violence of her mother's rape in the cane fields by attacking the sugar cane itself, Sophie draws on the spiritual links maintained while in New York and Providence and those forged following her return to Haiti which enable her to reclaim Haiti as 'home'.

As illustrated, therefore, consideration of these works from the Cuban and Haitian diasporas in North America offers further lines of enquiry that would enhance the analysis provided here, allowing the discussion to take into account this ever-growing body of literature which recounts the lived realities of an important group within the Cuban and Haitian population. Drawing on myth as a source of knowledge and on the spiritual plane as a context in which the diaspora and the Caribbean coalesce, texts such as those suggested here enable the conclusions drawn in this thesis to be demonstrated as applicable to a wider population and readership. In an environment in which interactions between those living in the Cuban and Haitian diasporas and those in Cuba and Haiti respectively are set to increase, as well as between these groups and wider society, an understanding of the presence, form and function of Santería and Vodou both in literary works and as an inextricable element of Caribbean life and culture is indispensable. The chapters of this thesis have demonstrated some of the complexities with regard to the manner in which gender and sexuality have been formulated in Cuba and Haiti, foregrounding the essential contribution made by fictional texts drawing on Santería and Vodou in incorporating the voices of women into the debate and exemplifying the crucial roles that they play in society which are underrepresented in male-oriented official accounts. Acknowledgement of this discourse and of the on-going nature of the conversations

thus outlined is fundamental when seeking to understand the functions of these increasingly popular but nevertheless much maligned religious traditions in Caribbean society. Equally important is the recognition thus emphasised of women's participation in defining the manner in which they and their sexuality are represented, articulated in a manner that itself undermines the primacy of official narratives in this regard.

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