University of Memphis

University of Memphis Digital Commons

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

4-22-2011

Hoodoo Women to Robber Queens: Breaking the Bounds of Ethnography and Female Subjectivity in Zora Neale Hurston's Circum-Caribbean Marvelous Real

Julie Lewis Lester

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/etd

Recommended Citation

Lester, Julie Lewis, "Hoodoo Women to Robber Queens: Breaking the Bounds of Ethnography and Female Subjectivity in Zora Neale Hurston's Circum-Caribbean Marvelous Real" (2011). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 239.
https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/etd/239

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by University of Memphis Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of University of Memphis Digital Commons. For more information, please contact khggerty@memphis.edu.

To the University Council:

The Dissertation Committee for Julie Lewis Lester certifies that this is the final approved version of the following electronic dissertation: “From Hoodoo Women to Robber Queens: Breaking the Bounds of Ethnography and Female Subjectivity in Zora Neale Hurston’s Circum-Caribbean Marvelous Real.”

Reginald Martin, Ph.D.
Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Verner D. Mitchell, Ph.D.

Ladrica C. Menson-Furr, Ph.D.

Charles E. Hall, Ph.D.

Accepted for the Graduate Council:

Karen D. Weddle-West, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Graduate Programs

FROM HOODOO WOMEN TO ROBBER QUEENS: BREAKING THE BOUNDS OF ETHNOGRAPHY AND FEMALE SUBJECTIVITY IN ZORA NEALE HURSTON'S CIRCUM-CARIBBEAN MARVELOUS REAL

by

Julie Lewis Lester

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Textual Studies

The University of Memphis

May 2010

DEDICATION

I dedicate this document to my family, and I extend special thanks to my daughter, Emily, for her patience and support.

ABSTRACT

Lester, Julie Lewis. Ph.D. The University of Memphis. May 2011. From Hoodoo Women to Robber Queens: Breaking the Bounds of Ethnography and Female Subjectivity in Zora Neale Hurston's Circum-Caribbean Marvelous Real. Major Professor: Dr. Reginald Martin

Throughout her career as an ethnographer, Zora Neale Hurston sought to capture the performances that linked African American folk communities of the coastal South to those she encountered in the Caribbean. The conjure woman of New Orleans and the Mambo priestess of Haitian Vodou exhibited performances that dramatized shared cultural and historical memory. These embodied performances connected women's lives across the circum-Caribbean diaspora. By situating the conjure woman in the context of the Marvelous Real, Hurston created a fictive site in which the conjurer acts as the interlocutor of women's recollected narratives and showed how identity could be shaped more directly by shared cultural memory than by geographic bounds. In the novels *Moses, Man of the Mountain* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston portrays the conjurer as an itinerant ethnographer who translates narratives that reflect a circum-Caribbean consciousness among African American and Afro-Caribbean women. This project explores how authors Erna Brodber and Nalo Hopkinson have since enlarged on Hurston's model of the conjure woman-as-ethnographer in the genres of Magical Realist and Speculative fiction. Much like Hurston, Brodber and Hopkinson create narratives that challenge the ways postcolonial female subjectivity has been inscribed in dominant discourses, while extending the bounds of what is considered national, regional, or cultural identity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Introduction 1

Chapter

1 Mapping the Conjure Woman in Hurston's Circum-Caribbean Marvelous Real 11

2 The Greatest Conjure (Wo)man that Lived 56

Part II: From Wandering Witch to Conjurer of Autoethnography: Janie Crawford in Their Eyes Were Watching God 92

3 "Ah Who Sey Sammy Dead": Erna Brodber and a Circum-Caribbean Caribbean Ancestral Text 119

Part II: New Frontiers: Nalo Hopkinson and the Robber Queen 151

Conclusion: A Backward Glance Toward a Marvelous Future 170

Bibliography 185

INTRODUCTION

what Zora Neale Hurston did
for Marie Leveau
Alice Walker did
for Zora Neal Hurston

Trinity of Hoodoo Queens
braving the ages and some folks'
snarls
to remember
our Powers
and wrap lonely bones
in arabesque ink
and paper
and sighs.[1]

In the introduction to *Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction, and Literary Tradition*, Marjorie Pryse examines how Zora Neale Hurston contributed to African American women's literature. Hurston, Pryse argues, reconsidered how a woman's identity could be shaped and influenced by her positioning within a folk community. Before Alice Walker rediscovered Hurston's oeuvre in the 1970s, black women's fiction largely avoided folkloric themes because African American folklore had been consistently stigmatized: folk themes were associated with the fanciful and the imaginary and suggested that African Americans were trapped in a cycle of perpetual naïveté (Walker 83-4). Some black authors asserted that to engage folklore was tantamount to supporting the damning stereotypes of the Jim Crow South that the Black Arts Movement and Protest Literature vehemently sought to dislodge from the American imaginary (Gates, "The Black Arts Era" 1837). However, Walker's rediscovery of Hurston reintroduced the author's undaunted and insistent affirmation of the folk as an intrinsic part of black American heritage. Hurston's propensity to frame each of her novels within a folk context argued for the legitimacy of folk culture as part of black heritage, as well as conveying the vibrancy and dynamic aspects of that folk culture from a sensitive and knowledgeable perspective. Hurston's ability to bring life to the African American folk in her literature, and to employ the folk as a means to access and expose the interior lives of her individual female subjects, is but one contribution that elevated Hurston to prominence as the literary foremother to countless African American women authors.

---

[1] Sin, Aseret. "Sister Ancestor." FEMSPEC 6.1 (2005): 151.

Walker's discovery of Hurston's literature in the 1970s gave rise to a thriving new generation of African American female writers that included Walker, Toni Morrison, Toni Cade Bambara, and Gloria Naylor, whose novels featured the protagonist's return to a folkloric past as a means to repair her ruptured ties to community and heritage. In Naylor's *Mama Day*, the author introduces the little South Carolina coastal village of Willow Springs as the setting in which the conjure woman and her craft reassume their rightful prominence as revered elders and healers. Miranda's, or "Mama" Day's niece Ophelia returns home to Willow Springs to find that she has become spiritually isolated and detached from her family and the community who once nourished her. When a jealous conjurer—and Miranda's rival, Ruby—becomes jealous of Ophelia and poisons her with nightshade, Miranda intervenes and attempts to save her niece's life with the use of folk medicine. Though Ophelia dies, she is reabsorbed in spirit to the network of connections and to her heritage. In Bambara's *The Salt Eaters*, civil rights activist Velma becomes detached from her community and she loses her sense of wellness and stability. Minnie, a conjurer, seeks the aid of Old Wife—a venerated ancestral spirit—to perform the necessary rites to cure Velma and restore her to psychic wellness. As Velma lies semi-conscious and delirious in her bed at the Southwest Infirmary, the conjure woman and her spirit guide create a protective enclosure of compassionate souls that encircle the drowsing woman. The symbolic ring of bodies chant, sing, and urge Velma on to physical wellness. Though her destiny is not clear, one understands that this mysterious destiny lies in spiritual prominence upon which rests her community's cohesiveness. Naylor's and Bambara's novels each prescribes a return to folk heritage as a means to restore those who have become fractured spiritually and bodily removed—either by dint of geographic displacement, or by the demands of an ever-evolving modernized world—and to return to the fold of the folk to seek the healing wholeness that modernity often disrupts. *Mama Day* and *The Salt Eaters* each conveys Hurston's pervasive influence on these authors' novels, as each returns to folklore as a literary trope through which the realities of their subjects are revealed and understood in powerful and poignant ways. In each novel, the conjurer is the mitigating, curative force who restores each protagonist to her spiritual home among the folk.

Just as Hurston rose posthumously to prominence as a literary foremother to African American women writers, she too acknowledged her own foremother: a woman whose life set forth a model of a conjure woman who cast a wide net and embraced and women across geographic margins. In *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, Hurston gives dynamic form to the character of Moses by drawing from the reputation of Mother Leafy Anderson, who combined New Orleans hoodoo and elements of European folklore, conjure, and western religious doctrine, to celebrate a unique and creolized New World culture that discovered a unifying oneness in the midst of diversity. No individual, regardless of race, gender, or background was turned away from the door of the Eternal

Life Spiritualist Church: Mother Anderson accepted all those seeking spiritual enlightenment and belonging, regardless of gender, ethnic or cultural background. By projecting the figure of Anderson onto that of the biblical Moses, Hurston defines the conjure woman as a model of charismatic, progressive black female leadership that is endowed with the gifts of uniting people who had been systematically relegated to the margins of a dominant white European culture. By stressing empathy among her parishioners, Hurston's conjure woman repairs communal fragmentation that resulted from historic displacement and forges a cohesive, new community under the canopy of a shared woman-centered faith. As Mother Anderson called upon Queen Esther and Black Hawk—historic champions of oppressed peoples—in a dynamic performance of spirit possession, she articulated narratives through the movements and gestures of the female body. Hurston bases her version of the biblical leader largely on the figure of Anderson to imagine through Moses' words and gestures, the lost histories of African slaves. In *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, Hurston creates the groundwork for a literary model in which she situates the conjurer in the context of the Marvelous Real to examine the common cultural memories of slavery—particularly from the perspective of women—in an attempt to strengthen the ties between the African American diasporic culture and its sister diasporas located in the Caribbean islands of Jamaica and Haiti.

Since its publication, *Moses, Man of the Mountain* has received considerable criticism for the author's portrayal of a black Moses as a cruel and destructive figure, whose most monstrous actions mimic the oppression exacted on African American slaves. However, Hurston's narrative recasts biblical parable and the miracle as the sites of the Marvelous Real, in which Moses stages a pedagogical deconstruction of western hegemonic discourse. Hurston's version of Moses alternately exhibits the capacity for callous destruction *and* balances this destructive impulse with a propensity for abiding compassion and mercy toward a community of followers. By configuring Moses as capable of such schizophrenic tendencies, Moses's actions reveal the chasmic contradictions between white European and African American culture's concept of Moses and his capacities for leadership, godliness, and deliverance. By bringing about plagues, disease, disaster and suffering, Hurston's Moses embodies and dramatizes the violent and oppressive wrath that white hegemony associated with western Mosaic tradition and implemented in the forced conversions of African American slaves. By embodying these traits, the Moses of Hurston's narrative illuminates with greater clarity the scope of cruelty suffered by enslaved peoples at the hands of white religious doctrine. Alternately, Hurston's Moses dramatizes the benevolence that is evidenced through a passionate devotion to one's God, to family, and to followers. Hurston's Moses expresses her compassion through a distinct folk dialect that serves as the connecting thread that binds her to her people. Her language is a cohesive force, and Hurston's strategy, while characteristically subtle in style, resonates as a powerful critique. The folk narrative of *Moses Man of the Mountain*, while a symbol of folk solidarity, contradicts the violently divisive, splintering, white hegemonic discourse that cast Moses as the embodiment of a furiously jealous, punitive, white Anglo-Saxon god believed to have ordained the forced dislocation and enslavement of Africans. What results in Hurston's narrative of Moses is a revelation of the violence that inhered in the inconsistencies and biases of white patriarchal discourses, and yields a postcolonial (woman's) response to this violence.

Anderson's unwitting contribution to Hurston's concept of the biblical Moses enables the author to project the black female voice onto the Judeo-Christian concept of Moses, and recast his figure as an African American *female* folk hero. Hurston's literary gender-play disrupts the hierarchical categories of race, gender, and geographic origin, and radically challenges the presumed fixity of white constructions of black identity. In a way similar to Anderson's possession performance, Hurston's Moses demonstrates the fluidity of identity categories, and reveals how identity can change, evolve, and grow with movements through time and geographic space. Lastly, by superimposing the female voice onto the character of Moses, Hurston asserts the centrality of woman as the official transcriber, narrator, or griot of her culture. In other novels, Hurston shifts her focus on the community's ethnographic history to imagine the conjurer as the transcriber of an individual woman's journey, and the evolution of her unique identity as *she* moves through geographic space and time.

Since Marjorie Pryse's insightful study of Hurston's contribution to Black Women's Literary Tradition, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, now resonates as the prototype through which women's writing could be thought of as a mode of conjuration; and offers a paradigm through which the protagonist *conjures* her narrative from memory. The novel records Janie's odyssey to discover and to ultimately define her own independent identity apart from the stigma her grandmother places upon her that prefigures her as the 'mule of the world.' However, scholars have overlooked how Hurston creates chronological scenarios in which Janie encounters the marvelous as a site of revelation. Janie's first encounter with the marvelous takes place at the foot of the pear tree. There she experiences an epiphany regarding her nascent sexuality, which she initially understands as the ‘marvelousness’ of marriage. This early encounter is the first in a series of moments in which the marvelous precipitates further understanding and self-knowledge for Janie. Later, during her rancorous marriage to husband, Joe Starks, Janie bears witness to the ‘mule funeral,’ where she encounters a scene in which folk fable becomes the dynamic, revelatory site of a marvelous reality that is less sublime: Janie achieves greater clarity concerning her lowly position in Starks’ world. Her revelations in the context of this marvelous real provoke another epiphany for Janie, in which she decides to recover her identity from the men who attempted to remake her in their own image; and from the townsfolk. Only then can she begin to define her life and her identity. By reclothing herself as the conjurer of her narrative—and hence her own identity—Janie reviews her life critically separates the truth of her identity from the fictions the townsfolk invent about her. By disclosing her narrative to her best friend Pheoby, Janie creates a spontaneous, intimate community of women that, while acknowledging difference and indivuation, is bounded by common histories, and memories, and experience.

Until recently, Hurston scholars have focused primarily on the author’s influence on African American women writers. However, the fiction of Jamaican writers Erna Brodber and Nalo Hopkinson present two examples of the ways Afro-Caribbean women writers have evidenced Hurston’s influence in their writing. In this project I show how each of these authors continues to enlarge on Hurston’s paradigm of the conjurer as situated within the marvelous real. In the novels discussed here, these authors introduce women who arrive at the discovery of selfhood and their positioning within a hemispheric—as opposed to regional diaspora, by first undergoing a trauma that provokes a return to folkloric heritage. By transcribing this experience, each protagonist becomes the conjurer/ethnographer of her individual history. By expanding on Hurston's Circum-Caribbean Marvelous Real, Brodber and Hopkinson discover innovative and imaginative strategies to examine women's experience and to focus on the common cultural and historical memories that bind women's lives across geographic, temporal—and even dimensional boundaries.

Much as the authors of the Black Women's Literary Renaissance chose the folk as a fictional context through which to examine women's lives in the U.S., Afro-Caribbean authors Brodber and Hopkinson introduce fictional scenarios that emphasize that a return to folk beginnings is necessary to commence personal healing, and to repair the wounds incurred after the trauma of displacement disrupts the life of the protagonist. As part of this process of healing and restoration, these authors cast the protagonist in the role of conjure woman—a representative embodiment of folk tradition—whose actions illustrate and transcribe women's narratives. In this way the conjurer fills in the gaps that were created in archival histories. Hopkinson and Brodber prompt us to reconsider what constitutes cultural narrative, and novels such as *Louisiana* and *Midnight Robber* suggest the expanding genre of the ethnographic novel that capitalizes on the characteristically fantastic elements of folklore. Because Magical Realism and Speculative fictions employ aspects of the absurd, or implausible, and present circumstances and realities that radically contradict what is familiar in our material world, the disparity between real and imagined creates a space of dissemination, in which one is alerted to the contradictory relationship between the world the author presents and our own recognizable world. These contradictions prompt the reader to evaluate and critique what exists in the interstice between real and imagined; and between autochthonous histories and those authored by indifferent, often biased, outsiders.

The narrative structures of *Louisiana* and of *Midnight Robber* employ the fantastic to dramatize the impulse to bridge the divide between disparate diasporic communities that have been separated by the effects of radical displacement. Erna Brodber's novel *Louisiana* expands on Hurston's career as a roving ethnographer and speculates on what Hurston might have learned had she been able to minimize the cosmic void that separates the living from the dead. Similarly, *Midnight Robber* articulates the rift that has occurred between diasporic communities in terms of separate worlds that the protagonist learns to navigate. In the narrative tradition of Hurston, each of these novels focuses first on the condition of the community, and then narrows the focus to the individual's relationship to that community. Brodber and Hopkinson metaphorize the splintering of the community as an individual's personal trauma. The trauma that each protagonist undergoes serves as the catalyst for a return to folk origins. By engaging this strategy, Brodber and Hopkinson's novels suggest that one must look critically and honestly at one's history before she can progress and heal.

To explore this healing process, each novel raises questions concerning maternity to examine the how motherhood contributes to defining one's origins. In this vein, each novel troubles the definition of *origin* by speculating on whether motherhood is strictly a matter of biological relationship or whether there are spiritual and experiential components that compose a maternal/filial bond. As Ella Townsend of *Louisiana* strengthens her communion with the Venerable Sisters, she discovers her ability to nurture and heal herself, much as a mother would. Ella's despair over her inability to conceive a child dissipates when she ascends to her place in continuum of spiritual mothers. Her life, and hence, her death unites her surviving progeny in St. Mary Parish Louisiana, and St. Mary's Parish, Jamaica. *Midnight Robber*, like *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, seeks to replace the missing mother by casting the protagonist as her own mother: Tan-Tan, like Janie Crawford, acquires the ability to heal herself and to connect to the community in a meaningful, lasting way, by becoming an intrinsic part of its folklore and history. These tropes and the questions they raise reinforce each novel's project to emphasize that origins are not necessarily defined by blood-kinships, or geographic location, but by shared experience, and the spontaneous bonds such experience can create.

Louisiana and *Midnight Robber* have been surprisingly understudied; however, these novels suggest a nascent trend among Caribbean writers to call upon the themes that populate folklore and reinterpret a folk heritage through the lens of the fantastic. This strategy enables the artist—and her audience—to look critically at a dystopian past and speculate on the potentialities of building a utopian future that is rooted in an emphasis on shared experience and connectivity. In addition, each of these novels raises questions concerning what constitutes 'diaspora'; and, what could further examination of the cultural and historical similarities between the contiguous Latin and Afro-Caribbean diasporas reveal that might bridge these cultures further.

CHAPTER ONE

MAPPING THE CONJURE WOMAN IN HURSTON'S CIRCUM-CARIBBEAN MARVELOUS REAL

"You've got to go there to know there" (Hurston Their Eyes Were Watching God)

Following its publication in 1938, *Tell My Horse* received little critical or popular acclaim. Hurston's biographer Robert Hemenway points out that although mainstream newspapers and magazines generally accepted *Tell My Horse*, Hurston's contemporaries in the field of social science dismissed the volume on grounds that it lacked sufficient scientific rigor, while literary critics objected to the volume's inconsistent form and style. Harold Courlander of *The Saturday Review* tersely condemned the volume as a "curious mixture of remembrance, travelogue, sensationalism and anthropology" (qtd. in Hemenway 251). Perhaps the most damning critique leveled at Hurston accused the author of possessing the same exploitative and sensationalist impulse that motivated many white folklorists and writers who produced ethnographies and folklore collections during the same period. In the decades since Alice Walker reintroduced the author's literary oeuvre in the 1970s, *Tell My Horse* has been more widely reappraised, and scholars in the fields of literature and social science now acknowledge Hurston's significant contributions to both fields. In his foreword to the 1990 edition of *Tell My Horse*, Ishmael Reed lauds Hurston for her innovative narrative strategy in which she combines her keen anthropological insight with engaging, personal narrative in a manner that creates a postmodern, 'hybrid' text. Additionally, ethnobotanist Wade Davis commends Hurston for the intrepidness and dedication she demonstrated by investigating the secret societies of Haiti—a fiat that few anthropologists before her had attempted.

Over the last seventy years, Hurston's volume seems to have recovered from accusations that her report of West Indian religious cultures betrayed an exploitative impulse. However, the well-deserved reconsideration that *Tell My Horse* now receives from modern-day scholars is attended by a degree of consternation from critics who question the politics the author seems to have expressed in her commentaries on Haitian culture. Hurston arrived in Haiti in the wake of the nineteen-year U.S. military occupation: a tense period in which anti-American sentiment flourished in the small Caribbean nation. Numerous scholars have observed that the author met Haitian anti-Americanism in *Tell My Horse* with language of her own that reflected a distinctly patriotic zeal that continues to raise questions concerning the author's political agenda in *Tell My Horse*.

However, by contextualizing Hurston's volume within the politico-historical context from which it was written, modern scholars now note how Hurston's narrative simultaneously capitulates to *and* critiques U.S. nationalist discourses that were prevalent in the early decades of the twentieth century. The nineteen-year U.S. military occupation of Haiti evolved as the result of a long series of 'banana wars' between the U.S. and its European adversaries to gain economic, material, and territorial control in the Caribbean. By 1915, the Wilson administration feared that the existing U.S. naval strength in the Caribbean was insufficient to resist attack from superior German naval forces. Concerned about securing U.S. trade routes to the Panama Canal, the U.S. State Department and the Department of the Navy expanded American military might at strategic points in the Caribbean by establishing garrisons in Haiti, the neighboring Dominican Republic, and the Virgin Islands to ensure American hegemony. From the onset, the Occupation in

Haiti was portrayed as a benevolent mission to expand liberal democracy. President Wilson and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan publicly advocated an anti-imperialist philosophy and vehemently opposed the use of force in U.S. foreign relations. Accordingly, Wilson insisted that the purpose behind the campaign in the Caribbean was one of humanitarian concern for the welfare of smaller island nations, and that it was the moral obligation of the U.S. to "promote constitutional, democratic government" throughout nations within the U.S. sphere of influence that were considered less technologically and economically sophisticated (Schmidt 9-10).

Despite the president's passionate assertion that the campaign in Haiti was structured by policy of protectionism, U.S. military and governmental maneuvers in the years between 1915 and 1929 comprised a series of insidious strategies that amounted to the virtual recolonization of Haiti. Hans Schmidt points out that the American campaign was driven primarily by the same racist assumptions about black inferiority and incapacity for self-governance that had persisted on U.S. soil. If Haitian self-sufficiency was to be realized, officials argued, it would depend on technological and infrastructural improvements that would usher the country into modernity. Therefore, the Occupation engineered the development of roads and the construction of hospitals and municipal buildings. Despite whatever improvements such projects may have yielded, however, the U.S. campaign in Haiti soon undermined its stated mission to advance Haitian civilization. Through a series of systematic measures, U.S. officials dissolved Haitian autonomy by dissolving its legislature, and by resorting to a serious of unscrupulous and illegal maneuvers to strong-arm a new Haitian constitution into existence. This constitution was designed to satisfy American political and economic interests exclusively. In addition, American efforts to improve Haiti's economy rested upon the reinstitution of a plantation agriculture that was controlled by American investments—a move that suggested a disconcerting return to the plantation slavery that shaped Haiti's troubled history (9-14). In roughly fourteen years, the proposed humanitarian motivations to modernize Haiti gradually gave way to the racist and imperialist impulses that were at the heart of the U.S. Occupation.

Concurrent with ongoing national and governmental campaigns to recolonize Haiti, American popular media perpetuated racist images of Haiti that were structured upon Vodou, the country's central religious practice. Wade Davis emphasizes that during and after the U.S. Occupation of 1919-1935, military officers who served in Haiti often received publishing contracts to produce travelogues like William Seabrook's *The Magic Island*, and *Black Bagdad* by Spencer St. John, that promoted gruesome, sensationalized images as bloody animal sacrifice, overtly sexual performances, and mysterious, occult rituals conducted by mendacious yet menacing 'swamp doctors.' Publications such as these attempted to justify American military occupation in Haiti by perpetuating images of Haitian Vodou as a "heathen," or "devil-worshiping" cult (Davis 208). While popular reading audiences eagerly consumed these manufactured images of Haitian Vodou, professionals in Hollywood and the Broadway Theater transferred these racist images of Haiti from the pages of the marine officers' travelogues to the screen and stage. Seabrook's lurid account of his encounter with Haitian Vodou, *The Magic Island,* was later made into a Broadway play entitled *Zombie* in 1932. In February of that year, *The Motion Picture Herald* announced that a film based on the play was in production, but no film ever materialized. Shortly thereafter, Victor and Edward Halperin commenced work on the screenplay for the film "White Zombie," that featured Belgian actor Bela Lugosi. Kenneth Webb, playwright for *Zombie*, heard of the Halperins' plans and filed a lawsuit for copyright infringement. Webb lost the suit on the grounds that since his play had failed after a three-week run, it was no longer commercially viable. Curiously, the reason for the lawsuit's outcome was that neither party held the copyright on the notion of '*zombies*' (Senn 19). Though Hurston makes no direct reference to these events in *Tell My Horse*, she was certainly cognizant of the damning images of Haiti that permeated the popular American imagination. These contrived images of Haitian culture formed backdrop against which Hurston, an African American woman and anthropologist, would obtain a Guggenheim Fellowship to finance her venture into the West Indies to collect material on Afro-Caribbean cultures. Contemporary scholars of Hurston's ethnographic volume question why the author would countenance American patriotic rhetoric throughout her observations of the political, economic, and social circumstances in Haiti—especially as she arrived in the Caribbean only three years after the departure of U.S. troops. Surely in so little time, the stinging effects of the U.S. Occupation could still be felt.

Mary Renda finds the narrative in *Tell My Horse* particularly disconcerting. She argues that Hurston's apparent support for the Occupation complicates how we should interpret Hurston's political loyalty. Renda points out that the author vacillates between overtly jingoist rhetoric and subtle indications of her critique of U.S. intervention in Haiti in the chapter entitled "Rebirth of a Nation." In this chapter, Hurston recounts the gruesome events of the night of July 27, 1915, when President Vilbrun Gillaume Sam ordered the deaths of 167 political prisoners (Renda 81). The surviving family members of those murdered in the massacre formed a mob and retaliated by killing the president and dismembering his corpse. Though Hurston portrays, with perceptible compassion, the mourners' anguish as they searched for the bodies of their loved ones, Hurston's focus shifts suddenly from an account of the peasants' collective anger toward Guillaume Sam to a depiction of the internecine conflicts that divided them in their struggle against a common enemy. Hurston's language in these passages evolves from an acutely sensitive account into lofty allegory, in which she describes the arrival U.S. ships to Haitian shores as though this event were cosmically preordained. "A prophet could have foretold it was to come to them from another land and another people utterly unlike the Haitian people," Hurston remarks. "The prophet might have said, 'Your freedom from strife and your peace shall come when these symbols shall appear.'" Hurston characterizes the relief and gratitude of the Haitian people at the arrival of U.S. ships, by distilling their passions in the body of a peasant woman who, in the throes of grief, decries the internal cruelties Haitians have perpetrated on each other. With her arms stretched wide "like a crucifix," she pleads for the "white man" to return and rule Haiti (TMH 65; 72). Hurston constructs a scene that resonates with the religious imagery of Christ's martyrdom on the cross; however, the woman who assumes the posture of the martyr appears to sacrifice herself to the arrival of the occupying force. By suggesting that the U.S. military is the savior of the Haitian peasantry, Hurston's narrative resonates with popular U.S. discourses that promoted the apotheosized image of the U.S. as force that intervenes on the affairs of an impoverished nation of blacks that, having turned on itself, necessitated the protection and diplomacy of the U.S. military to establish utopian order.

Renda concedes that although Hurston's account appears to support the U.S. intervention, Hurston alternately critiques the presence of U.S. forces in Haiti. Throughout "Rebirth of a Nation," and in the following chapter, Hurston presents contradicting images of whiteness and blackness that undermine the author's surface patriotism. Hurston refers to the arrival of the *U.S.S. Washington* as the bearer of "white hope," a phrase that echoes the racist assumptions that cast the U.S. as a superior white nation. However, Hurston later observes Haitians' historical determination to overthrow their "white oppressors" and to gain political independence. In subsequent passages, the author reflects approvingly on the stabilizing economic effects that emerged from the Occupation; yet she praises the Haitian people for having withstood nearly two decades of dominance by a "foreign, white power" (TMH 72-4). Throughout these chapters, Hurston aligns images of whiteness with themes of aggression and domination. Alternately, the author introduces a subtle critique of the Occupation by implying that Haitian 'blackness' manifested a resilience that matched the 'whiteness' and aggression of foreign interlopers. Indeed, Hurston's jingoist remarks are offset by a reclamation of Haitian resolve and determination; nevertheless, Hurston's alternating tone and language in these passages suggest to some scholars that there were larger forces at work that influenced the author's contradicting political attitudes that vie for control of the narrative in *Tell My Horse*.

Current scholars suggest that the character of Hurston's narrative is attributable to the dilemma she faced in preparing the volume for publication. In her letter to the Guggenheim Foundation, Hurston's enthusiasm was palpable as she described the upcoming project to her interlocutor. She asserted that a comprehensive and legitimate book on Vodou had “never been done, and it is crying to me to do it” (Hemenway 246). After she had overcome many hurdles to acquire funding for the trip, she was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in March 1936, and in January of the following year, she embarked for Jamaica, and then Haiti. However, Amy Fass Emery points out that Hurston was soon made acutely aware of the limits placed not only on her scholarly project, but on her physical well being during her time in Haiti. As an American woman of color and scholar traveling alone, Hurston faced significant obstacles as she set out to collect ethnographic material in the West Indies. At home in the U.S., she was forced to court a white readership that was strongly affected by racist portrayals of Haiti in the national press; and Emily Dalgarno, among other Hurston scholars, observe the constraints under which her patron, Mrs. R. Osgood Mason, routinely placed her (Dalgarno 523). Alternately, anti-American sentiment, and an appalling sexism flourished among the Haitian folk population, and made her Haitian subjects wary of her both as an American and as a woman. Many Haitians whom she interviewed resisted her inquiries into the particulars of their religious culture, as they identified her as a representative of a formerly occupying nation (Trefzer 309).

Meanwhile, Haitian officials were concerned about incurring further negative publicity surrounding Vodou, particularly concerning the question of ‘zombis’. Although officials publicly dismissed the question of zombis as folk myth, they intercepted the author’s investigations into the Cochon Gris and Secte Rouge: Vodou secret societies alleged to be responsible for producing the neurotoxin involved in the process zombification. Though Hurston persevered to deconstruct the myth of the zombi poison, her record of the conversation she conducted with her informant Dr. Rulx Leon, Director of the Service d'Hygiene, appears vague and elliptical. Hurston muses that the zombi was not a corpse reanimated by a sorcerer's magic, but "a matter of the semblance of death induced by some drug known to a few. Some secret probably brought from Africa and handed down from generation to generation. These men know the effect of the drug and the antidote." Unfortunately, Hurston's speculation on the zombi myth ends on an abrupt and dissatisfactory note, and the chapter ends on open speculation that is perhaps attributable more directly to the influence of political forces than by any Vodou "magic" (TMH 196).

Wade Davis observes that the 'select few' to whom Hurston refers were the insular Vodou sects that existed in Haiti since its colonization, and inhabited the remote regions of Haiti's countryside. At the time of her investigation, these sects exercised considerable influence among the Haitian peasantry as judicial or peace keeping bodies: often the *chef de section* of a particular peasant village was also a practicing houngan, and leader of a secret society. Though these societies were less magical than their fabled reputations would suggest, their reputation for poisoning their enemies had been confirmed and was widely acknowledged (Davis 236-7). Dr. Legros, another physician in Hurston's company, warned her against pursuing the topic of zombis for this latter reason. She remarks that had she persisted "I would find myself involved in something so terrible, something from which I could not extricate myself alive, and that I would curse the day I entered upon my search" (TMH 196). Hurston may have had sufficient reason to express her concern about her health and welfare. In June 1937 an "intestinal ailment" incapacitated the author and landed her at the home of the American consul to convalesce. Hurston's lamented the illness, saying that "[i]t seems that some of my destinations and some of my accessions have been whispered into ears that heard." Hemenway suggests that Hurston feared that she had penetrated too far into the subject of Vodou sects, because her illness followed soon after her initial inquiries. Whether or not she had come into contact with a deadly poison has never been satisfactorily corroborated. Nonetheless, the sudden, violent ailment undoubtedly heightened Hurston's consternation and frustrated her efforts to produce the volume that she *wanted* to write. Scholars agree that the narrative of *Tell My Horse* reflects the author's predicament to navigate within the multifarious limitations placed upon her during her research in Haiti (Hemenway 247). In light of these restrictions, one surmises that Hurston had to play her cards very carefully if she wanted to publish her findings.

Amy Fass Emery has termed Hurston's narrative strategy in *Tell My Horse* as one that is "double-voiced": that is, one in which two competing agendas are expressed—and often collide—in the same volume (328). Emery suggests that this strategy creates ambiguity that raises doubts in the minds of readers as to just what the author's true purpose may have been. Scholars agree that Hurston's propensity to mask or 'signify' was informed in part by the possession performances she witnessed and recorded that centered on the image of the trickster god, Guedé. In the chapter entitled, "Parlay Cheval Ou," Hurston emphatically points out that the Haitian peasantry identifies the god called Papa Guedé as its collective spiritual embodiment. As the divine representative of the peasantry, Guedé is configured as a ribald and an audacious vagabond who accepts simple offerings of blanched corn, peanuts, and clairin, which he imbibes with alacrity (Deren 104). Thought to be capricious, audacious, and utterly ungovernable, Guedé possesses the living, or 'mounts his horse,' through whom he vociferously chastises pompous elites. The ‘horse,’ or devotee who embodies Guedé dresses in the costume ascribed to the god: an ill-fitting formal top hat and discarded cutaway coat. By clothing himself in mocking versions of the iconic fashion of the European elite, Guedé conveys a figure that pantomimes a concession to the dominant European power. By pretending his acceptance of alien cultural influence, Guedé masks his violent disavowal of the dominating culture, and enacts the ‘mimicry’ that Homi Bhabha describes, in which the performer simultaneously accepts and disavows imperial domination through his embodied actions. Bhabha defines this mimicry as a “recalcitrant” performance that underscores the vast cultural difference between imperial and colonial forces, and “emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal” (Bhabha 122). As he verbally mocks and condemns his enemies, Guedé’s performance testifies to the ways western discourse attempted to reclothe him in its own image, yet violently othered him in the same instant. Clearly, Hurston acknowledged that American political and popular discourses sought to build America’s reputation as a benevolent, paternal nation by inscribing Haitian identity as a collective of uncivilized ‘others.’ As if responding to this presumption, the author astutely points out that the Haitian folk creates their divinity as one who can signify on his oppressors and “burlesque the society that crushed him” (TMH 220).

For some critics, Hurston’s narrative oscillates uncomfortably between patriotic rhetoric that might placate white readers and publishers and language that reflected the author’s impulse to defend the customs of the Haitian peasantry. Critics’ discomfiture with Hurston’s narrative seems to arise from Hurston’s well-documented neglect to stage an explicit political critique. Hurston’s contemporaries during the period of the Harlem

Renaissance frequently condemned the author for her evasiveness concerning issues of racial prejudice and discrimination in the U.S. In similar fashion, the author dodged any engagement of overt political critique concerning the U.S. Occupation in Haiti. In *Tell My Horse*, Hurston chooses to alternate between American patriotic rhetoric to partially conceal her defense of the Haitian folk: a strategy that maintains a far stealthier resonance. Annette Trefzer writes, "[l]ike the Haitian peasant population, who had to resort to disguising their ideological insubordination, the black American writer traditionally had to find her own ways of negotiating between dominant narratives and social critiques" (Trefzer 305). And, like the trickster Guedé, Hurston relies on the ambiguity that is created through performative signification. As Guedé's devotee creates a performance that thinly obscures the Vodouist's insubordinate response to U.S. domination, Hurston's narrative is a performance that stages a similar, subtle critique of the dominant discourses that plagued her project. The effect of Hurston's strategy is a juxtaposition of discourses that casts the errors and inconsistencies of American nationalism into sharp and sobering relief.

James Scott offers insight into the machinations of Hurston's authorial strategy in *Tell My Horse*. In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Scott demystifies the unspoken protocol that governs discourse that occurs between dominant and subordinated groups. Scott argues that in the public forum, members of the dominant class offer a public performance in the presence of the other that only partially disguises their own private thoughts or motivations. These displays are intended to affirm hegemonic control and to disguise insecurities concerning potential retribution from the subalternized group. Scott points out that members of the dominant culture suppress an awareness of this trait in their own cultures; yet they project this strategy onto their subordinates. As a result, they view the subalternized group as ‘shamming’ participants in an ongoing, clandestine scheme. The ‘sham’ that is conveyed by the subordinate is often a charade of deference that is intended to ensure their own self-preservation. Only in carefully constructed circumstances can the feelings of anxiety and antipathy toward the oppressor be aired freely. Scott observes that the performance of the subordinated group provides a shield of safety while the performer gauges the reactions of his or her ‘superior.’ He writes “[s]ubordinates offer a performance of deference and consent while attempting to discern, to read, the real intentions and mood of the potentially threatening powerholder. As the favorite proverb of Jamaican slaves captures it, ‘Play fool, to catch wise’” (Scott 3). Perhaps the narrative in *Tell My Horse* does indeed reflect the author’s impulse to ‘play fool to catch wise,’ as the proverb goes. One argues that by pantomiming her complicity to popular discourse and setting it against the subtlety of Guedé’s performance, Hurston exposes the failings and inconsistencies—and ultimately the instability—of the dominant American discourse as one that is founded on faulty presumptions of racial inferiority and Haitian passivity.

Despite Hurston’s wily narrative strategy, it remains that author was indeed frustrated by circumstances beyond her control that prohibited a fuller investigation of Vodou culture, as she would have undoubtedly preferred. These obstacles that she encountered undermined her stated determination to separate the religious culture from the damning racism to which it had been subjected. In the opening chapters of the volume, Hurston emphasizes that Vodou has traditionally been a religion of rebellion, and certainly the author was interested in emphasizing this aspect. Vodou and its complex pantheon of gods had played a significant role in the country's violent and victorious emancipation from colonial rule in the nineteenth century. However, had her investigation into secret societies and the zombi powder been more fully realized, Hurston might have been able to undermine the sensationalism surrounding Vodou 'cults' and to enlighten her contemporary readership to Vodou as a legitimate—and life affirming—religion: positive aspects that the American public chose either to ignore or pervert. As Wade Davis has compellingly argued, Hurston clearly suspected the relationship between the Cochon Gris and other secret societies in Haiti to Vodou's historic role as a key component in the nation's victory over slavery. A summary of that role is helpful in understanding the historical and political antecedents that helped to reevaluate Vodou as a religion that encompasses the themes of life, victory, and liberation: a legacy that would contribute mightily to shaping Hurston's initial project in the Caribbean.

By the late eighteenth-century Haiti—then the French colony of Saint Domingue— had become the most productive and profitable site of France's economic interests. The plantations of Saint Domingue fortified the economic power of the French empire by exporting the cash crops of sugar, cacao, coffee, cotton and tobacco—the production of which had expanded by fifty percent in the last few years of the eighteenth century. Nearly 80,000 whites and mulattos controlled a massive population of nearly 500,000 slaves, yet frequent importations of African slaves were made necessary as the slave population was periodically decimated by the disease and pestilence that was rampant in the area. For the slave on the French colonial plantation, life was exceedingly brutal and brief. Those who were able to escape the plantation fled into the hills to join rebel bands of Maroons who periodically raided plantations and terrorized owners and slaves alike. Maroon populations consisted of former slaves, many of whom could trace their lineage directly to Africa. Some had been slaves in Africa, while others were the offspring of royal families. Still others were artisans, warriors, farmers, metalworkers, and medicine men who had carried with them many of their tribal traditions and esoteric knowledge that included the preparation of herbal remedies, poisons, and their antidotes (Davis 70).

The threat of the Maroons and their clandestine practices produced a climate of fear among planters, who responded by instituting exceptionally cruel methods of punishment designed to deter slaves from escaping bondage. Such atrocities included slicing the hamstrings of a slave who had tried to escape, mutilating a slave's body for the slightest infringement. Those slaves caught consuming the produce of the cane fields were forcibly strapped into iron muzzles while they toiled. Random beatings, rapes, hangings, and other forms of unimaginable brutality were common occurrences in the daily life on the plantations of Saint Domingue (72; 190-1). By 1791, whites' collective fear of an uprising was justified when, in August of that year, a houngan—or Vodou priest—called Dutty Boukman presided over a Vodou ceremony near Cap Français, at Bois-Caiman, that would instigate the first and most successful slave uprising in history. Boukman's devotees swore a blood oath to conquer their French oppressors, and some days later, his small band of guerilla rebels began setting fire to nearby plantations. Over the next twelve years, slave bands would defeat consecutive onslaughts by British, Spanish, and French troops. Even the seasoned European armies could not withstand the attacks of the rebels, and those who were not slaughtered by the rebel armies were decimated by disease. The rebel slaves, driven by the conviction that their gods would defend them in their struggle, faced bayonets and cannon-fire, while asserting that when they died, their souls would ascend to freedom among their ancestors in a distant and mythic Africa, called Guinée (72). Hans Schmidt points out that the victory of the slaves of Saint Domingue and their subsequent independence produced two outcomes: in more specific terms, the victory over slavery by its very victims was a crippling blow to France's positioning as a world economic power. More broadly, the emerging independent black nation was an embarrassment to European hegemony. Vodou, as the driving spiritual force behind the uprising, evolved as a symbol of black militancy, and therefore menaced the minds of many Europeans (Schmidt 22-3).

Hurston's narrative strategies in *Tell My Horse*, for this reader, suggest a far more complex and profound project than what previous scholars have identified as an authorial tentativeness that Hurston resolved through signification. In her essays and in private letters, Hurston frequently expressed her desire not only to affirm Vodou as a vital cultural artifact, and to do so with sensitivity; but she also expressed her desire to capture the immediacy of Vodou performance just as she witnessed the same element in the porch-talk and verbal play among the African American folk. Further, Hurston sought to emphasize the cultural forms that linked localized African American communities in the coastal South to their connections among the Afro-Caribbean diaspora. She observed the themes of resistance, resilience, and liberation consistently reified in the Vodou possession performance. As an ethnographer—and as an author of fiction—she sought to capture these qualities and bring them to the public's attention by showing how performance perpetuates a culture by reinvigorating its history. Performance theorist

Diana Taylor examines how embodied performance—such as the possession ritual in which Guedé selects a host—represents a postcolonial narrative she calls the *repertoire*: a collection of ritualized behaviors that include dance, storytelling, and gesture. These ritualized behaviors compose a narrative that challenges and completes the *archive*: the 'official' written documents in which postcolonial interaction has been authored by the dominant culture. Taylor observes that some cultural historians have dismissed performance on grounds that embodied behaviors are too transitory and impermanent to contribute significantly to the existing historical record. Taylor responds to this claim by asserting that performances, because they are reiterative, reanimate the lived experiences of the authoring culture. Therefore, embodied performances retain a "constant state of againness" (Taylor 21). It was the persistent *againness* that Hurston found compelling in African diasporic cultural forms, and especially evident in the syncretic religious performances she witnessed in the West Indies.

Hurston reveals her preference for the immediacy of natural, impromptu performance in the early chapters of *Tell My Horse*. While in Jamaica, Hurston made the acquaintance of a Colonel Rowe who served as her tour guide. When he offered to stage a native dance for Hurston, as he had done for her predecessor to the island, Melville Herskovits, she graciously though emphatically declined. As though sharing a secret to a friend in confidence, Hurston discloses to her reader that "I did not tell him that I was too old a hand at collecting to fall for staged-dance affairs. If I do not see a dance or a ceremony in its natural setting and sequence, I do not bother. Self-experience has taught me that those staged affairs are never the same as the real thing" (TMH 22-3). Hemenway points out that Hurston demonstrated early in her career that she was driven by a conviction to foreground the lived experience of the cultures to which she was intimately associated and passionately devoted. For Hurston, "immediate experience takes precedence over analysis, emotion over reason, the personal over the theoretical." Hurston was seldom a strident political analyst or critic, and her avoidance of direct involvement with political or racial issues has dissatisfied, and even angered, many critics past and present. However it was insufficient, and even defeatist in the mind of Zora Neale Hurston simply to rehabilitate Vodou—and other African diasporic cultures—from racist stereotypes. Instead, she preferred to foreground the performances of African diasporic cultures as dynamic, self-affirming, fearless, and even superior to dominant Western cultural modes (Hemenway 212-13). Rather than to make explicit comparisons to the dominant cultural forms, Hurston preferred to showcase Vodou performance and allow it to speak for itself. As the powerful Guedé mounted his horse, the ferocity with which he denounced his adversaries echoed the militant resistance of the Haitian slave militias who won their freedom by virtue of their bravery and their commitment liberation through a faith in their ancestors.

Joseph Roach, who links concerns of performance and its relationship to memory, observes a similar dynamic at work in the performances of non-Western cultures. Roach distinguishes between Western, or European-derived and non-Western cultures with regard to the way cultural memory is recreated through performance. Roach argues that Western historical performances end tragically, with the chaos of a past event acknowledged, yet, the anticipation that the tragedy will recur still lingers near the surface. Conversely, the non-western, spirit-world ritualized performances of formerly subalternated religious cultures, like that of Haitian trance possession, takes a more preterit approach to specific aspects of the past: that is, tragic events are considered as part of the past, without the anticipation that these events will necessarily resurface again in the future. Often the dancing that accompanies these ritualized performances celebrates the conviction that these tragedies of history were decisively overcome. Roach points out that "[t]his affirmation contests the closure of investing the future with the fatality of the past, a position more easily maintained by those whose communication with their ancestors was continuous, dynamic, and intimate" (35). It is plausible that Hurston discovered the *againness* that inhered in Vodou's embodied performances arose primarily from a tradition of acknowledging and calling upon ancestors to pay homage to them for their sacrifices. By consistently reenacting the triumphs of ancestors, Vodou performance created a metaphorical space in which the "marvelous reality" of lived histories could be revealed and reiterated.

Hurston's observations of Vodou performance resonates powerfully with the philosophies of Alejo Carpentier, who some years after Hurston departed from Haiti, developed his concept of the "marvelous real": a phenomenon he claimed to exist in the Haitian and Latin American cultures he visited in the 1940s. Writing against the tradition practiced by European Surrealists, Carpentier observed a vibrant celebration of New World 'otherness' repeated through representations of the hybrid vegetation, the rich mixture of Creole languages, and the cultural and ethnic complexity of the Caribbean people (Bowers 15). Carpentier found in these examples of synchronism, a positive attribute to being "other;" or as Carpentier phrased it, to being "criollo." Carpentier defined "criollo" as a phenomenon that was at once self-affirming and enduring, because to be *criollo* meant to belong to a uniquely original, sui generis *American* culture that evolved and flourished against centuries of imperial domination.

Of Cuban and European descent, Carpentier initially expressed the concept of the marvelous real by assigning the term *lo real maravilloso*. In the author's native Spanish, "lo real maravilloso" assumes a far more existential meaning than the comparatively mundane English translation might suggest. As opposed to the Spanish expression, "El Real," which simply means, "the real" or "reality," *Lo real* translates to "that which is real," which assumes a comparatively ontological connotation. *Lo real maravilloso* is best rendered as "that which is marvelous in (one's) reality": a reality that closely associated with one's subjective being and to the experience of living. The marvelous real in this sense, then, is necessarily linked to being criollo, because the nature of criollo in Carpentier's terms reflects an adaptability that allows one to absorb and appropriate strains of external cultures to one's own such that it yields a unique cultural identity. The author discovered the beauty of criollo and of *lo real maravilloso* most evident in the architecture of Haiti, particularly the fortress built during the reign of Henri Christophe, the Citadelle La Ferrière. Carpentier explained that the Citadelle testified to the will and determination of King Christophe to transform the experience of European cultural domination into a means to build a glorious empire. The Citadelle stood as a lasting bulwark against European dominance, and in the one hundred and twenty years since its construction was finalized, the fortress testified to its history, forever revisiting the historical moment in which Haiti won its independence. The resilience of its design made the fortress impenetrable, as it had withstood the violent and torrential rains of the subtropical Haitian climate, earthquakes, and having been twice struck by lightning.

Therefore, characteristics of the marvelous real include an ever-present awareness of history; the capacity to endure; and to transform adversity into staunch determination and self-preservation (Carpentier 84).

Carpentier argued that the phenomenon he discovered in Haitian—and later in Latin American culture—formed the basis for a new and distinctly American mode of literary expression. The author deployed his concept of the marvelous real in his novel, *The Kingdom of this World*, in which he engaged the legacy of François Macandal, legendary leader of one of the most violent and devastating uprisings in Haitian history. Macandal, who claimed to have been descended from a royal family, had become a prominent figure among the slaves and French planters on the cane plantation near Limbé. The plantation owner valued Macandal for his awesome strength and endurance; and among his fellow bondsmen, he was admired for his bravery and his steely resistance to the lash. Men admired him, and women vied to share his bed, because it was rumored that he had frequent and prescient dreams: those who slept by his side would share in his predictions of the future. When a cane press crushed his arm, he endured this agony with remarkable stoicism. However, the disfigurement forced him from the canefields because he was judged unfit for the demanding toil of the fields. He was sent to tend the cattle in the pastures, but otherwise wandered the countryside. Left alone to suffer the humiliation of having been rendered unfit for more physical labor, Macandal dedicated himself to exacting revenge on his tormentors—not just for his own sake; but also for the sake of those who had toiled along with him. Macandal consulted conjurers and herbalists who lived in obscure regions of the remote countryside to perfect his knowledge of plants and poisons. By 1740, he formed a clandestine Maroon community in the mountains north of

Limbé. Macandal concocted a poison that could easily become airborne, and the deadly effluvium contaminated the crops and killed livestock. At his execution, Macandal cursed his persecutors and vowed that he would transform himself into a fly and escape death (Davis 189-90; 199). Carpentier observed that the spirit of resistance that Macandal embodied lingered on the air in Haiti. He claims that he was so inspired to distill the legend in his novel because, while in Haiti, he found himself "in a land where thousands of men, anxious for freedom, believed in Mackandal's lycanthropic powers to the extent their collective faith produced a miracle on the day of his execution" (Carpentier 87). Francois Macandal, like Dutty Boukman, was absorbed into the Vodou pantheon as a demigod, and his legacy is revisited through ritual performance. The author observes in "The Marvelous Real in America," that the ever-present Rada drums of Haiti call upon the spirits of Macandal and Boukman, and followers revisit their mythic triumphs over French slaveowners through dance and pantomime (88). Inspired by the legend of Macandal, Carpentier asserted that this engagement with the past in the form of spiritual communion was a glimpse of *lo real maravilloso* that inhered in the lived reality of Haitian culture. In subsequent essays, the author advocated a New World literary style that could reflect the marvelous reality he identified in these distinctly American cultures, in which the mythology of Haiti and Latin America came alive through dynamic representations of the magical or phantasmagoric. *The Kingdom of This World* engages frequent scenes in which fantastic elements such as shape-shifters, conjuration, and spirit communication characterize the confluence of history and mythology that the author believed reflected the uniquely Creole New World experience.

Just as Carpentier noted the way in which Vodou performance reanimated Haiti's historical and mythic past, and Hurston's brush with secret sects in Haiti and with "zombi" Felicia Felix-Mentor deepened her awareness of how embodied performance could dramatically reanimate the Haitian tradition of resistance and the nation's historical insurgence against oppressors. Hurston's curiosity concerning the Maroon communities and their specialization in preparing herbal remedies—and poisonous toxins—indicates that Hurston already suspected connections between herbal poisons and the role that secret societies played in the Haitian war for independence. In a letter to the director of the Guggenheim foundation, Henry Allen Moe, Hurston writes that she is captivated by the Maroon communities in Jamaica, and of their tradition of preparing herbal concoctions. She observes that "[i]t has occurred to me to make a collection of all the subtle poisons that Negroes know how to locate among the bush and the use of which they are so expert…But as I am learning day by day more and more I think that I will be doing medical science a great service to identify these weeds so that antidotes can be prepared. The greatest power of Voodoo rests upon this knowledge." Hurston adds that she has observed how poisons can be made to become airborne, if the bushes and foliage are dusted with poison. She concludes that "[o]ne of [the poisons] will kill by being placed so that the wind will blow from it to the victim. Another can be rubbed on the clothing and enters through the pores as soon as the victim sweats" (Kaplan 382). Doubtless, Hurston was convinced that the esoteric knowledge that the Maroon communities possessed could make a considerable contribution to western medicine. However, it appears she also detected that the source of the 'zombi' toxin had its antecedents in Haiti's national history and mythology. Hurston's observations in this passage from *Tell My Horse* tellingly recall the Macandal legend. The neurotoxin to which Hurston referred in her interview with Rulx Leon had been prepared by secret societies that included not only the Cochon Gris and Secte Rouge, but also the Vinbrindingue and *Macandal*—the latter thought to be the descendants of the legendary conjurer and Maroon leader himself (Davis 211).

As Carpentier observed how Vodou ritual dance revisited Haitian mythic history through performative reenactment, Hurston's encounter with 'zombi' Felicia Felix Mentor suggests that the author was confronted with a similar phenomenon that would echo Haiti's history through an encounter with an individual presumed to have been dead for twenty-nine years. According to Haitian folk legend, the zombi was thought to be the handiwork of the bokor, or malevolent Vodou priest. The bokor sought his revenge on an enemy by reanimating his or her corpse and forcing it into slave labor. Wade Davis concludes in his groundbreaking publication, *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, that the active agent in the 'zombi' poison was tetrodotoxin, a poisonous agent similar to that found in the reproductive organs of the Japanese fugu fish: a delicacy prepared only by the most skilled chefs. The toxin, when administered in even trace amounts, can bring about violent gastrointestinal disturbance, dizziness, disorientation, and upper respiratory ailments. Depending on the individual and the dosage, the tetrodotoxin can attack the central nervous system, bringing about dysphasia, ataxia, and a gradual brain death, such that the individual may appear to be dead. Davis believes that, had she been able to continue her investigation, Hurston may have been the first to demystify the source of the so-called 'zombi poison,' the traditional preparation of which may have had its beginnings in the deadly airborne poison prepared by Macandal and his Maroon bands

(Davis 122-4). To the unyielding skeptic, Hurston's nascent suspicions about the secret societies of Haiti and the 'zombi poison' may seem, at first blush, to be excessively credulous. However, while she was in Haiti, the author was clearly affected by her experience with Felicia Felix Mentor: an encounter that perhaps brought her into a radical confrontation with the marvelous real.

Where Macandal's legend characterized the horror suffered by the victims of slavery, the folk phenomenon of the zombi confronted the author with a mode of embodied performance that reanimated the horror of forced subjugation and exile peculiar to the condition of the *female* slave. Hurston's characterization of Mentor's appearance and demeanor betrays the author's compassion for the pitiable creature. As the author stood photographing Mentor, the woman lingered near the fence, cowering as though desperately frightened. To fend off the threat of punitive violence, the woman set immediately to a pantomime of domestic labor. Hurston writes, "[t]he moment that she sensed our approach, she broke off a limb of a shrub and began to dust and clean the ground and the fence and the table which bore her food." By recording the woman's absent and defensive gestures, Hurston's depiction of the zombi brings forth a scene in which the attenuated and brutalized demeanor of the female slave is dramatized through Mentor's behavior. Visually the woman was ghastly; but undoubtedly, the woman's horrific appearance brought Hurston into a violent contact with the image of female subservience and alienation. Hurston adds, "[t]hat blank face with the dead eyes. The eyelids were white all around the eyes as if they had been burned with acid" (TMH 195). The author's account of her face-to-face encounter with Felicia Felix Mentor suggests that the experience resonated powerfully with Hurston. The 'zombi,' as a result of its shocking grotesquerie, provoked a jarring revelation of lived reality that indicated the marvelous to Hurston: a performance that revealed an historical moment embodied in the person of Mentor. Whether Mentor's behavior was attributable to the effects of a mysterious poison or was simply the disorientation and stupor associated with a catatonic mental illness, Mentor's actions yielded a mimetic *performance* of a type that conveyed the effects of captivity and forced exile.

Returning to Joseph Roach, the author characterizes two distinct "bodies" of performance: the surrogate, and the effigy. Unlike the surrogate, which can be defined as a material substitute for an historical figure that attempts to recreate or *mimic* a bygone era, the performing body of the zombi is characteristic of the effigy. The effigy, he argues "bod[ies] something forth, especially from a distant past' and shares origins with words like efficiency, efficacy, effervescence, and effeminacy." The effigy bears the inscription of a dominant hegemonic culture, as in the Haitian slave of the French plantation who was branded with the Fleur de lis. Performed effigies, Roach adds, arise "from human bodies and the associations they provoke" (36). The secret societies believed to be responsible for the zombi poison descended from Maroon bands responsible for the poison that decimated thousands of slaves and French planters during the Revolution. Maroon, which is a term derived from the French word *marronage*, can be translated loosely as "self-exile." These bands whose members had once been violently displaced from an entire network of customs, relationships, and traditions, transformed the forced exile of the slave by electing to exile themselves to enclaves in the vast countryside, where they recreated these cultural networks anew. Mentor's characteristic "zombi" movements and gestures confronted Hurston with a dynamic reenactment: an embodied representation of the psychological trauma of forced exile. Though her appearance does not anticipate a return this historical moment, it materializes an era that her culture overcame by choosing to live as they wished, apart from the influence of French planters.

Hurston, foremost a feminist, appears to have been deeply impacted by this figure that offered her a glimpse more into the marvelous real. Hurston may have identified in Mentor a mode of expressing a hidden narrative concerning the tragic and traumatic experiences of black women of the African diaspora. Hurston follows her account of Mentor with a second, and perhaps even more chilling tale of zombis that involves the reanimated bodies of two little girls. In this tale, an unnamed woman of Port-au-Prince had five daughters, and a niece, for whom she was financially responsible. Desperately poor, the woman was anxious to see the girls married. Meanwhile, a second, unnamed woman prepared to attend the "lazy people's mass" which was set to begin at four a.m. in the nearby Catholic Church. Having miscalculated the time, the woman arrived one hour early. The church was deserted, except for two young girls dressed innocently and sweetly in white communion attire, while kneeling at the altar in an anteroom. The woman demanded to know why they were there, all alone in the deserted church. One child gazed up at her with blank eyes and replied, "We are here at the orders of Madame M.P., and we shall not be able to depart until all of her daughters are married" (TMH 198). Hurston adds that the daughters did eventually marry, though four out of the five had already left their husbands. Hurston neglects to elaborate on the many ironies in this folktale, though one concludes that she observed that the two young girls dressed for communion were positioned in a posture of humble subservience as they prepared to receive a sacrament that would tie them to a lifelong relationship to the Church.

However, as the tale reveals, the ever-present influence of Vodou prevailed. Where the chilling grotesquerie of Mentor recalled historical slavery, the gruesomeness of the latter scene suggests an embodied performance that comments on the social and economic positioning of women in contemporary Haitian culture. Positioned at best as second-class citizens, women in Caribbean culture could look only marriage and faithful service to the dominant Western religion to ensure their protection and solvency.

Throughout *Tell My Horse*, Hurston intermittently returns to moments in which she expresses her consternation with the systemic sexism she encountered in the Caribbean. For example, in the opening chapters, Hurston conveys her displeasure with a Jamaican male who considers women generally to be intellectually inferior, and illustrates his point with an insulting portrait of female stupidity (17). To her dismay, Hurston discovered that Caribbean males shared this form of galling sexism universally. "It is not that they try to put you in your place, no," she asserts. "They consider that you never had any" (58). Hurston concludes this passage by adding that in the Caribbean women had little chance for personal or professional motility, as educational opportunities were limited exclusively to males. In the tale of Madame M.P., the young figures in white create a macabre juxtaposition in which the Vodou myth of the zombi violates a scene of childhood innocence and Catholic piety. The undead zombi children, so dressed in virginal white, dramatize the alienating violence perpetrated against young women through the institutional expectations forced upon them by contemporary Haitian culture. If Hurston located the marvelous in such scenes, it was from the perspective that the marvelous could be accessed through representations of the horrific—and horrifying—aspects of lived reality. Carpentier points out that the marvelous is not always synonymous with 'beautiful,' but can engage the fearsome, even grotesque aspects of lived experience. To that end, the 'marvelous' articulates historical reality in all its various facets. Carpentier explains that the marvelous "is not necessarily lovely or beautiful. It is neither beautiful nor ugly; rather, it is amazing because it is strange. Everything strange, everything amazing, everything that eludes established norms is marvelous" ("Baroque and the Marvelous Real" 101).

Hurston identified characteristics of the marvelous real in the ambiguity that attended Vodou performance and symbology. By deconstructing this ambiguity, one could reveal the hidden narratives that were partially obscured by dominant cultural narratives. Unlike many western religious doctrines, Vodou does not acknowledge mutually exclusive categories that separate good from evil, or beautiful from ugly. Instead, the Vodou pantheon reflects how these binaries often intersect and compliment one another. There is no concept of absolute good or evil in Vodou: there are only acts that benefit humankind, and those that hinder mankind. Though there is a concept of an omnipotent being, followers consider this entity to be so remote that he or she seldom interferes with the mundaneness of terrestrial affairs. Instead, Vodouists recognize a pantheon of spirits, or "lwa" which are considered lesser, though distinctly powerful entities. However, as Shirley Toland-Dix notes, "lwa" does not translate directly from Haitian Creole as "spirit" as such as a transient, ephemeral being; but instead is "something more concrete and material than the English word would suggest" (Toland-Dix 207). The Haitian Vodouist senses the presence of the lwa in every aspect of day-to-day living.

Followers of the lwa project the full spectrum of human traits and emotions onto each of their divinities, because many of the lwa are considered to be ancestors. Though the pantheon is divided into Rada (benevolent) and Petwo (malevolent), strata, each god possesses both a Rada and a Petwo persona and is addressed by a variation on his or her name, depending on the purpose and desire of the devotee. For instance, the goddess Erzulie Frieda has been imagined as a beautiful and sensual courtesan whose blessings come in the forms of love, beauty, and romance. However, her counter-persona, Erzulie Dantò, is imagined to be an earthy peasant and tender of the soil: a resilient mother who is fiercely protective of her children (Long, *Spiritual Merchants* 21). Guedé reappears in various manifestations as Baron Cimitière, and Baron Samedi. As Lord of the Cemetery, Guedé is portrayed as a gravedigger, representing his stature as the ombudsman who ushers souls to the afterlife. In other renditions, he is the mischievous trickster who delights in human folly, and often creates trouble for an enemy (Deren 112-13). By configuring their gods as possessing human failings as well as divine powers, Vodou is a comparatively holistic religious practice that accepts contradiction as a characteristic of human nature and of reality. Further, the beautiful as well as the terrifying are components of human experience that in various ways contribute to a historical record of the culture's survival, existence, and evolution. Therefore, its incorporation of all aspects of its history and of human nature unites Vodou culture with the phenomenon of the marvelous real.

In addition, as Vodou unites Roman Catholicism to West African religious forms, the syncretic religion reveals the marvelous real in its symbology. As mentioned earlier, the devotee of Guedé exploits ambiguity, enabling free expression of the ineffable contempt for western interlopers. Similarly, the symbol that represents the god avails itself to multiple interpretations. A cross that is encircled by lighted candles represents Guedé, and the arrangement resembles both the Christian cross and the African cosmogram. To the uninitiated observer, this symbol may suggest the religio-cultural concessions Vodou has made to Christianity as a matter of self-preservation. However, the significance behind the cosmogram reveals that the resemblance between these symbols is mostly arbitrary. While the cross suggests a linear narrative that imagines the death of Christ and his eventual return to build an earthly kingdom, the cosmogram privileges a circular narrative that features the individual as the center of an all-encompassing cosmic scheme. The arms of the cosmogram represent the individual at the various phases of life. The central junction where the lines intersect is a spiritual center that represents both the convergence of the physical and spiritual spheres, and the *individual's* imminence (Desmangles 104-5). The similarity between the cross and the cosmogram actually discloses the subtle difference between the two symbols. By exposing the difference, the cosmogram disarms the western assumption that African diasporic religious forms were derivative of or inferior to western religious traditions. Hurston's observations of Vodou symbology indicate that the author readily observed the all-encompassing nature of Vodou. By examining the points at which subalternated cultures absorbed strains of the dominant culture, Hurston discovered that these points of intersection gave way to remarkable—and marvelous—truths of experience that could be revealed.

Hurston's ethnographic record in *Tell My Horse* reveals that the author was acutely aware of the marvelous real as a metaphorical context in which to animate the postcolonial histories of Afro-Caribbean cultures. However, as a writer, Hurston engaged the conjure woman as a dynamic metonym through which to disclose these narratives. As the grotesquely embodied performance of the zombi conveyed a narrative of female suffering and alienation, the conjure woman entered to disseminate these narratives and to restore connectivity through performance. While in New Orleans, Hurston encountered two distinct figures whose actions and reputations suggested an impulse toward uniting the religio-cultural threads that coalesced in New Orleans. These intersections of culture also bound the lives of Afro-Caribbean and African American women in a network of circum-Caribbean relationships. The legendary "Voodoo Queen," Marie Leveau, and the Reverend Mother Leafy Anderson of the Spiritualist Church of New Orleans contributed to the model upon which Hurston later constructed the conjure woman as a recurring figure or trope in her fiction. The embodied performances that were associated with Leveau and Anderson created a context of the marvelous real: an imagined topos in which each performance reenacted historical memory. Women like Leveau and Anderson articulated women's responses to social, racial, and economic injustices and pieced together a collective narrative of postcolonial experience. By bringing these hidden narratives to light, these conjure women restored the voices that were lost to the written historic records of dominant hegemonic culture. Hurston located in the lives and reputations of Leveau and Anderson the blueprints for an instrumental literary device: a fictive conjure woman whose actions demonstrated the experiences that were shared by women across the Afro-Caribbean diaspora. Since the conjurer's movements reached across geographic boundaries, the conjure woman becomes, in Hurston's fiction, a type of itinerant ethnographer, as her performances recorded postcolonial histories that bound women in a borderless, hemispheric, or *circum-Caribbean* community.

Roughly ten years prior to her venture to the West Indies, the author conducted research into the voodoo culture of New Orleans. Referred to alternately throughout the South as ‘conjure,’ ‘hoodoo,’ or ‘rootwork,’ the Afro-syncretic folk practice that traveled from Haiti to New Orleans in the nineteenth century assumed an almost spontaneous identity of its own as ‘voodoo’: a term that retained it French colonial influences. While in New Orleans, Hurston encountered the legacy of the notorious voodoo priestess, Marie Leveau, which lingered in the atmosphere of the city. Leveau’s reign is believed to have lasted from approximately 1830 until the 1870s; but records of her life blend local lore and hearsay with historical documentation. However, historians agree that Leveau had been a prominent practitioner of voodoo in New Orleans society, and had risen to fame as a much sought-after fortune-teller and clairvoyant. Though the verifiable details of her life are scant, historians of the Leveau legend are unanimous in the assertion that more than anything else, Leveau was a shrewd and savvy businesswoman. Leveau began as a free woman of color, and is thought to have married Jacques Paris. After his death, she later became the mistress—and then the wife—to Christophe Glapion, as the tradition of concubinage was prevalent throughout the nineteenth century New Orleans culture (Long, *Voudou Priestess* 19-21). After her husband’s death, Leveau discovered that her husband had left her very little, and she procured work as a hairdresser to the wealthy ‘mulatto’ elite in order to support herself financially. This employment placed her in a rarified position in which she was privy to the gossip and interior lives of her clients. One popular story features a prominent politician whose son had been accused and found guilty of murder. The politician sought Leveau's aid in overturning the guilty verdict. Leveau ostensibly performed a ritual that resulted in acquittal for the young man, and he was subsequently freed of all charges. Leveau affirmed her reputation and popularity among the wealthy elite who simultaneously feared and admired her. This seems to have been less attributable to any occult magic she may have had than for the information she was able to gather: Leveau purportedly had no compunction against using information culled in confidence to use to her advantage (79-83).

The practice of voodoo had been grudgingly tolerated throughout the most of the forty years Leveau's reign, but by the 1850s, city officials intensified their harassment of voodooists—and of any blacks who assembled publicly. During this period, there were frequent raids at homes thought to be the sites for voodoo worship among whites *and* blacks. Christian religious groups backed local legislation to bring about the near-total extinction of conjure as a practice in New Orleans, and its adherents were intimidated into hiding. However, according to the local legends, Marie Leveau's figure stands out as the singular, fearless champion of the voodoos. One report concerns a raid on Leveau's home on St. Anne Street, in which the priestess is alleged to have "hexed" the police officers conducting the raid, and sent them "barking like dogs." It is quite possible that folk legend has obscured the more likely reality that Leveau deflected the arrest by exposing sensitive information about officials' private lives (103). Leveau's ability to confront and to manipulate the white and mulatto classes made her a prominent and revered character among the less fortunate strata of New Orleans people of color, among whom she kept a regular, and loyal clientele. Historians confirm that although much legend surrounds the figure of Marie Leveau, she is known to have existed, and to have lived an influential life in New Orleans culture throughout much of the nineteenth century.

However, the legends say much about the culture from which they emerge. The figure of Marie Leveau looms large on the folk belief in New Orleans as a symbol of postcolonial female resistance and continuance. She was not only a practitioner; but also a protector of victimized African-diasporic cultures, and throughout her lifetime, she insistently perpetuated the recurring strains of Afro-syncretic religion in New Orleans voodoo. One notes that after the death of Marie Leveau, her followers were shocked to see her likeness walking the streets of the Vieux Carré near Marie's home on St. Anne's Street. Marie Philomene du Glapion had resumed her mother's role as voodoo priestess, and her resemblance to her mother was considered so striking that onlookers were convinced that Marie I, also referred to as the Widow Paris, had achieved victory over death. It is not surprising that a daughter would bear a resemblance to her mother; and like most of the legends concerning Leveau carry a great deal of folk imagination. However, this last note on Marie II underscores that the Leveau women were persistent symbols of a matrilinear tradition committed to the continuation and resilience of subordinated Creole culture.

Carolyn Morrow Long observes one significant indication of how Leveau is thought to have perpetuated its antecedents in Vodou and Haitian history in her practice of New Orleans voodoo. The author observes that Leveau arranged altars in designated rooms of her home. In a front room, she kept an altar for eliciting 'good works' for her clients: matchmaking, success in business venture, to cure the infirm, or to summon a wayward spouse home; and another in a back room for 'evil works': this altar was designed for works that killed, sought revenge upon, or harmed their targets. She adorned the altar for good works with the likenesses of Catholic saints. The only exception to the traditional Roman Catholic pantheon she presented, was the figure of St. Marron, the designated "folk saint unique to New Orleans" (*Voudou Priestess* 109). Voodoo did not acknowledge lwa as in Haitian Vodou; nor did it actively incorporate ancestral worship. Long explains that St. Marron, is a figure that belongs exclusively to the New Orleans voodoo belief system. This rare addition to the pantheon of 'spirits' acknowledged by the voodoo practitioner perpetuates the historic memory of Macandal and keeps it alive among his descendants in New Orleans.

In 1881, the Leveau dynasties permanently ended, and conjure in New Orleans declined dramatically. Jim Crow segregation in the South ensured this end to New Orleans voodoo through the same strategies of intimidation and violence as were used among white institutions in the rest of the South. The city legislature introduced a series of final measures to eradicate the practice altogether, and to strengthen measures that regulated any form of assembly among blacks. An 1881 ordinance required a permit for "any sort of meetings, including religious gatherings and the formation of processions in the public squares of the city." Additionally, in 1887, "traditional healers" were forbidden from practicing healing rituals without full licensure. Finally in 1897, the city passed legislation that outlawed the practice of "fortune telling" (128).

When Hurston arrived in the city of New Orleans in the 1920s, she was anxious to revisit the reign of the voodoo priestess, but New Orleans voodoo had been driven underground. So enamored was she of Leveau's legacy that Hurston vowed to take part. In her collection of African American folklore, *Mules and Men*, Hurston recounts her full immersion in New Orleans voodoo culture. More than six “two-headed” doctors initiated the author into the tradition, and all claimed to have descended from Leveau. Though these claims came with varying degrees of credibility, Hurston recognized that her indoctrination had a meaning that extended beyond an initiation into a folk practice; she was absorbed into an auspicious continuum of influential women who possessed the power to bestow onto their successors. Hurston disclosed her enthusiasm in a letter to Langston Hughes, in which she quipped in characteristic bravado that, “I have landed here in the kingdom of Marie Leveau and expect to wear her crown someday—Conjure Queen” (Kaplan 18). Though she reports in *Mules and Men* that her multiple initiations into New Orleans voodoo had earned her a facility for the trade—and even gained her a reputation among potential clients—Hurston admitted that she was a writer, a folklorist, and a scientist: not a conjurer. Though officials had driven voodoo into extinction in New Orleans, Hurston’s ethnographic essay “Hoodoo in America” suggests that she had already identified the woman who might resurrect it in a new guise. Mother Leafy Anderson appears to have been the spiritual leader Hurston identified who subversively returned conjure to New Orleans religious and folk culture. By uniting the folk tradition to additional religious practices, Mother Anderson’s career seems to have galvanized Hurston’s definition of the conjure woman as a literary figure, and introduced an inspiring prototype.

In “Hoodoo in America,” Hurston introduces the Reverend Mother Leafy Anderson, the charismatic and iconoclastic founder of the Eternal Life Spiritualist Church of New Orleans. Like Leveau, very little of Anderson’s life is known, and tales of her career and her extraordinary presence often combine historical fact with folk imagination.

Historians speculate that Mother Anderson traveled from Chicago to New Orleans sometime between 1918 and 1920 to establish her ministry at the Longshoreman's Hall on Jackson Avenue. Later she moved church services to her home on Melpomene Street. She finally settled in a three-story building on Amelia Street, where she began to amass a large congregation. Anderson advocated a matriarchal religious doctrine that privileged the maternal and she ordained only women and thus created opportunities for women at a time when African American institutional churches prohibited women in the clergy. Historians Jacobs and Kaslow observe that Mother Anderson welcomed new female congregants by offering them training that included lessons on performing spiritual readings, which attracted over eighty new congregants in the first few months following the opening of Mother Anderson's church (Jacobs and Kaslow 34).

New Orleans officials during this period suspected that Anderson's church was a mere façade for voodoo, and Mother Anderson was placed under police surveillance when rumors that the practice had returned in a new guise. However, Anderson publicly denounced voodoo, referred to its followers as "evil-doers," and objected openly to any comparisons made between herself and Leveau (37). Ironically, local legends concerning Anderson relate that she, like her predecessor, employed clever means to deflect police inquiries into her affairs. When called before the court, Mother Anderson allegedly 'read' a judge by exposing details of his life that were "not generally known." Kaslow and Jacobs do not speculate whether Anderson's information came as a result of divination or some other means; however, Anderson did indeed exercise some sway over the judge, as she received the charter for the Eternal Life Spiritualist Church on Amelia Street in October 1920 (34).

Hurston visited the Amelia Street Church shortly after Anderson's death in 1927. The author appears to have been drawn to the ways Anderson restored the matrilinear Leveau sequence, despite the Reverend Mother's vociferous claims that she denounced voodoo and all its evil machinations. At a peak time in which minority women were barred from the same kind economic independence most men enjoyed, Anderson devised ways for her followers to supplement meager wages. Jacobs and Kaslow confirm that Anderson and her successors encouraged many of the female members of her congregation to do readings, and to procure and sell gris-gris: hoodoo charms, poultices, and healing oils to generate additional income for themselves. To deflect suspicion from local law officials that conjure was taking place, Anderson's congregants were to sell these items under the guise of acting as "spiritual advisors." Long cites one former spiritual adviser who alleged to have been trained by Marie Leveau herself. This woman begrudgingly left the Spiritualist Church only to appease her son. She remarked that "'I was one of the best in the work, could do wonders, but my son asked me to stop and make a vow never to do no more hoodoo. Boy, I used to make money'" (*Spiritual Merchants* 53). By allowing her female parishioners the opportunity to earn additional money through the sale of these items, Anderson commoditized the folk tradition in a way similar to that of Leveau. However, though Anderson may not have participated in the sale of gris-gris, she created subversive modes of advocating female interdependence and self-sufficiency by enabling her parishioners to do so for their own benefit. One concludes that Hurston's definition of the "conjure" or "hoodoo" may have been shaped significantly by Anderson's example of the conjure woman was a strong, central, and charismatic female who discovered ways to uplift and connect those for whom she was responsible, and those for whom she cared most. Hurston adds in her concluding remarks on the Spiritualist leader that "Mother Leafy Anderson was not a hoodoo doctor in *the phrase of her church members*" (Hurston, "Hoodoo" 320-1, my emphasis). However, one may argue that Mother Anderson was *the* hoodoo doctor in the eyes of Zora Neale Hurston.

Anderson's liturgical practices further contributed to Hurston's evolving model of the conjure woman as a cultural and literary phenomenon. Anderson's religious services stressed connectivity among individuals, continuance through tradition, and empathy achieved through alternate forms of knowing. Anderson's church borrowed from Catholic, Pentecostal, and Sanctified Churches, which she combined with representations of Native American and Italian folk cultures and Afro-Caribbean religious traditions. Anderson's church formed a uniquely creolized religious expression that resonates with Carpentier's definition of *criollo*: one that celebrates an identity borne from the confluence of diverse cultural influences. By extension, Anderson's church became the stage for Hurston's circum-Caribbean marvelous real on which Anderson, in turn, became the central and most dynamic performer. From Afro-Caribbean religious tradition, Anderson extended the practice of trance possession, which was the focus of many of her religious services. As in Haitian Vodou, Anderson envisioned a great genderless 'spirit' that presided over a pantheon of spirit guides, which she frequently called upon and 'demonstrated' during her religious services (Kaslow 35). Her primary spirit guides were the Hebrew queen, Esther, and Chief of the Native American Sauk and Fox tribes, Black Hawk. Esther, according to the Old Testament, challenged King Ahaseurus and dared to enter the royal court. Kaslow and Jacobs point out that because she was both female and Jewish, she is a prominent role model and symbol of diasporic female self-assertion in the Church. Anderson explained that Black Hawk was the "spirit of the South," while White Hawk tended to the North (Tallant 169). Little corroborative fact is known about why Anderson selected Black Hawk as her primary spirit guide, but historians speculate that due to the historical and geographical proximity New Orleans blacks have shared with Native Americans, and the similar experiences of oppression and cruelty both groups have suffered historically at the hands of white Europeans, a kinship of mutual identification was formed. Anderson's beliefs ran contrary to Western notions that individual and communal identities were constructed along regional or national geographic boundaries. Instead, she advocated concepts of identity as having been shaped by common experience and shared memory. Anderson may have adopted Black Hawk because he, like Dutty Boukman and other martyrs of the Vodou ancestral pantheon, was an encompassing symbol of diasporic courage and triumph over oppressors. Today his figure continues to loom large in the Spiritualist hagiology as an adopted ancestor and ranks alongside St. Michael and Martin Luther King, Jr. (Jacobs and Kaslow 137-46).

Mother Anderson incorporated many of the religious strains from Vodou in the possession performance. As the Vodou devotee dressed in the raiment ascribed to Guedé, Mother Anderson appropriated the dress and mannerisms that she attributed to each of her spirit guides. When she summoned Black Hawk, Mother Anderson donned a feathered headdress. When she called upon the Hebrew queen, she dressed in long, flowing feminine robes. By demonstrating the spirits of diverse ethnicities and genders, Anderson's performances radically disrupted hegemonic notions of prescribed gendered and ethnic categories by emphasizing the fluid aspects of identity. Further, she allowed her congregation of men and women, blacks and whites to identify with the histories of diverse lives and raised the potential for broader, more global identification among *multiple* diasporas. According to its own logic, trance possession enables the performer—or the possessed—to embody external personae. The process of mimicking the other's behavior allows the possessed to intuit the emotions and experiences—and in effect—the *voices* of the possessing entity. By recognizing the Native American chief and the Hebrew queen, as shared ancestors, Anderson's performance consistently relativized the connections among diasporic histories to her congregation.

Mother Anderson named a third spirit guide about which even less is known. Father Jones—or "Father John"—according to the recollection of some members of the Church, may have been derived from Father John's Medicine—a widely used remedy for "throat irritations, coughs, and colds." Jacobs and Kaslow observe that "[t]he syrup comes in a box that has a picture of a benign-looking priest wearing a clerical collar and dark suit." One elderly congregant, whom the authors interviewed, recalled that whenever Father Jones was present in spirit, Mother Anderson "wore a dressing robe…which was yellow and gold…and sometimes a full dress suit, looking like a man" (134). The authors surmise that Anderson may have adopted this symbol as a spirit guide because her church placed great emphasis on alternate medicine and holistic methods of healing. During the period in which the Spiritualist Church was gaining a foothold, blacks had very little access to quality health care, and as a result suffered a high mortality rate (135). By bodying forth the entity of Father Jones, Anderson dramatized a union with familiar male symbol of healing with which her congregation could easily identify. More generally, she demonstrated that healing, as well as church leadership, was not a matter of gender but a matter of faith.

Anderson's successor in the Spiritualist Church, Mother Catherine Seals, continued the tradition of healing in her church on Jackson Street in New Orleans. In her sanctuary, which she designed to resemble a manger, Mother Catherine preached a gospel of healing by faith, including the laying-on of hands as her principle technique. Catherine Seals advanced the precedent set by Anderson to offer the Church as a refuge for anyone who lacked sufficient healthcare. She rigorously preached against abortion, and was therefore especially committed to accepting young, unwed mothers to seek refuge in her church (167). Hurston spent two weeks in Mother Catherine's church and it appears that the author was impressed with the religious leader's generosity and giving spirit toward young women. On the subject of abortion, Hurston quotes Mother Catherine as having insisted that "[t]here are no sinful births," and welcomed mothers and their children into the congregation ("Mother Catherine," 859). Catherine Seals had plans of extending her ministry to unwed mothers by developing a haven for them in the new Temple of the Innocent Blood, but plans for its development dissolved due to the lack of funding. However, she did manage to open her temple on Jackson Street as a refuge until her death (Jacobs and Kaslow 167). Seals shared the same welcoming attitude toward her ethnically diverse congregation as her predecessor. In her essay entitled "Mother Catherine" Hurston quotes the Reverend Mother as she echoes the tenets handed down from Anderson. She passionately remarks, "I got all kinds of children, but I am they mother. Some of 'em are saints; some of 'em are conzempts (convicts) and jailbirds; some of 'em kills babies in their bodies; some of 'em walks the streets at night—but they's all my children. God got all kinds, how come I cain't love all of mine? So says the beautiful spirit" ("Mother Catherine" 858).

Hurston's observations in "Hoodoo in America" suggest that as Mother Anderson continued her ministry throughout the American South, she cast her net more broadly. "I have a message for the people" Anderson announced upon her arrival from Chicago (Tallant 168). However, she carried that message of diasporic collectivity beyond the borders of New Orleans to the far reaches of the small rural communities in the South, to the larger metropolises of Memphis, Houston, and Little Rock. Since her arrival to New Orleans in 1918, Mother Anderson's life and ministry have become the subjects of folk imagination as much as historical fact—nearly to the extent that Marie Leveau emerged as a significant folk figure. As a social scientist, Hurston was certainly interested in the process that elevated dynamic figures such as Leveau and Anderson; and she understood that folklore and legend often contributed more to our understanding of a culture than what can be found in historical texts. Hurston introduced a conjure woman into her fiction who bore a striking resemblance to Mother Anderson. In select novels, and most conspicuously in her 1939 novel, *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, Hurston presents readers with an interpretation of the biblical figure, Moses as a powerful and central conjurer. Hurston inscribes her Moses with the traits of a Leafy Anderson: a conjure woman who serves as the interlocutor between the archive and repertoire who reveals and comments on the hidden narratives that convey women's lived experience. The following chapter will explore Hurston's implementation of the conjure woman as an itinerant ethnographer: first of those women's lives that existed and struggled within the context of the diaspora in *Moses, Man of the Mountain*; and then of an individual woman's experience in which she finds herself at odds with her community in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In each of these novels, Hurston's conjurer travels the topos of the Marvelous Real to uncover the truths that connect women's lives.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GREATEST CONJURE (WO)MAN WHO LIVED

Got a rabbit foot in my pocket
Toad frog in my shoe
Crawfish on my shoulder
Lookin' dead at you
Got dust from a rattlesnake
Got a black spider bone
If that don't do it, baby
Better leave it all alone

They call me the Voodoo Woman
And I know the reason why
They call me the Voodoo Woman
And I know the reason why
Lord if I raise my hand
you know the sky begin to cry

("Voodoo Woman" Koko Taylor)

These lyrics from Koko Taylor's 1975 blues song, "Voodoo Woman" capture at once the confidence, swagger, and sexuality of the speaker-conjure woman of African American folk and blues tradition. She bears witness to her own power and agency by enumerating the items in her peculiar pharmacopeia—a selection of items that bind New World conjure to the Vodou and Obeah traditions of the Caribbean. In so doing, she attests that she has the necessary tools to prepare a potent *hand*: the small pouch containing enchanted objects that have empowered bearers for centuries, and has evolved to symbolize the power passed down from ancestors through New World syncretic traditions. If this tool of her trade and its symbolic history does not work to soothe one's ills, she cautions, then nothing will. Also noteworthy is that the speaker asserts her identity by invoking the witness of others: "*They* call me the Voodoo Woman," she asserts, because the community that surrounds her in the moment of her enunciation also contributes to her agency. Taylor's lyrics depict a reciprocal exchange of between community and conjurer in which the speaker draws her confidence from her dependence on her present-day community and a historical community of ancestors. In turn, the community depends on her for her esoteric power and wisdom to aid and to represent them. In a few short lines, the speaker-Voodoo Woman evokes centuries of hoodoo tradition that has historically served to bind its community; and she discloses her lived experience, the experience of her community, and the dynamic between individual and community that nourishes and fortifies her. Finally, Taylor's Voodoo Woman performs a gesture that speaks to these relationships and to their cultural history by raising her right hand—a symbol of her power. The right hand that she extends is symbolically transformed into the embodiment of the communal strength derived from honoring a tradition of folk practice, and its intrinsic New World Creole syncretic practices.

Taylor's lyrics resonate with the character of Moses, the charismatic protagonist of Zora Neale Hurston's 1939 folk retelling of the Hebrew Exodus, *Moses, Man of the Mountain*. In this novel, Hurston transforms the biblical Moses of the Old Testament tradition into the "greatest hoodoo man that ever lived," whose right hand, or "rod of power" synechdochally encompasses the complex historical connections among hoodoo New World traditions, and binds them to their expansive connections among Southern coastal folk traditions. In her opening remarks, Hurston points out that Moses has evolved multiple symbolic manifestations that evince his meaning to numerous diasporas. She writes that "[w]herever the children of Africa have been scattered by slavery, there is the acceptance of Moses as the fountain of mystic powers. This is not confined to Negroes. In America there are countless people of other races depending upon mystic symbols and seals and syllables said to have been used by Moses to work his wonders." To the Hebrew people, he is a representative Messianic figure who led the Children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt into freedom. She adds that in Haitian Vodou cosmology, "the highest god in the Haitian pantheon is Damballa Ouedo Ouedo Tocan Freda Dahomey and he is identified as Moses, the serpent god." Damballa, a central and powerful god of Vodou, has as his symbol a staff—his rod of power—that converts into a serpent at will, and "in every temple of Damballah there is a living snake or symbol" (*Moses* xxiv). This rod of power that Damballah shares with Moses is the symbolic instrument around which multiple diasporic forces converge. Therefore, Moses's (or Damballah's) staff symbolizes connectivity forged through shared historic memory; and that Damballah, like Moses, looms as a charged figure symbolizing freedom and power that unites New World diasporas.

Just as Hurston understood the relevance of the Exodus myth to African American and Afro-Caribbean diasporas, she understood how this same myth bound the African American and Jewish peoples. The daughter of John Hurston, a minister to the Sanctified Church of Eatonville Florida, Zora Neale Hurston was intimately familiar with the story of the Exodus, and with the sympathetic identification African Americans shared with the Jewish peoples as each held the Exodus story as a sacred narrative of freedom and deliverance. Albert Raboteau explicates this abiding historical bond among the members both diasporas by pointing out that "[African] slaves prayed for the future day of deliverance to come, and they kept hope alive by incorporating as part of their mythic past the Old Testament exodus of Israel out of slavery. The appropriation of the Exodus story was for the slaves a way of articulating their sense of historical identity as a people.

That identity was also based, of course, upon their common heritage of slavery" (Raboteau 311). The story of the Hebrew Exodus resonated in the mind and imagination of Zora Neale Hurston as illustrative of the historical strands that helped to connect diasporas as the Exodus story contributed greatly to shaping Jewish identity—and concomitantly—African American identity. Hurston's observation of the profound relevance of a shared historical memory resonates in *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, as Hurston explores the potential of extending Moses's relevance to a broader Afro-Caribbean diaspora. Accordingly, Hurston renders her Moses as a figure that extends across artificial cultural boundaries and is therefore readily recognizable to multiple peoples. Derek Collins observes of Hurston's Moses that he is "…a figure concocted from Hurston's own brand of alchemy. He is not Hebrew but Egyptian—in other words, African—and not merely endowed with magical powers from God, but a hoodoo conjure man…a kind of semiological entity whose meaning cannot be resolved only in terms of one culture" (Collins 139). Indeed, Hurston's Moses endures as a powerful and emblematic figure representing syncretic cultural confluences, whose right hand of power provokes events that disclose the suffering, the pain, the humor, and the joys—in sum, the lived realities that connect his people to a broader, Circum-Caribbean diaspora.

The Moses of Hurston's novel has been a controversial figure for many Hurston scholars. Paul Gilroy has argued that Hurston's "idealization" and "romanticization of the folk" impeded Hurston's ability to conceive of forward moving, "African American cultural transformation" (qtd. in Lamothe 168). Still others read Hurston's Moses as a draconian tyrant scripted according to figurations of white paternalism. Indeed, the Moses of Hurston's novel embodies qualities of leadership that reveal him to be benevolent and compassionate in one instance, while in other, contradictory moments in the novel, he assumes monstrous, self-serving qualities, and appears indifferent to the suffering of others. Many recent scholars now observe that Hurston's novel explores the nature of black leadership through the character of Moses by configuring his character as one that encounters consternation and frustration and vents these emotions in violent displays of his wrath. Hurston constructs her rendition of Moses as a bifurcated subject who struggles to overcome disappointment in face of the internecine quarrels of those he leads, and to resolve these obstacles with his nobler pursuit to unite his nation once freed from bondage.

This reading of *Moses Man of the Mountain* builds on the interpretation of Moses as a character adamantly tied to a noble sense of responsibility and a notion of right; but also as one who engages the power divinely vested in him to navigate these pitfalls and to catalyze events that disclose his own trials and those of his people. In effect, Moses is the "conjurer" of an ethnographic text that exposes the dynamics that are formed between a leader and individuals psychically injured by years spent in bondage. Hurston crafts her all-too-human Moses in direct accordance with a hoodoo cosmic epistemology: Moses, who assumes dual impulses toward generosity and sudden cruelty, resonates harmoniously with the Vodou concept of the multi-faceted lwa, which mirrors the fallibility and fickleness of its servitors. Further, In *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, Hurston situates Moses in a context of marvelous reality—one that invites the reader to examine historical events as they were lived by recasting biblical tropes of miracles and of plagues, of pestilence and the horrors of war, as agents of the marvelous. Hurston grafts a hoodoo, or Vodou aesthetic onto the biblical Moses to produce a forward-looking telos in which she invites readers to take a backward glance at a historico-mythical past and interpret lived experience through the lens of the marvelous. From here she enables readers to speculate on the truths of ancestral experience as her Moses made conjurer-ethnographer discloses them through gesture, performance, and the portentous lifting of his mighty hand.

At the core of this strategy, Hurston positions Miriam, the emblematic and amorphous figure of the Mother, and later, Moses himself as triadic figures that create a paradigm through which one can analyze critically the various modes of creating ethnography. By configuring a triadic matrix of relationships among these dynamic and central characters, Hurston dramatizes how the ethnographic pen is passed from one author of culture to the next. In so doing, she enables her readers to witness the perspectival disparities that exist between the projects of her contemporary white male ethnographers who foster a paternalist agenda and that of postcolonial peoples whose non-literary, embodied performances of custom and memory, often escape the western anthropologist's gaze. By situating Moses and Miriam as antipodal figures, Hurston dramatizes the conflict between western modes of recording postcolonial cultures and uncovers the hidden voices of those cultures. Simultaneously, the Mother figure whose positioning is compromised in the process represents lost claims to authenticity and origin.

In her critique of Hurston's *Moses*, Erica Edwards claims that Hurston sets Miriam in opposition to Moses as alternate model of leadership, and indeed, Hurston does. However, Miriam is Moses's unspoken adversary: an aspiring and self-aggrandizing leader who strives not for the greater good of her people, but for the purpose of satisfying her monstrous desire for credit and recognition. In the opening chapters of *Moses*, Hurston exploits the biblical trope of Moses's divinely predestined fate to lead, and positions Miriam as the antipode to the type of leader her brother will ultimately prove to be. Miriam grows to adulthood guided expressly by the hope that her exploits will be preserved for posterity in the historic record. In this sense, Miriam assumes traits of sexism and controlism that are conventionally ascribed to male power figures. Miriam's initial coming of age is framed by the trope of her desire: a grotesque longing for credit and centrality that ultimately blinds her to nobler objectives. Her narrative begins with the wanton eye-looks of desire upon the female subject, and ends with the usurpation of the Mother Figure—the Hurstonian emblem of genealogical, historical, and figurative connectivity that is often violently or suddenly supplanted in Hurston's novels; but Hurston as author seeks to restore the lost Mother figure through the workings of the conjure woman as ethnographer.

Hurston's retelling of the biblical Exodus opens as the Pharaoh has sent out an edict ordering all Hebrew boys to be executed. Hurston portrays the uneasy stillness and dread of this opening scene as her narrator observes that "Moses hadn't come yet, and these were the years when Israel first made tears. Pharaoh had entered the bedrooms of Israel. The birthing beds of Hebrews were matters of state. The Hebrew womb had fallen under the heel of Pharaoh." The oppressed had been violently forced into silence in the wake of their oppressor, as women stifled their anguished cries in childbirth and "[m]en learned to beat their breasts with clenched fists and breathe out their agony without sound" (*Moses* 1). Jochebed is determined to ensure her child's survival, and prepares a small niche in their home where she keeps her son until he is three months old. She then sets the child adrift on the Nile River on a raft of pitch and bulrushes. In the biblical book of Exodus, Jochebed's daughter, Miriam briefly accompanies her mother to the bank of the Nile before disappearing from the narrative completely (KJV, Exod. 2). Hurston makes a decisive and significant alteration to the biblical version of the story by featuring young Miriam more prominently in her version: Hurston places Miriam with the task of delivering the baby to the Nile, and her mother is not present at all.

In the wee hours of the morning, Miriam, a child of nine, takes her infant brother to the riverbank and sets the little raft on the water. Her long sentry among the bulrushes tires her, and she drifts off to sleep just before daybreak. When she awakes, she spots the Pharaoh's daughter bathing in the pool outside the palace, surrounded by a coterie of eunuchs and handmaidens. Young Miriam fixates on the sensual scene, and the woman's beauty, poise, and wealth transfixes the child. "Royalty is a wonderful thing" the little girl says to herself. "It sure is a fine happening. It ought to be so that everybody that wanted to could be a queen…" (27). The coterie moves on toward the palace, but in her forgetfulness, Miriam stands up to get a better look, and it is then that she is spotted. A lady-in-waiting sees her on the bank and suspects that she's a spy; however, the princess blithely remarks that the child could pose no harm because "[g]overnments are not overthrown by little girls" (28). Whether Hurston intended it to be understood that Miriam overheard this remark is not clear; however, the Princess's remark seems to have somehow made an indelible imprint in the child's psyche: Miriam's campaign for recognition, and her rivalry with her brother commences from this pivotal moment.

Edwards observes how this scene provides Miriam with an imaginary respite from the horror of the child's brutal reality. As young Miriam gazes on the 'marvelous' scene of feminine beauty and splendor that unfolds before her in a ‘glorious site,’ she is confronted with a phenomenon that before had not existed in her day-to-day reality. While she transfixes on the scene, she is jolted from the fact that the Hebrew women of Goshen, including her own mother are forced into silence under penalty of death. They, unlike the Princess who lives in luxury, must stifle their cries of pain in childbirth (1). Edwards observes that Hurston underscores the vastly uneven positioning of women in Miriam’s biblical world—and incidentally—in the child’s evolving worldview (Edwards 1091). As Miriam observes the princess, the child is met with a scene that conflates opulence and pampered beauty with the feminine. Meanwhile Egyptian law relegates Hebrew slave women to a wretched condition in which they are persecuted for their race, and for the poverty that attends that oppression. Most damning, they are oppressed for the intrinsically *female* act of childbirth. In her naïveté, Miriam creates a juxtaposition of models of femininity in which the image of the Princess supplants that of her own mother as the more desirable model of femininity which to emulate. Miriam’s revelation of desire at the bank of the Nile River discloses truths about her own developing character and motivations that become increasingly apparent later in the narrative. She appears indifferent to her mother’s suffering, and oblivious to the fact that the Princess, a symbol of the power the Egyptian oppressor, is indirectly responsible for the misery of the Hebrew women who “shuddered with terror at the indifference of their wombs to Egyptian law” (Hurston, *Moses* 1).

Nevertheless, Hurston’s linguistic figuration in this passage initially calls to the reader’s mind the defiant continuance of reproduction and life despite formidable political obstacles. One plumbs deeper to find meaning that suggests that the innermost private lives of these oppressed mothers remain nonetheless resilient to the volition of external and faceless machinations that legislate their oppression. While Miriam gazes dreamily upon this opulent scene of material wealth and feminized grandeur, the cries of real female strength and endurance fall silent to Miriam's ears.

Though Miriam's young and impressionable mind does not yet grasp the cruel irony of what unfolds around her, these passages mark the moment in which her grotesque desire for material things and credit begins to form. Edwards interprets Miriam's rapture with the Princess as the child's nascent stirrings of homosexual desire. Miriam's eventual goal reaches beyond facile explanations of libidinous urgings, however. Miriam's desire that initiates as the naïve awe in the presence of the Princess and her coterie evolves into a desire for material wealth that she later conflates with female leadership. By appropriating the framework and logic of the Mosaic myth in which the Almighty presages fate and destiny, Hurston situates Miriam as a contender for greatness; but she undermines her own claim to glory by permitting her selfishness to interfere. Though she is at this juncture far too young to interpret the consequences of her actions, her mother has sent her on an auspicious errand that, if carried out according to plan, could offer Miriam an instrumental, and significant leadership role in the historical record. Had she avoided engaging so long in a covetous gaze, she would have had assumed a loftier role in her own freedom and to the freedom of the Israelites as a nation. However, she turns her eye away from the desperate circumstances of her people to revel in the moment in which the princess acknowledged her. This fleeting acknowledgement makes Miriam instantly visible, and in her childish imagination, permits her sufficient entre into the inner circle of the Egyptian power structure. By constructing Miriam in this way, Hurston critiques those who would claim leadership or power that is predicated on the mimicry and desire that evolve from eye-looks upon and from those in power. Hurston suggests that a thralldom with the trappings of material wealth and power can eventuate as one's undoing: while Miriam reflects dreamily on the scene, the future prophet who one day will deliver her people from the misery of slavery drifts aimlessly out of her grasp. Hurston's decision to place Miriam at the scene is doubly significant: in the biblical version of the Mosaic narrative, Jochebed sets the child adrift at the bank of the Nile. Hurston situates Miriam in that auspicious role in which she has an instrumental hand in her young brother's destiny, and hence, in the destiny of her people: a role that her mother occupied in the biblical version. Yet, Hurston portrays Miriam as having, and then forfeiting that actual role in exchange for daydreams of power.

Miriam's subsequent embodied performances betray her attempts to reformulate the narrative of Moses's destiny to suit her own objectives. Her first move is to distance herself from Moses and from the action to manufacture her own narrative. After she is spotted by one of the Princess's ladies-in-waiting, Miriam suddenly panics and returns home to Jochebed. Aware of what she certainly will face as punishment for her long delay, she invents an alibi to deflect her mother's anger. When the little girl arrives home she immediately admits to her mother that she fell asleep at the riverbank. However, when her initial honesty fails to be rewarded, Miriam is compelled by self-preservation to embellish details, and embellish she does. "You see, mama," Miriam begins earnestly, "while I was asleep, the basket with your baby in it floated down-stream and the Princess saw it and took him home to the palace with her. Then when she was ready to go she saw the baby and sent and took it with her" (29). To diffuse her mother's anger and to reassure Jochebed that the child made it to safety, she adds that the Princess made a delighted fuss over him in which she cradled the child and cooed at him. However, as she sinks further into her reverie, Miriam's story shifts to a self-indulgent monologue in which she recreates the Princess's appearance, attitude and gestures. "And, mama," she continues, "the Princess had a headdress of blue feathers that fell down over her shoulders in a real pretty way like this." Miriam grabbed a shawl and draped it over her head and strutted about (31). By mimicking the way the Princess walks and moves, Miriam indulges a fantasy in which she escapes from acknowledging her failure to live up to her responsibility to watch over the infant Moses. However, by constructing her own Marvelous reality in which she indulges the fantasy that enables her to claim ownership in part of the prestige that the Princess represents, she discloses her own agenda.

Miriam's insistent and childish self-indulgence exacerbates her position and her mother's vociferous demands break her reverie. Miriam insistently refers to her infant brother as "*the* baby," or "*your* child" (29, emphasis mine). Miriam's verbal distancing from the subject of Moses indicates that she fails to acknowledge her relationship to the baby—and her part in the greater task she was sent to complete. Miriam's failure to recognize her connection to the child is initially due in part to a naïve dismissal of the urgent situation her family is in, and her assumption that Moses and his fate are the province of the adult world—a world that exists outside the purview of her childish imagination. However it is this distancing that places her in the periphery of the real, and fully instantiates her in an internal world of misguided fantasy. Further, Miriam has not only allowed Moses to escape her mind, she confirms Jochebed's ultimate disappearance from the narrative when she remarks, “I love the Princess, mama. I wish she would take me to the palace too” (30). Miriam’s fanciful remark has serious underpinnings that suggest that she subconsciously vies first for her mother’s position as Moses’s deliverer to the Princess and his fate; and then for her brother’s position as an eventual leader. She wants to be Moses and live in the palace of the Pharaoh, and to be nurtured by the Princess, Miriam’s idealized fantasy of the materially endowed feminine maternal.

Despite her predilections for childish fantasy, the core of Miriam’s tale bears out: Moses was indeed taken in and raised by the Pharaoh’s daughter; however, Miriam did not actually *witness* the child being taken in. The biblical Exodus story configures Miriam expressly as a mute witness to the infant Moses’s journey down the Nile and nothing more, which suggests that her task to witness and report on this event is vital to the development of the biblical narrative in Hurston’s scheme. In Hurston’s traditional style, seeing and perceiving are intrinsic to the vitality of narrative. Additionally, the positioning and bias of the viewer is equally critical. By failing to be truthful to her mother, the Miriam of Hurston’s novel fails to live up to her assigned function in the Exodus narrative: she falls asleep and later crafts a tale of her own design, placing herself as the central player. The tale she tells in the beginning draws listeners, and the child enjoys an intoxicating moment in which she receives the attention she craves from the adults around her. Soon her father, and other members of the community cluster around her to hear the story of Moses in the palace and “conceived and added details at their pleasure, and the legend grew like grass” (35). Miriam’s retelling triggers an imaginative impulse to shape the narrative to fit with the sublimated, unspoken desires of her listeners. Erica Edwards observes that “Miriam’s story is heteroglossic; it is a dynamic, moving narrative that merges her fantasy, the people's knowledge, and the community's desire for an 'insider' in the palace" (Edwards 1092). Miriam's narrative is indeed a collaboration of individual and communal desire: her own covetous desire to connect with a figure of the oppressive caste stimulates the community's envy—and fantasy—as they imagine "one of their own" within the confines the palace. Soon, the confluence of this desire gives way to a narrative that gravitates farther away from the truth. Truth gives way to a child's fantasy and the tale evolves into an elaborate, falsifying myth. Though Hurston certainly sought to dramatize how a culture's narratives are produced through polyvocality and multiple contributions, Miriam's actions are particularly destructive: she is motivated primarily by a covetous desire to mimic the aesthetics of power, and by a persistent, inhibiting greed to maintain narrative control, and to sculpt that narrative according to her own agenda.

It is significant that Miriam vanishes for several chapters in which Hurston's narrator foregrounds the progression of Moses as he comes of age in the house of the Pharaoh. As a boy of about twelve, young Moses has grown accustomed to a life of privilege and wealth; but unlike his brother Ta-Phar, Moses does not concern himself with training to become a great warrior, but instead prefers to inhabit the palace libraries, pouring over its volumes and amassing esoteric knowledge. The youngster cultivates a relationship with the elderly stable hand, Mentu—a character borne entirely in the imagination of the author—from whom he learns the ways of the universe: that darkness alternates with the light of day because darkness is the "womb of creation," that births the day. He learns the nature of God and the universe, and the habits of the animals—both real and fabled. The stories that the old man tells strengthen the growing bond between

Moses and Mentu, and provide a means through which Moses can access the origins of his destiny. Hurston characterizes Mentu's stories dynamic, as though they were living, breathing organisms:

> They always seemed to want to get out where people could see them. That had puzzled the old stableman a great deal because they were not always beautiful nor their behavior pleasant. Nevertheless one and all wanted to get out as soon as ever they could to show themselves. They always departed about their own business once they had been given outside life by his lips—for he could not write at all. So they had no home in the papyrus rolls like others who spring from the minds of scribes. These images and happenings of the mind, scrambled from his lips and entertained the listeners for a day, then went to join the thousands of other dreams where they dwelt (*Moses* 38).

Mentu relates a folk narrative that constitutes the repertoire of Moses's worldview: the realities of lived experience that are "not always beautiful" bring the boy into confrontation with his history, present, and with the future he must face. *The Book of Thoth*, which Mentu describes as an ancient text guarded by a great serpent, has existed under the sea for centuries; but this tome is an integral part of Moses's future, and contributes greatly to his destiny as a leader. Hurston constructs a paradox concerning the tales told by Miriam and those told by Mentu to Moses: Miriam contrives a linear narrative set in the past, with a discernible beginning, middle, and end. She harnesses control of her narrative, tailoring it to suit her idealized fantasies and desires. Meanwhile, Mentu's tale has no discernible beginning, middle, or end: it is circular and exists outside chronological time, in which past, present, and future occur contemporaneously. Further, Mentu's mentoring of Moses, particularly his direction of Moses to the Egyptian *Book of Thoth* is significant. In Hurston's rendition of the Mosaic myth, the ancient Egyptian book of Mysteries is a text belonging to the controlling political structure. By accessing this text, Moses learns the secrets of its contents and decodes its rules of law that enable him to become a great leader. In effect, like the legendary trickster, the Moses of Hurston's novel wrests the tools from the Master to deconstruct the Master's House. Mentu's tale, though it suggests a distant origin as the "dark" begets the "day," exists outside time and is controlled by the culture that creates it. By setting up these paradoxical scenarios, Hurston makes her critique of those imperialist forces outside a cultural happening that propose to author ethnography for the purposes of maintaining their own control. The author extends this critique further by positioning Miriam outside the action of the novel as a frustrated and mute observer. Though she is divested narrative control, she nonetheless clamors for it. Above all, she desires credit.

The reader does not encounter Miriam again until she appears briefly at the palace in search of Moses, and it is then that he learns that he is not an Egyptian of the royal class as he believed, but in fact a Hebrew. At this stage of Moses's revelation about his birth, Miriam exists outside the central action of the narrative and materializes only in the language of others. Hurston reduces Miriam's presence to mere spoken references: she witnesses, but is never witnessed. It is significant that the reader learns of Miriam's visit to the palace of the Pharaoh as Moses does, only through the words of his Ethiopian wife. The African female subject is the taleteller in this instance, and it is her language that yields Miriam's existence. However, Miriam's elliptical presence catalyzes Moses to action. When Moses learns that he is Hebrew, the news galvanizes his campaign to bring the Hebrew slaves to freedom. He sets out to wander among them and there he encounters an Egyptian overseer whipping a Hebrew slave who cowers in pain. Moses becomes enraged, and in a fit of blind misguided anger murders the overseer and has him buried in the sand. Despite the nature of his crime that shocks the sensibilities of the modern reader, Hurston engages the modes of meting out justice that were consistent with his day. Though Moses exhibits an underdeveloped concept of avenging his Hebrew brother, he nonetheless struggles to ascend to his place as leader. Meanwhile Miriam's phantom presence looms outside the action. Miriam's early selfish act has exiled her to the periphery: she remains a wraith that provokes and prompts the action, but she does not engage fully in the narrative.

Miriam appears again, and again she is disembodied, appearing only through the spoken words of Moses and Aaron. Moses has returned to Egypt, accompanied by his brother, Aaron, who informs him that Miriam has become a great prophetess to the people of Goshen, and prepares gris-gris, which she sells out of her home. "Miriam got a certain little bundle that she makes, that ain't no bigger than a man's thumb," Aaron explains to Moses. "You put that around your neck and wear it, and nothing can't do you no harm" (135). Aaron's dialogue with Moses as they enter Egypt implies that she has become a charlatan in search of renown, rather than a legitimate soothsayer. This information piques Moses's suspicion and he raises a pertinent question. Moses asks Aaron why, if Miriam is such a powerful prophetess, hasn't she made an effort to free Israel? Aaron replies that "We haven't considered like that and if we did, we might say that we, that is, Miriam, was called to prophesy to the people and not to save them." Aaron's slippery rejoinder only partially masks the machinations below the surface. According to the biblical story of the Exodus, God chose Aaron as the prophet of Moses, because he, unlike his brother, possessed a gift for speech and persuasion (KJV, Exod. 4.14-17). Instead, Hurston casts Miriam as the unseen force that manipulates Aaron's speech and motivations. Miriam appears to have renounced her voice to speak through her brother, much as a puppeteer would manipulate a puppet on strings. As the dialogue between Aaron and Moses develops, a subtext emerges that raises Moses's suspicion about what is actually at work between Aaron and Miriam. It becomes evident that the siblings do indeed vie for 'credit' for delivering the Hebrews out of Egypt—not to prophesy the coming of Moses. Aaron's insistence vexes him, but Moses humors his brother by parroting his speech. Moses responds flatly, "The point I want to get clear in your mind is that if you, I mean Miriam, is called to prophesy to Israel and I am called to save Israel, our paths don't conflict at all." One concludes from this dialogue that until this stage of the narrative, Miriam asserted control over Aaron in a bid to sabotage at least a portion Moses's glory. Moses, bound to his appointment by God to free the children of Israel, views this less as a competition for glory, than a collaborative effort among all three. Moses's agenda is plain: he wants the salvation of his people, and little else. Nonetheless, Aaron presses further and couches his language in oily subterfuge. "The point is," Aaron finally explains, "I don't see how come she, that is, both of us, can't get credit for what we got to do in saving Israel. And that is mighty important" (136). Miriam lurks on the margins of the narrative as her hunger for credit for her part in freeing the Israelites intensifies. However, when she returns fully formed to the narrative, her jealousy culminates at the sight of Moses's wife, Zipporah. It is during this scene in the novel in which Hurston's strategy to construct a triadic paradigm of female power struggle and ethnographic control of narrative manifests most conspicuously.

The Hebrews have defeated the Pharaoh and his army, and have braved an attack from the Amalekites. Moses has led the Hebrews and the Kenites—people of "mixed blood" whom Hurston describes as having accompanied the Hebrews to the foot of Mt.

Sinai—and they prepare camp for the next day's journey up the mountain. By this time Miriam has deteriorated into a gnarled woman nearing ninety. She has exhibited valiance in battle and passionate devotion to the Hebrews' triumph over the Egyptian army. Hurston's narrator describes the old woman as she celebrates in an exuberant, if momentary performance of dancing, singing, and playing the cymbals. However, her enthusiasm halts suddenly when Moses's family—Jethro and Zipporah—arrive. When the elegant and bejeweled Zipporah approaches, Miriam seethes in silence. After a moment the old woman recovers her voice to express the full scope of her vitriolic resentment for Zipporah. In the diatribe that ensues, Miriam's unwavering desire for material wealth, beauty, and most of all 'credit' for her suffering and for her contribution to battle rise resoundingly to the surface.

The sight of Zipporah's delicate beauty and raiment immediately thrusts Miriam back to the memory of her childhood, in which she eyed with equal envy, the daughter of Pharaoh. When she compares her own threadbare garments and her weathered hands and feet to the delicate form of Zipporah, her jealousy swells to bursting. "Look at the hussy!" Miriam exclaims. "Somebody to come queen it over us poor people and rob us" (219). Miriam, in her self-deprecating comparison to the woman, looks down at her own jewelry that she herself had taken in battle. Miriam, blinded by her envy, fails to see the irony of her actions. Zipporah has passively acquired the baubles and trinkets that she wears: these material things come as a consequence of her husband's triumphs at war. Moses has no use for material wealth, and he has passed on the spoils of war to his wife. Unlike Zipporah, who has been so bedecked as a living testament to Moses's heroism, Miriam fought alongside her brother, and by virtue of her own courage and tenacity, acquired the material things that she wears on her garments by her own hand. Miriam is beset by her early eschewal of her own mother as a model of female power. She covets a life as the Princess once lived; and her desire for such a life occludes her ability to locate value in her own accomplishment. She sees her own suffering as she once viewed her mother's suffering in poverty and discrimination as wretched. Therefore the aged Miriam sublimates this wretchedness in the covetousness and constant voyeurism that reads in her countenance. In a controversial passage, Moses defends Miriam to Jethro who observes that Miriam possesses the haggard and wan look of one who has "never been loved," and never been "nuded by a man." Moses points out that she is the leader of the Hebrew women, and warns, "[d]on't take her too seriously. It's her idea of what a leading woman ought to look like…she feels she should be Leader-in-Chief." Clearly Moses identifies strong qualities in his sister, but that her character prevents her from using them. "She has more brains and more courage, too, than Aaron, but no talent for leadership. Too spiteful and bitter. Life has been too cruel to her. Don't judge her" (217-18). One concludes from this dialogue Miriam's biases have distracted her from self-knowledge, and from acquiring the things that she covets most. By distancing herself from her own mother Miriam has forfeited her ascendance to real feminine power and leadership in favor of her pursuit of the artificial accoutrements that she believes represent power.

Moses, to the contrary, has never explicitly declared an ambition to be a great ruler or to live in a palace as a king. However, throughout his life he is drawn—perhaps subconsciously—to representations of material wealth that is often tied to the females who navigate within his intimate circle. One need look no further than Hurston's forays into the syncretic religions of the Caribbean and the Creole customs of New Orleans, to conclude that Hurston's construction of Moses and the intimate network of females to whom he is invariably drawn, was largely informed not exclusively by male representative figures of leadership, but by *female* spiritual leaders who embodied the conjuring tradition of the South and the West Indian traditions of Vodou. Mother Leafy Anderson forged unity among the marginalized, disinherited souls of her congregation in her little church on Amelia Street in New Orleans. Hurston shapes her portrayal of Moses according to the paradigm set forth by the prominent religious leader and conjure woman. Anderson, whose Eternal Life Spiritualist Church combined elements of the Sanctified Church, Catholicism, and hoodoo represents a model of female leadership who actively sought to cast in sharp relief the confluence of cultural strains that composed not only her church and her doctrine, but also the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic composition of her congregation. In much the same way, Hurston's Moses embraces the Kenites as an extension of his own diaspora.

By interpolating elements of Anderson's personage and legacy Hurston deploys her conviction that a cultures' finite origins are of less interest to her than are the ways cultures imprint on one another, influence one another, and constantly change and evolve through the exchange of shared historical memories. This, to Hurston, was the very crux of community cohesiveness, and it was largely reflected in the stories, performances and cultural artifacts that reflect polyvocality and multiple authorships. Anderson, like many other models of leadership, was not immune to criticism from sources inside and outside her church. Historians Andrew Kaslow and Claude Jacobs observe that "[c]o-workers admitted that [Anderson] took in large amounts of money during her Sunday services, and claimed that she had made over fifteen hundred dollars from the classes she offered during the first year alone. She evidently dressed lavishly, favoring lace, sequins, expensive shoes, and lots of jewelry" (Kaslow & Jacobs 36). Though Anderson may have flaunted her wealth and success as a spiritual leader, she nonetheless employed her unique persona and charisma to assemble the faithful under a canopy of acceptance and belonging at a time in which spiritual life was hardly immune to segregation and racial prejudice, and women were prohibited from the pulpit. By configuring a Moses that embodies the characteristics that accord with Anderson's model, Hurston creates a flawed, yet gender-fluid, Moses-as-conjure *woman* who navigates with ease between the feminine and the masculine varieties of leadership; and traverses the line between the mortal and the divine. Susan Sered observes the trend in religious leadership in the Protestant faith during the nineteenth century, in which tropes of the feminine began to predominate in religious iconography. She writes that "[w]hile men continued to dominate all leadership roles in mainstream Protestant denominations, by the early nineteenth century American iconographic representations of Christ showed feminine characteristics predominating." However, Sered emphasizes also that although attitudes toward the feminine began to shift at this time, women's ecclesiastical leadership roles were still considered taboo. She cites Louis Kern, noting that "[o]n the one hand women were morally 'better' than men (i.e., less materialistic, more pious), but on the other hand they were not allowed to exercise the power that could be expected to derive from moral superiority…Women were simultaneously the source of salvation from the materialistic world, and secretive, sexual beings. He concludes that this period was characterized by intense sexual ambivalence and anxiety caused by social, cultural, and economic changes” (Sered 44). Such a climate of gender discrimination in religious and spiritual leadership underscores the prominence and iconoclasm Mother Anderson represented as a spiritual leader in her time. She assumed a conventionally male role, and with it, the charismatic style of spiritual leadership typically assigned to the male reverend. Anderson claimed full control of the doctrines and liturgy of her church, yet opened her church’s doors to unwed mothers, housing them and nurturing them during a time when these young mothers were turned away. Her possession performances also iterated gender as fluid and fleeting categories of identity, and interrogated the widely held assumption that the pulpit was a gendered site. Despite the superficial concessions she made to maleness in her ministry, Anderson nonetheless steeped her ministry in a perpetually sanctified Motherhood. Meanwhile, she unabashedly surrounded herself with material trappings that signified her prominence and wealth.

Most notably, Hurston borrows from Anderson’s example to render Moses a conjurer whose performance within a Marvelous reality does more than lead her children into the Promised Land; like Anderson she forges a community by embracing all cultures regardless of theoretical ‘origin;’ and syncretizes male and female leadership models in a mode consistent with Anderson’s doctrine of appealing to congregants of varying backgrounds. The biblical Moses of the Old Testament tradition raises his right hand as the instrument of God; in Hurston’s rendering, Moses’s right hand becomes the synecdoche of what (s)he represents: a figure composed of many syncretisms: his power originates from the confluence of multiple cultural strains. As I have mentioned earlier, Hurston’s Marvelous real is often located in those instances of cultural syncretism—particularly that evidenced in Mother Leafy Anderson’s Spiritualist Church. It is at those points at which cultures converge to create a powerfully charged locus for truths concerning historical memory and experience come to light.

Hurston's modeling of Moses after Mother Leafy Anderson is most apparent in the ways she structures the themes of leadership and motherhood—particularly as motherhood in this novel raises questions concerning the matters of national or individual *origin*. Hurston's strategy resonates with the historical dislocation of African peoples to the New World. Though African slaves had been forcibly removed from their national origin, or Motherland, they cultivated new bonds despite violent removal, and the forcible rupture of familial connection in which wives were separated from husbands and children were separated from their mothers. Hurston was frequently quick to acknowledge the shared connections to Africa among African Americans and Afro-Caribbean diasporas. However, Cheryl A. Wall has noted that Hurston also stressed the threads of connectivity that emerged spontaneously in the New World as a result of that forced separation (Wall 1019). Tracing absolute lines of origination and 'racial purity' was not in Hurston's design; she was more immediately concerned about the cultural ties that emerged in the U.S. coastal South and Caribbean, as evidence of the endurance and resilience of common cultural and ancestral kinships.

In her preface to *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, Deborah McDowell asserts that "Hurston is not so much intent on establishing [Moses's] origins beyond dispute, but rather on casting doubts about Moses' 'pure' origins and, by extension, on the very idea of 'racial purity'" (McDowell xiv). Indeed, Hurston appears to have eschewed the notion that there existed any such thing as "racial purity" of any kind, and in fact, focalizes this conviction through Moses's words and actions that bloodline ranks only secondary to the spontaneous, emotional bonds that are created through nurturance and through shared memory. These spontaneous creations of connection borne out of common struggle were the proofs of African diasporic resilience. Consequently, Moses becomes more fully representative of African peoples' struggle in this instance than he does when he becomes the leader of the Hebrews.

Hurston transforms the story of Moses's separation from his natural mother, Jochebed, into a pastiche that dramatizes the historic and violent dislocation of African peoples from their homeland. Hurston further appropriates this aspect of the biblical narrative to iterate her ideas concerning spontaneous, New World connections; but also to dramatize how notions of origin are troubled by dislocation. Hurston articulates her conviction that one may claim *multiple* origins that are created through the confluence of cultural forces, and she begins to explore this conviction by looking again at the biblical *Book of Exodus*, in which the Pharaoh has ordered that all Hebrew infant males are to be killed. Moses's natural mother, Jochebed, makes a tiny raft of "pitch and slime" and takes her infant son to the bank of the Nile to set him adrift to safety. The Pharaoh's daughter spots the child and takes him in as her own. Jochebed is hired as a wet nurse for the infant, and Moses is raised to adulthood in the house of the Pharaoh. When he is grown, Jochebed takes him to the Pharaoh's daughter, who pronounces him her son, and christens him "Moses" because she "drew him out of the water" (KJV, Exod. 2.10). In the biblical narrative of Moses, as in Hurston's rendition, the mother who names the child supplants the birth mother. This passage reads as a ceremonious re-naming of the newly freed African diasporic subject in the New World.

By recasting the happenstance of Moses's birth and eventual adoption into the "new world" of the Pharaoh's home as an instance the marvelous real, the author dramatizes the bond created after Moses is forcibly separated from his now lost origins. In the author's re-telling, Hurston exploits the irony that Moses has landed in the home of the very Pharaoh who would have had him murdered to stage a marvelous reality that exposes the cruel irony of racism. After the Princess discovers the infant Moses and takes him in, Jochebed is turned away at the royal gate because she is a Hebrew. The physical boundaries of the palace reflect the figurative bounds that are constructed by artificial racial hierarchies. Jochebed attempts to gain access to her child, but the figurative—and literal—door to the palace slams shut, and sealed her out of its structural confines, and out of her child's life forever. It is noteworthy that the named mother—Jochebed—disappears; yet the Pharaoh's daughter who raises him remains nameless throughout Hurston's novel. Though she persists fully formed in his memory, even Moses himself fails to refer to her by name. When Moses has been ejected from Egypt and goes to live with Jethro and his family in Midian, he is compelled to Mt. Horeb, and sets out to discover the source of the mysterious voice in the mountain. As he departs, he asks Jethro to go to the tombs of Mentu the stable-hand, and that of his parents and to make an offering to each. He is adamant that his mother be honored. He remarks to Jethro that "[s]he (the Pharaoh's daughter) might not be my actual mother as they say. She might have adopted me from Assyria or found me on the Nile or borne me. It doesn't matter to me for she was a real mother, loving and kind. I prefer to think that she bore me, and I do not want her tomb neglected" (Moses 110). Jochebed, on the other hand, lingers in his memory as an amorphous, indistinct figment, too distant to recall; yet the bond he formed with the Pharaoh's daughter remains vivid and he remembers her tenderly. She who named him remains nameless, which suggests that Moses has emerged as a New World identity—this being the central and most important consideration in Hurston's rendition of the narrative.

The Mother as representative of origin—however loosely Hurston may have wished to use the term 'origin'—echoes many of the tenets that Mother Anderson espoused. Anderson too was not concerned with bloodline, but with the nurturance that was symbolized in the title, "Mother." Hurston's Moses meets with a confluence of symbologies when confronted with the notion of "Mother": themes of nurturance, tenderness, and acceptance converge with symbols of material wealth and feminine beauty. These symbologies are re-presented and projected in the persons of his mother, and the mother of his children, Zipporah, who share a preference for the material symbols of power. Just as Hurston draws from Vodou cosmology to inform her characterization of a flawed and gender-fluid Moses that mimics the multivalent Haitian lwa, Miriam and the combined figures of the Princess and Zipporah represent two sides of Ezili: Freda and Danto. Ezili Freda, the mulatta courtesan of Haitian Vodou belief, was bedecked in jewels and finery, and shares an aspect much like that of Aphrodite of Greek myth. Conversely, Ezili Danto is the crone; the embittered and wretched alter ego of Ezili Freda, whose aspect is associated with "maternal wrath" (Lamothe 161). Miriam and her counterparts in Zipporah and the Princess circulate in Moses' life to represent his various origins. Even in her perverse misreading of her mother's 'wretchedness,' Miriam pantomimes a maternal force—or theoretical origin—that continues to shape Moses's progression. Simultaneously, Zipporah and the Egyptian Princess represent New World origins that continue to shape Moses's persona and destiny.

Leafy Anderson's successor, Mother Catherine Seal, reinforced the spontaneous kinships she created with her female followers through a series of ritualized gestures that reinforced multiplicities of origin and connectivity. In her essay, "Mother Catherine," Hurston reports on a ceremony in which she was a participant. Mother Catherine sat upon her throne in the temple she called The Manger, holding a box of salt like a "rod of office" and each adherent would approach her, kneel, and be anointed and blessed with the sacred salt. The salt, a common symbol in African American folklore, was thought to enable one to fly to Africa—the Motherland—and symbolic origin of the diaspora. "I know this reads incongruous," Hurston remarks, "but it did not look so. It seemed perfectly natural for me to go to my knees upon the gravel floor, and when she signaled to me to extend my right hand, palm up for the dab of blessed salt, I hurried to obey because she made me feel that way" ("Mother Catherine" 855). Hurston's characterization of her experience reflects a gentle fondness for the woman with whom she appears to have felt an instant bond. Before this encounter, Mother Catherine had been a stranger to her; but the woman's gestures, accompanied by the symbolic element signifying diasporic memory—the salt—completes a performance of connectedness through a moment of shared experience. It should not surprise that Hurston would configure her Moses as an all-encompassing figure who incorporates attributes belonging to both male and female leadership models; and one that is so indelibly meaningful to multiple peoples. When the unnamed Pharaoh's daughter adopts the Hebrew child as her own, her actions resonate with the doctrine of the Eternal Life Spiritualist Church that overlooked bloodline, ethnic background, and 'race,' to embrace and nurture those who had been disinherited and orphaned from ostensible origins. Hurston emphasizes that it is the action, the gesture, in fact the *performance* of acceptance that resonates formation of new bonds and new identities. The princess's unwitting, but tender gesture of accepting the child into the household indicts the racial prejudice that her palace and its walls symbolize: that race and bloodline determines destiny. Nevertheless, despite the prescribed separation of Hebrew and Egyptian, the Egyptian Palace household becomes a site of blended cultural forces, in a metaphorical return to Africa.

Following on the heels of pan-African political movements that were designed to unify African Americans to other members of the global diaspora and to the African homeland, Hurston sought to emphasize the common historic and cultural memories that united individuals of the African diaspora in the New World. The doctrine of the Spiritualist Church that dictated that one can build *her* empire where she sits so impressed Hurston that the author incorporated this doctrine into her portrayal of Moses. Anderson and her successors were, for Hurston, evidence of the rich, cross-cultural, and spontaneous cultural forms that emerged in the New World—and more specifically—in New Orleans hoodoo culture. Hurston, like Anderson, failed to feel the impulse to leave from the home she knew in the U.S.; and instead she planted her feet firmly and assertively amid the Creolized cultures that developed in Eatonville, the Caribbean, and New Orleans. These sites were the loci of the Marvelous: those charged sites on the fringes where Circum-Caribbean culture was created. Though the cultural strains she witnessed there evidenced the survival and persistence of African origins, she marveled at the ingenuity, imagination, and creativity that led to the reappropriation of original cultural strains into new, vigorous, and resilient forms of cultural expression that occurred in the centuries that followed dislocation. These were cultures to be valorized and celebrated as New World origins that transformed margins into charged sights of insight, discovery, revelation, and, ultimately, transformation. At the helm of these discoveries the conjure woman prevailed. Hurston's Moses-as-conjure woman raises her right hand to effect disclosures of experience.

In a trenchant reading of Hurston's literary oeuvre, Keith Cartwright identifies Hurston's affinity with the orisha Oye, the goddess "of hurricanes, death rites, and shape-shifting wilderness transformations" (Cartwright 742). Oye serves as a tremendous natural force in which the wind she brings cleanses and "brooms out" the lives of her servitors. What remains following Oye's wrath, is the clearing away of all obstacles that obscure the truth of lived experience. Moses urges the Pharaoh to free his people from the bonds of servitude; but the Pharaoh and his court adamantly refuse. Moses lifts his mighty right hand to bring the Ten Plagues upon the house of the Pharaoh. With each subsequent plague of boils, hail, locusts, and darkness, the Pharaoh's own edict returns to haunt him. Moses sends death upon the first-born of Egypt. Consequently what remains is a reckoning: as the crucible bears out the bare bones of truth, Moses's sweeping plagues have left the Pharaoh stripped of his power, and the righteousness of freedom bears out. Hurston's narrator describes the aftermath, observing "Pharaoh looked upon his first-born and wept. His son was dead and the son of his son was dead in his own blood. There were snorts and bellows from his stables from the smell of animal blood. So the Pharaoh cried for his dead with all of his voice" (*Moses* 178). By reversing his deeds and raining down the same miseries onto Pharaoh as the Pharaoh had brought upon his

Hebrew slaves, Moses exacts a reckoning in which the true nature of the Hebrews' suffering is made real to the oppressor.

In this same spirit, Hurston rescripts the miracle of the Moses's "crossing over" the Red Sea as a marvelous context: a site of radical transformation and discovery. The author rescripts the historico-mythic event into a symbolic performance of Moses's divestiture of his high birth in Pharaoh's house to his acquisition—and reclothing—of himself as a Hebrew. He treads across the sea: a geographic boundary and charged site of transformation in which his new identity is born. He bathes his feet in the water, and symbolically cleanses himself of his former life in the Egyptian royal house. He is renewed in a fresh, if subalternized identity, yet simultaneously left hollow and bewildered by the experience. He is now aware of the trials and obstacles he must face in his newly embraced identity, and prepares to defend against those odds. Hurston's narrator focalizes Moses's thoughts by observing:

> He had crossed over. He was not in Egypt. He had crossed over and now he was not an Egyptian. He had crossed over. The short sword at his thigh had a jewelled hilt but he had crossed over and so it was no longer the sign of his high birth and power. He had crossed over, so he sat down on a rock to rest himself. He had crossed over so he was not of the house of the Pharaoh. He did not own a palace because he had crossed over. He did not have an Ethiopian Princess for a wife. He had crossed over (*Moses* 78).

Similarly, the valley at the foot of Mt. Sinai is a figurative stage in which Marvelous events and performances initiate the disclosure of Miriam's true nature. An elaborate performance heralds the defeat of Pharaoh, and in a style reminiscent of ritualized folk call-and-response patterning, the celebrants rejoice. One man calls out "Old Pharaoh is dead!" to which the others respond, "How did he die?" The soloist pantomimes the recent victory over the Pharaoh, "[t]hen he sang another part and everybody went on dancing and shouting" (*Moses* 193). Miriam, leading a group of Hebrew women, leads a dance with cymbals. Miriam's performance and accompanying song implicate her as a significant player in the action and elevate her contribution to their victory as having "played the cymbal right over" the Red Sea. Her combined song and dance performance follows her brother's symbolic progression across this boundary: however, her transformation, though equally radical, does not constitute a commensurate 're-clothing' into a renewed and fresh identity. Instead, a venomous and cruel aspect of her nature is revealed.

Not long following her victory dance, Miriam resumes her tirade against Zipporah, and notices the other Hebrew women mimicking Zipporah's movements, just as she once mimicked the Princess. The display enrages Miriam and she scolds the women. "Look at Old Aunt Judy!" she exclaims. "Awringing and atwisting herself and grinning like she was some young gal! And she look like somebody slapped her in the face with a buzzard gut! All of you look like you done gone crazy! Get on back to your tents! Somebody in Israel got to have some sense" (220). Miriam's focus shifts to Zipporah's regal walk: a dynamic and embodied signifier of caste. Zipporah exudes the graceful movement of a refined and cultivated woman, as did the Pharaoh's daughter, and calls back Miriam's desire to be in her place. The memory assumes new significance as Miriam points out the way Zipporah moves, and soon the other women begin to mimic her. "She could see women already trying to set down their broad bare feet in the same way that Zipporah set down her dainty sandals. Her walk and gestures were catching. They were more than willing to take the wife of Moses for a pattern" (219). The actions of the women around her trigger Miriam's anxiety concerning her own behavior so many years ago as she beheld and mimicked the princess. This act of mimicry, as Miriam then realizes, is not a recalcitrant performance of difference as Guedé's was; but rather, it is one in which the performer fully cedes her will and identity to the power structure, and create zombified performances of subalterity. The women's performance projects the failings of Miriam's early desire and triggers any angry diatribe from Miriam. She shouts at them saying "Look at you! Running and gaping behind a woman and what she got on when we come to this mountain to meet our God. Is that any way to act? He is picking out a home for us and here you go running after somebody because they got on gold anklets and neck-rings and forget all about our new God in the mountain" (220). Miriam's pantomime of righteousness is a mere façade. Her reaction indicates her radical confrontation with herself and her undisclosed realization of the futility with which she once mimicked the Princess. Though she has not yet owned or accounted for her own behavior, she nonetheless projects her frustration at herself onto the Hebrew women. Miriam's encounter with this instance of the marvelous real via performance reveals her own agenda and precipitates her downfall.

Miriam's jealousy manifests bigotry, and her malevolence is most chillingly conspicuous as she attempts to destroy that which she covets. She attacks Zipporah on the basis of her complexion, and argues that the woman's skin is too dark to have her in their company. "Look how dark her skin is." She observes. "We don't want people like that among us mixing up our blood and all. That woman has got to go…Got us round here looking like her servants" (243). Moses is outraged at his sister's behavior. He curses her with leprosy and sets her outside the encampment for seven days as 'unclean.' Though his actions resonate with Christ's 'casting out' of unclean spirits, Hurston recasts the biblical curse upon Miriam as the dynamic gesture of the female sorcerer: one that reclaims Moses's status as central while revealing the truth of Miriam's nature and intent in the most visceral sense. By physically removing Miriam from the encampment, Moses's actions dramatize how Miriam has historically removed herself spiritually from her brethren. Miriam's leprosy creates a grotesque rendering of her voracious desire to be set apart and to receive more than her share of credit. Moses instantiates himself as the central power by violently confronting Miriam—and onlookers—with the true decrepitude of her nature. When she finally regains her voice, Miriam assumes the role for which she had initially prepared for herself: that as prophet and witness to her brother's power.

Teresa Washington situates 'the curse' within such a scenario as a powerful phenomenon in which the "Word": a pronouncement, or here, a gesture, is derived from ancient force called Àjé. "Human Àjé," Washington explains, "are the source of biological creation and spiritual and artistic creativity. These daughters of Oòduà possess spiritual vision, the power to make desires realities, ownership of flora and fauna, socio-political authority, and the power of the word" (59). Hurston's Moses calls down the ancestral forces in order to disclose the truth, to reclaim his power and centrality, and to set things to right. By raising his (her) right hand, Moses, in the hands of Hurston, dramatizes the desire to reclaim central status to the multitudinous, subalternized diasporas whom he (she) represents as righteous and suitable. Further, Hurston asserts her desire as author to affirm Moses's relevance not merely to Western historico-religious record, but to the unwritten modes of diasporic history. Though Moses's actions create a perverse—and even cruel—enactment of Miriam's desire for centrality and credit, even

Miriam affirms the power of the spoken word to create historical record. In her muttered testimonies to passers-by, Miriam attests that "He lifted his right hand and the thing come upon me. I felt it when it come. His right hand was clothed in light" (246).

Scholars have criticized Hurston for her rendering of Miriam's character, because Hurston, whose reputation as a feminist seems to collide with her decision to remove the voice of a central female protagonist in this novel. However, this reading of Miriam's character finds her most evocative of those white patriarchal forces that sought to author the histories of diasporic peoples for their own aggrandizing purposes. By casting Miriam in this role as Moses's antagonist, and an antipodal model of misguided ambitions, Hurston discloses the vast differences that separate two modes of authoring ethnography: one that seeks to reveal the truth through demonstrable performance; and those that seek to undermine them. Moses's easy and fluid character, that navigates effortlessly from the feminine to masculine modes of power demonstrates Hurston's assertions that the character of Moses remains accessible to multiple diasporas, and therefore unites them through common historical memory. Miriam's decrepit physicality in her leprosy mirrored her internal bitterness, and while she sought throughout her life to claim a voice, she was denied because of her selfishness. Notions of power and leadership certainly worked their way into Hurston's strategy in this novel; however, Moses's final assertions concerning leadership betray the author's firm belief that true freedom originated from a mindset that enabled freedom and voice to take place. "He found out that no man may make another free." Hurston's narrator begins. "Freedom was something internal. The outside signs were just signs and symbols of the man inside. All you could do was to give the opportunity for freedom and the man himself must make his own emancipation" (282).

Moses, Man of the Mountain has been for many Hurston scholars, a formidable challenge to categorize: multiple interpretations emerged following its publication in 1939; and again in the 1970s, until critics wearied from their attempts to decipher its multiple metaphors and symbology. It is the complexity and the endless possibilities of interpretation that make *Moses Man of the Mountain* so compelling. In this novel, Hurston dramatizes the struggles of her gender-fluid Moses as s/he navigates geographic borders and superficial boundaries of identity. Moses's struggle concomitantly reveals the creation of ethnography from the perspective of its subjects. The structure of Moses Man of the Mountain reveals the author's ongoing preoccupation concerning the ways ethnography is created from the autochthonous perspective of the collective group. When one considers *Moses* against Hurston's 1937 publication, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a complementary project emerges. While *Moses* considers the great biblical leader as a conjurer of a people's history, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* narrows the focus of her ethnographic spyglass to consider the life story and evolution of the individual female protagonist. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is the armature of Hurston's project concerning a Circum-Caribbean Marvelous Real. In this novel, protagonist Janie Crawford evolves from a marginalized 'witch' in the eyes of her community into a veritable sorceress: a conjurer who claims the power of the spoken word to author her own ethnographic text. Hurston maps out the paradigm that modern Caribbean authors Brodber and Hopkinson have adopted in their own novels. Hurston engages the marvelous real in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as a metaphorical topos in which jarring truths reveal the nature of lived experience to the protagonist through an invocation of the fantastic. These collisions with truth propel her along on her journey toward self-discovery and autonomy. However, the full evolution does not occur until a life-altering trauma is introduced. The horror and catastrophe that result from this trauma bring about a sea change in the lived experience of the protagonist. By focusing on the common concerns and historical memories of women within a Circum-Caribbean diaspora, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and the novels that draw their inspiration from it, strengthen the diasporic ties shared by women in an ever-flourishing New World Creole culture.

PART II: FROM WANDERING WITCH TO CONJURER OF AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: JANIE CRAWFORD *IN THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*

Hurston Scholars have often pointed out that Janie Crawford is a ‘seeker’: a woman whose sojourn toward wholeness simultaneously propels her forward; while at the same time, she struggles subconsciously to overcome the ‘curse’ that her grandmother makes in her early life that would condemn her to a fate as the ‘mule of the world’ (Washington, “Complements” 171). However, what remains to be examined in this text is the way in which Hurston incorporates magical, fantastic, and grotesque elements to elevate Janie’s narrative. What reads initially as the story of one woman’s quest for selfhood transforms into a mythic bildungsroman of an incipient conjurer-ethnographer of a life’s story.

Throughout Janie's narrative in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston grafts the 'magical' and 'marvelous' elements of folklore and myth onto the events of Janie's quest for the most cherished "human longing" of "self-revelation." In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston stages Janie's multiple interactions with the marvelous real as a series of incremental, revelatory moments that gradually propel her toward the discovery of her voice. The death of her third husband, Teacake Woods, marks the event that finally catapults her toward the autonomy and the spiritual communion she longs for. In the opening lines of the novel, Janie returns from burying the dead: "Not the dead of sick and ailing with friends at the pillow and the feet. She had come back from the sodden and the bloated; the sudden dead, their eyes flung wide open in judgment" (*Their Eyes* 1). As Janie Crawford returns to Starkville, the eyes of the porchtalkers—townsfolk who gather on the front steps of the general store to talk and observe—gossip and speculate about Janie's life in the Everglades, where she had disappeared two years prior with her much younger husband. Janie passes them with indifference and remains silent until she meets her best friend, Pheoby. Over a dish of mulatto rice, Janie begins her tale. Commencing with her earliest recollections of childhood, Janie plumbs her memory to construct a story of how things came to be for her down in the Everglades. More than mere reverie, Janie's story contains a larger significance: as she travels back through her memory, she explores her life, the relationships that helped to define her, and the events that shaped the woman she has now become. She begins at the beginning of her life, with tales of early childhood, and examines how the rancorous relationship she shared with her grandmother defined much of her thinking throughout adulthood. The most significant formative moment is that in which her hopes for beauty in love and marriage were initially dashed by her grandmother's damning pronouncement, that she, like Nanny herself, could expect no better future than the wretched existence of a lowly beast of burden.

Hurston's narrator observes that Janie's "conscious life" began at her grandmother's gate when she was sixteen years old. There in the surrounding countryside, under the pear tree, Janie experienced the event that contributed mightily to her then nascent self-awareness and sexual maturity. In a provocative and oft-cited passage, Hurston's narrator focalizes the young girl's rapture as she observes the workings of nature, procreation, and life coming into full bloom. The narrator observes that "[s]he saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was marriage!" The extravagant eroticism of this passage reifies the young girl's blissful encounter with the marvelous reality of life and procreation. Janie discovers the marvelousness of the fecundity of sexual passion and of the continuance and vitality that it represents. She bears witness to the giving and receiving of life and in that instant feels intimately connected to a grander cosmic scheme defined by the feminine. The narrator remarks that Janie's encounter with this glimpse of the sublime had convinced her that "[s]he had been summoned to behold a revelation" (11). This revelation galvanizes Janie's burgeoning joy and desire for self-expression.

Teresa Washington offers further insight that augments the significance of Janie's experience at the pear tree. She observes the Yoruba tradition of aligning tree symbology that invokes images of the eternal Mother, of roots, and of perpetuity. Hurston's strategy of naming the missing mother "Leafy" is noteworthy, as the name connotes wellness, abundance, and life in full bloom. Seen within the context of this metaphor, Janie's experience under the pear tree resembles a youthful attempt to connect with a cosmic matrilineage and to simultaneously birth the autonomous self: one that is strong, vibrant, feminine, and life-giving. She imagines herself positioned in a tradition of birthing and giving birth, of mothering and being mothered. However, Janie's history, as revealed by her grandmother, conveys that her connections to her mother have been violently severed. In Janie's case, the traumatic removal of her own mother leaves her aimlessly and mutely searching for a sense of purpose and rootedness ("Complements" 168).

Janie's grandmother had been a slave during the Civil War, and, as many African American women had, she endured the miseries peculiar to the female slave in which she was exploited and mistreated by both the Master and Mistress of the plantation. She bore a child by her white master, and called her "Leafy": a name that suggests that the woman had vested in her daughter all the hope that she might grow and flourish. However, the Mistress of the plantation brutally whipped Nanny, and threatened to sell her child off the plantation. To avoid this fate, Nanny, in much the same fashion of the biblical Jochebed, hides her child in the swamp with the hope she will be rescued. "In de black dark Ah wrapped mah baby de best I knowed how and made it to de swamp by de river." Nanny explains to Janie, "Ah knowed de place was full uh moccasins and other bitin' snakes, but Ah was more skeered uh what was behind me. Ah hide in dere day and night and suckled de baby every time she start to cry, for fear somebody might hear her and Ah'd git found" (*Their Eyes* 18).

Leafy's beginnings resonate with those of Moses's; but Nanny's retelling is burdened with the heavy sadness and disappointment that contributed to the bitterness that Janie observes. Hurston dramatizes the vast disparity that exists between the record of the white power structure and the internal lives of its victims. What Nanny had hoped for her progeny and the brutal reality she suffered at the hands of the white male marks the disjunction between the 'script' she wished to follow, and one that was written for her by the Master. While Nanny and her daughter and granddaughter might have enjoyed the connections and bonds formed by family of women and a matrilinear heritage, the Master perverted into a forced tradition of concubinage. Nanny had hoped that Leafy would outlive the stigma and shame of her birth; however, her story ended tragically. The girl grew to school age, but by the time she had reached adolescence, she too had been abused and sexually exploited by her white schoolteacher. Nanny sent her to school one morning, but she did not return for the next two days. "De next mornin' she come crawlin' in on her hands and knees. A sight to see." Nanny reports. "Dat school- teacher had done hid her in de woods all night long, and he had done raped my baby and run on off just before day" (19). Leafy never returns, leaving a void of emptiness in Nanny's and Janie's lives. The trauma that Leafy suffered symbolically destroys the life, vitality, and matrix of female connections that her name symbolizes.

The void left by Leafy is filled only with the stigma foisted on her birth—and then the events that led to Janie's birth. These traumatic events intensify Nanny's conviction that the black woman must bear the burden of the white male's lust and cruelty. Though Leafy is notably absent from the remainder of the novel, her legacy and the void she left behind plagues Janie. One speculates that the author still retained the memory of Mother Leafy Anderson because her reputation for inculcating a sense of matrilinear continuance among her congregation—and for harboring young unwed mothers—had left an indelible mark on the author. Hurston's oblique reference to the Reverend Mother, whose church judged no birth as 'sinful,' suggests that the author introduces the memory of Leafy Anderson to reverse the stigma surrounding Leafy's and Janie's births. Hurston's subtle invocation of the memory of Anderson metaphorically restores the gap left by the missing mother, and alleviates the stigma of rape. However, because Janie never quite receives the benefit of knowing her own mother, or from receiving Mother Leafy's restorative influence, Hurston iterates the futility of Janie's initial hopefulness.

Nanny compounds Janie's flagging hopes for a bright future in love, by explaining to Janie the workings of the real world as she has seen it through her eyes. She remarks, "So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule of de world so fur as Ah can see. Ah been prayin' fuh it tuh be different wid you" (14). The stark disparity between Nanny's reality and Janie's hoped-for reality reveals the underlying truth behind the old woman's bitterness. Nanny's portentous words are the result of the burdensome legacy imposed by slavery and sexism. Nanny's words shatter the glorious picture Janie had envisioned of romantic love and marriage and silences Janie as well as her desires for a future filled with romance and connection. Rather than resist, the sixteen-year-old Janie grudgingly follows her grandmother's wishes to marry Logan Killicks: a much older, unappealing, yet settled man who has the means to care for her and provide her with stability. The narrator focalizes Janie's dejection by solemnly adding that "her first dream was dead, so she became a woman" (25). From Janie's initial disappointment, her experiences with the marvelous real swiftly shift from glorious to ghoulish visions that haunt Janie and thrust her into an unsavory alliance with the beast of burden.

Janie's first marriage to Logan Killicks takes shape as a macabre rendering of Janie's youthful fantasies of love and marriage. As the young girl enters into the arranged union with the much older Killicks, she discovers that not only does she not return his passion she is repulsed by him and his efforts to transform her into a brute. Distressed over the disappointment, Janie seeks the advice of neighbor Mrs. Washburn, to whom she explains, "Ah hates de way his head is so long one way and so flat on the sides and dat pone uh fat on his neck…his belly is too big too, now, and his toe-nails look lak mule foots" (24). Janie had hoped to return his passion with matched interest, but instead finds Logan to be a vile rendering of the ideal man. The mule imagery in these passages appears to be a portent for Janie: his last errand is to go into to town to buy a mule for her to plow, making her less of a romantic companion than a mere work-mate. Janie responds to her predicament by hinting to him that she will 'run off' one day and leave him, which raises Logan's anxieties and heightens his paranoia. At this point, Janie has given him real reason for concern, as her frequent meanderings to the pear tree—and to the road where she meets Joe Starks—prove her growing desire to flee. Janie's actions intone folk and mythic implications that suggest that her spirit is a restless one that longs to be unencumbered by Logan's, and later, Joe's stifling versions of romantic love.

Hurston scholars have frequently interpreted the mule imagery in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as a trope that ties African American female ontology to a history of slavery, sexism, and marginalization. The symbol of the 'mule' as a beast of burden reifies the burden of New World history as it contributes to questions concerning African

American women's projects to define and express themselves and to reject that identification. Hurston's novel transforms mule imagery into a folkloric trope of grotesquerie that mocks all attempts to align African American womanhood to the image of the 'mule.' Hurston borrows 'magical' elements found in African American and Afro-Caribbean folklore, and their antecedents in Yoruba tradition to dramatize how Africana women resist the pejorative alignment by alternately resisting and capitulating to identities that have historically been contrived for them. Hurston invokes these cultural threads to create instances of the marvelous real: a metaphorical stage in which the truth is revealed. Each of Janie's encounters with marvelous reality propels her toward her destiny as conjurer: a fully autonomous being that is vested with the power of her own voice. However, before Janie achieves full autonomy, she confronts realities regarding the nightmarish identity that her husbands and others create for her. Hurston engages the shape-shifter phenomenon to dramatize how Janie responds to and acts upon the identities foisted upon her by the others around her.

Hurston draws from the African American and Jamaican folk narrative of the "Boo Hag" to characterize Janie's internal torment while married to first husband, Logan Killicks. The Boo Hag, according to its cultural traditions, was a wandering witch who dons the guise of a normal woman during the day, but leaves her skin at night to take off in pursuit of mischief. The tale often varies, but the core plot features a husband who complains that each night, his wife leaves the marital bed to wander. Concerned that she is a witch, he consults the local hoodoo woman, who informs him that each night, the Boo Hag leaves her skin and flies about in the night air, causing havoc. The hoodoo woman advises the husband to locate his wife's skin—which would be hanging in a closet on the mantle—and to fill it with salt and pepper. Upon her return, the Boo Hag will unwittingly attempt to re-skin herself, and the pepper will abrade her exposed organs and cause her to shriek in pain. Her anguished cries will then identify her as a witch (Moonlit Road.com).

Hurston records a version of this narrative that is told from the perspective of the night-flying huntress herself (Cartwright 756). Entitled "De Witch Woman," this version portrays the 'witch' returning home from her escapades, to find the skin where she left it, but filled with stinging salt and pepper. She attempts to put on the skin and the painful burn causes her to cry, "Skin, oh skin, old skin, don't you know me?" She discovers what her husband, or "used-to-be" has done, and concludes, "Gee whiz! Old skin, dis is me. I been goin' and goin', but I think dis is my old use-to-be (who has conquered me)" (Kaplan, *Every Tongue Got to Confess* 63-4). Though the tale's intended purpose may have been merely to frighten or entertain young listeners, its subtext suggests a cautionary against wandering wives as suspected witches. By superimposing the image/narrative of the Boo Hag onto Janie, Hurston dramatizes the ways women's moods and vicissitudes in the process of reaching fulfillment is often misread and even perverted by others around her. In Hurston's retelling of the Boo Hag tale, the teller configures the 'skin' as a macabre symbol of her freedom that, notably, may be taken off or put on at will. However in the end of the folktale, her 'freedom' does not recognize her because it has been undermined—or altogether robbed from her—by a dominant, possessive male. The subtending meaning suggests that women were to be content in their marriages and were not expected to wander at night. Those who did were necessarily thought to be witches: their ways and shifting moods were thought to be sly and slippery means to resist their husbands' wills.

Within the context of multiple modes of folk superstition, the 'witch,' a female necromancer, has been historically aligned with malevolence. Thought to conspire with compatriots in her all-female coven, any assembly of females raised suspicions that members conspired against 'normal' society. Kimberly Ann Wells defines the historico-social stigma associated with the phenomenon of the witch and the implications she poses in the face of male power structures. Wells explains that "the witch…also labeled priestess, mistress, shaman, mambo, healer, midwife—is a metaphor for female unruliness and disruption to patriarchy and as such, is usually portrayed as evil and deserving of punishment" (Wells iii). The sexual politics of Janie's fictional world in many ways mimic the Judeo-Christian, androcentric policies of white society, as women are considered second-class citizens. Were a woman to deviate from her expected roles as devoted wife and mother she would incur the derision of the community. Janie's rejection of her arranged marriage to Killicks provokes her to wander, and her wandering earns her the condemnation of Killicks, whose accusations regarding her fickleness and caprice heighten as his fear of being cuckolded intensifies. When she openly announces her unhappiness, he chastises her and warns "You won't git far and you won't be long, when dat big gut reach over and grab dat little one, you'll be too glad to come back here" (*Their Eyes* 30). Janie's rebellious move to go off in search of something more fulfilling marks her as a pariah: an ungrateful and evil woman unwilling to consign herself to domestic role expected of her. But it is a fate Janie is willing to accept because in her still persistent youthful optimism, she extends her hope for a better life.

The Afro-Caribbean folktale of the Boo Hag has mythical counterparts that are less macabre, and suggest Janie's eventual ascendance beyond the status of mule of the world. Scholars locate an affinity between Janie and the Yoruba goddess who renounced the suffocating constraints of domesticity. Teresa Washington observes the similarities between Janie's narrative and the Yoruba myth of Àràká, also called Oya, the Rain-Bringer. Washington observes that Hurston's multiple initiations into the hoodoo tradition of New Orleans, and her ultimate crowning as "Rain-bringer" fixed the author into an alliance with the goddess—an alliance that Hurston confers upon Janie. Washington argues that Hurston inscribes the myth of Oya onto Janie's narrative to the extent that *Their Eyes Were Watching God* emerges as a retelling of the myth of Oya. Washington suggests that Hurston's travels throughout the Coastal South prepared the author for this retelling, because "when Hurston visited New Orleans Oya marked her, and Hurston's flesh became the Deity's text…and Janie Crawford, whose life-text is so similar to Oya's it could be considered a contemporary revision" (Washington, "Complements" 168). Indeed, Janie's marriages to Logan Killicks, Joe Starks, and Teacake Woods bear similarities to the marriages of the goddess. Oya's first husband, Ògún resembles a composite of Killicks and Starks. Ògún, the god of iron was much older, and "taciturn," and because he would return filthy and sweaty from his toil each day, he gradually became less physically appealing to the much younger and vibrant Àràká.

Both Janie's narrative and the myth of Àràká tell of a woman whose spirit was restless and undaunted, and one who rejected the conventions of married life in search of communion that was of a deeper and more spiritual nature:

> (Àràká's) attachment to her 'spiritual group' was strong. She regularly sojourned with them, and because Ògún was not an initiate, she kept her whereabouts and actions hidden from him; in fact, she would leave home secretly and return unceremoniously. After leaving Ògún, Àràká married Sàngó, who was both younger than Ògún and more aesthetically appealing. …Sàngó was also a renowned rule and fearsome warrior. While both parties benefited from the compounded power of their union, the idea of his wife leaving furtively for undisclosed reasons did not sit well with the ruler of the Oyo Empire. For the second time, Àràká found domesticity and romantic love threatening her personal and spiritual needs. She left Sango choosing to feed her spirit rather than his ego" (Washington, "Complements" 168-9).

The Boo Hag narrative in its grotesquerie articulates the pejorative way others perceived Janie, and to some extent, the ways she was forced to perceive herself. Hurston's impulse to draw from the multiple diasporic cultural threads of African American, Afro-Caribbean, and Yoruba myth suggests the author's impulse to underscore how the common experiences that unite diasporic women intersect on the margins of cultural lore. Janie's paradoxical affinity with these variations on the subalternized 'witch' instantiate her on the margins of her society; but her shape-shifting progression as she evolves from maligned and marginalized 'witch' or 'hag' to curse-wielding sorceress usher her to the status of wizened conjurer of her own narrative. As Janie leaves Logan in favor of a life with Joe Starks, in the second third of the novel, Hurston configures the marvelous as grotesque images that reveal to Janie the nature of her existence in the town. By couching truths within macabre scenarios that involve the tragicomic figure of Matt Bonner's mule, Hurston dramatizes Janie's revelations concerning her marriage and her positioning among the townsfolk of Starkville.

In Hurston's fictional folk hamlet, orality is the mechanism through which one gains autonomy and earns his or her place in the community. Joe, a swaggering braggart and mayor of Starkville positions himself at the center of the town's consciousness. Joe creates the position for his wife as a mute accessory to his power. He intercedes on her every attempt to join in on porchtalk, insisting that, as the mayor's wife, she is a class above the common townsfolk. Hurston scholars have noted that Joe's ideas concerning power are based largely upon models of white imperial control that sought to marginalize and silence blacks. The mule imagery in Hurston's novel represents an element of the magical that assists in testifying to the extent of Joe's crushing control over Janie's voice. By fixing her into a figurative alignment with the mule, Joe's actions deepen the psychological wound left by Nanny's pronouncement and suggest that the process by which the black woman becomes 'mule of the world' is coming to fruition. Joe expresses affinity for material wealth and the tangible representations of power—a large white house in the center of town, well furnished with what he considers the 'best of everything'—that even includes an ornamented spittoon for Janie. By appropriating his own version of white materialism while relegating his wife to be seen and never heard, Joe corroborates Nanny's pronouncement: a demoralizing realization for Janie. His braggadocio reflects colonial history's legacy of systematically emasculating and degrading the black male, and prescribing a set of Euro-centric materialistic values and configuring them as desirable. These paternalist machinations relegated black women to an even lower status. Intoning the words of Brinda Mehta, Megan Musgrove asserts that "[h]istorically, women were particularly vulnerable to the rupture enacted by colonization because 'they had to deal not only with the inequities of the white master but also with the destabilized psyche of their menfolk, anxious to re-member their threatened manhood by replicating their own humiliations…and projecting them onto their women'" (Musgrave 67-8). Joe's desire to be a 'Big Voice' squelches any attempt Janie makes to engage in the communal porchtalk; or even to speak in her own defense. Instead she is the target of Joe's deflected humiliations.

Joe's centrality and the influence he wields over the townsfolk further alienate his wife. The novel opens to introduce the townsfolk, whom Janie refers to as "Mouth Almighty," because the porchtalkers derive a collective sense of importance and power over Janie by gossiping about her. Janie is simultaneously present—and absent—from the action as far as the porchtalkers are concerned. While she is feature topic of their gossip, she remains bodily relegated to the margins, and prohibited from becoming a fully participating subject. Similarly, as the ill-tempered, malnourished, and emaciated beast of burden becomes the topic the townsfolk's ridicule, Janie's identification with the poor brute deepens. The townsfolk bate and tease the beast out in the street, and Janie stands in the doorway watching the spectacle. She identifies with the poor, mute creature, while it defenselessly bears the punishment; and its sunken, emaciated form mirrors her deflated spirit. Joe prepares to intervene in the mule baiting, while Janie mutters her indignation before running to fetch her husband's shoes. She turns away from the scene, remarking, "'They oughta be ashamed uh theyselves! Teasin' that poor brute-beast lak they is!" the narrator observes. "Done been worked tuh death; done had his disposition ruint wid mistreatment, and now they got tuh finish devilin' 'im tuh death" (56). Joe overhears her and decides to free the beast by purchasing it for five dollars: a self-aggrandizing gesture that garners him attention for his display of mock compassion. Janie's anger at Joe and her pity for the mule forces its way into her speech, and manifests in the biting sarcasm with which she responds to Joe's act of "mercy." When he returns to the storefront, she meets him, saying "Jody, dat wuz uh mighty fine thing fuh you tuh do…Freein' dat mule makes uh mighty big man outa you. Something like George Washington and Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln, he had de whole United States tuh rule so he freed de Negroes. You got uh town so you freed uh mule. You have power to free things and dat makes you lak uh king uh something" (58). Janie's disgust at the mule spectacle—and with Joe—marks a pivotal point in the novel at which Janie begins to speak in her own defense and to fortify herself against Joe's mistreatment. Joe, however, disregards his wife's sarcasm and departs to preside over the 'mule funeral.' The townsfolk drag the carcass to the outskirts of town, while Janie is left behind, alone with her thoughts on the steps of the general store.

A particularly significant aspect of this scene is that Joe and the townsfolk leave Janie behind, physically isolated and situated on the geographic periphery of the action. As they drag the carcass to the remotest reaches of town for the presumed purpose of hygiene, Janie's identification with the mule assumes an added, morbid dimension as she visualizes the scene. As in porchtalk, during the 'mule funeral,' Janie and the mule are situated bodily at extreme positions, they are both equally present *and* absent from the collective conscience of the community, while simultaneously being mocked and shunted.

Joseph Roach explains in *Cities of the Dead*, the custom of architectural planning that emerged in the seventeenth century in which city planners plotted cemeteries and graveyards at the furthest reaches of town. The rationale behind this move extended beyond mere sanitary measures, as the underlying desire was to simultaneously honor and to forget the dead. Roach explains that "[a]s the place of burial was removed from local churchyard to distant park, the dead were more likely to be remembered (and forgotten) by monuments than by continued observances in which their spirits were invoked. Like the ghost of Dido, the enlightened dead were more likely now to observe the strict silence of the tomb" (Roach 50). However, Janie is not being honored, and the townsfolk who conduct a mocking funeral for the mule reify her positioning as a half-subject: one that never becomes fully formed and exists only for the purposes of the townsfolk's cruelty and amusement.

Hurston constructs the scene in which the townsfolk stage the 'dragging out' and funeral of the mule as a subtle departure from comparatively real-world elements into those of a marvelous real context. In the instance of the mule funeral, Hurston breaks from her ethnographer's impulse in which to explicitly introduce folk material for the purpose of showcasing it. In this instance, the anecdote about the mule's funeral is decidedly macabre in comparison to her other folk renderings. Her strategy in these passages engages the same element of ambiguity she employed in her other work; but her introduction of magical elements is so seamlessly nuanced that the juncture in which the recognizable, real-world backdrop evaporates, and the introduction of the magical scape of the talking buzzards is almost indiscernible to the reader. Following almost immediately afterward, the narrative returns—without comment from characters or narrator—to its original real-world themes.

Janie's physical positioning outside the scene demands that her imagination takes her to the funeral. In her mind's eye she sees Joe as he steps atop the mule's swollen body and commences a eulogy. Sam follows with mocking imitations of John Pearson, the local preacher. Following this spectacle, the townsfolk chime in with extemporaneous musings about mule angels and mule heaven, in which molasses flows freely in a creek and oats, barley, and other mule delicacies abound. Though Hurston writes the scene with discernible humor, the near-comic tenor gradually turns into one of fanciful grotesquerie, in which humans become scavenging birds ravaging the carcass of the dying mule. The apparent leader, the Parson, drops down from his perch to examine the dead beast, and, determining the mule quite dead, "he balanced and asked: 'What killed this man? The chorus answered, 'Bare, bare fat'" (61).

Hurston portrays folk images that evolve in Janie's imaginings into monstrous, anthropomorphic creatures. This gradual shift, a hallmark of the magical realist narrative, tends to arrest the reader's attention by temporarily upsetting his or her expectations. Wendy Faris explains that the magical realist narrative contains 'irreducible elements' that are introduced to jar the reader's attention toward a disparity or inconsistency the author observes. Although the author introduces surprisingly fantastic or surreal elements that are incongruous with their contexts, the effect is quite subtle. Within the logic of the narrative, the magical, the implausible, and horrific enter into the scene as normal, quotidian occurrences, which participants in the novel often accept without comment. The effectiveness of this strategy, therefore, lies in its subtlety. Faris explains that the "irreducible elements are well assimilated into the realistic textual environment, rarely causing any comment by narrators or characters, who model such an acceptance for their readers. Paradoxically, because they also nevertheless frequently surprise those readers and their realistic expectations, they also say, in almost existential fashion, 'I EKsist,' 'I stick out'" (Faris 8). Janie's connection to the mule intensifies through her imaginings of its funeral; and its worn and emaciated form are a projection of her emotional state. Janie's thought scenario creates what Julia Kristeva has termed a moment of "abjection."

To paraphrase, Kristeva defines abjection as being the consequence that follows an individual's encounter with his or her mortality in representations of the unclean: of a corpse, refuse, or illness. The visceral and startling impact of the visualization of death prompts a radical awareness of one's own imminent connection to that unseemliness. The individual's response is often horror or disgust, but then this refutation evolves into an acceptance that propels the individual forward toward enhanced self-knowledge. According to Kristeva, abjection is "immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you…" (Kristeva 4). By introducing these grotesque themes into the scenario that Janie imagines, Hurston alerts us to an instance in which Janie indicts her alignment with the unflattering familiar. She simultaneously identifies with the condition of the beast; but the grotesque, repellent images startle her into a rejection of the selfsame beast as *other* and separate from her.

In her discussion of Hurston's folk retelling of the narrative "Black Death," Lynda Marion Hill points out the juxtaposition that Hurston configures linguistically between the world of the familiar, and that of the marvelous in her retelling of common African American folk tales. She remarks that "[Hurston's] choice of words suggests the tension inherent in the kind of act she describes—a tension between two worlds, one mundane and the decidedly outside of everyday events, both worlds overlapping at a terrifying juncture, where the stability of ordinary occurrences is undermined" (Hill 129). Janie's confrontation with the mule funeral marks a crucial point in her transition from witch/pariah into sorceress/conjurer. However in this passage, it is the absence of verbal cues in Hurston's portrayal of the mule funeral that trigger Janie's encounter with her marvelous reality: Hurston's subtle rendering of the mule funeral presages the moment when Janie finally claims the power of the Word, in which she issues the curse that permanently dislodges her identification with the 'mule' by altering the dynamic she shares with Joe.

After two decades of verbal and physical abuse, Janie has reached her limit of patience, and she explodes in a violent flash of anger one day in the general store. After Joe insults her for her clumsy attempt to slice a plug of tobacco, he moves on to insult her age and appearance. Feeling publicly denuded and humiliated, Janie fires back saying, "You big-bellies round here and put out a lot of brag, but t'ain't nothin' to it but you' big voice, Humph! Talkin' 'bout me lookin' old! When you pull down yo' britches, you look lak de change uh life!" (*Their Eyes* 79). Her actions earn her a violent slap, and Joe gradually retreats from her, and refuses to acknowledge her as his wife. Her verbal attack on Joe also provokes the scorn of the community. Pheoby explains to Janie that the other townsfolk believe that she hexed him. She explains to Janie that "Ah though maybe de thing would die down and you never would know nothin' 'bout it, but it's been singin' round here ever since de big fuss in de store dat Joe was 'fixed' and you wuz de one dat did it" (82). When Joe falls ill, he forbids her to come into the sick room and allows only townsfolk to enter for a visit: he will not even permit Janie to deliver food and medicine. For a second time in her life, Janie is positioned as the malevolent and ungrateful witch who mercilessly bit the hand that fed her.

Teresa Washington identifies Janie's reclamation of the "power of the Word" as a calling down of cosmic forces called Àjé and Òrò. Àjé, a kind of cosmic life force that is vested in women naturally through bearing children, or by initiation, combines with Òrò, "a cognitive-critical-creative force that unites art to artist to audience with the goal of infinite recreation" ("Power of the Word" 61). Washington locates this power evident in the lineage of female conjurers such as Marie Laveau, who, according to legend, commanded the movement of Lake Pontchartrain through the sheer force of her will. She argues that these life-giving forces are cultivated through patience, and manifest at precise and opportune moments in which they can educe the optimum effect. Janie's long patience has earned her the reclamation of Àjé and Òrò and the tempest of her fury provokes further revelatory encounters with the marvelous real.

Washington terms the verbal power that Janie wields as an example of aásàn, the power of the female conjurer "to curse and drive insane" (62). Janie's curse manifests in Joe's declining physical appearance. Her husband has deteriorated in the twenty years that they had been married: he appears withered and broken, and to Janie, his present state mocks her image of the strapping younger man she ran off with down the road. As she looks him over, the narrator observes that "…she noticed how baggy Joe was getting all over. Like bags hanging from an ironing board. A little sack hung from the corners of his eyes and rested on his cheek-bones; a loose-filled bag of feathers hung from his ears and rested on his neck beneath his chin. A sack of flabby something hung from his loins and rested on his thighs when he sat down" (*Their Eyes* 81). Janie's abjection in the face of Joe's morbid condition provokes the realization for Janie that her husband's waning life mirrors the time that remains for her to explain herself to him, and reclaim her voice. As he lies on his deathbed Janie resolves to face him finally and lucidly with her reaction to the abuse she has suffered these many years. She asserts, "All dis bowin' down, all dis obedience under yo' voice—dat ain't what I rushed off down de road tuh find out about you" (87). Joe recoils feeling martyred, and responds by hurling insults at her 'tearin' down talk.' However, Àjé and Òrò fortify her in the face of his anger: she uses her voice to assert her autonomy, drawn from the energies of Àràká, and a multitude of spiritual foremothers, like Laveau and Anderson whose Power of the Word passes to Janie. Washington observes that "by applying 'tearin' down talk' equivalent to that of Leveau and Bòkólo and in choosing a fulfilling life over a suicidal concept of love, Janie uses her inheritance of Àjé Òrò to liberate herself" ("Power of the Word" 65). By calling upon a lineage of ancestral mothers through this power of the word, Janie attempts to restore the void that created by Leafy's absence and begins to mend her broken spirit and, to effectively birth the autonomous self she abandoned at the base of the pear tree. By embracing her alliance with the Rain-bringer, Janie makes her final transformation into sorceress-conjurer.

By the time she reaches forty, Janie seems to have found the fulfilling love she sought in her third and final marriage to Teacake Woods, a young, free-spirited drifter and gambler. The two enjoy a brief and happy union, but a violent hurricane brings an abrupt end to the tranquility they had during their two years in the Everglades, working on the "muck". The appearance of the hurricane heralds Janie's ultimate collision with the marvelous real and sets the stage for her dramatic transformation as conjure woman. As the clouds gather and loom, members of the work camp observe a band of Seminoles traveling toward Palm Beach to escape the coming storm. When a second band appears, Janie asks one of the men where they are going. He responds that they are "[g]oing to high ground. Saw-grass bloom. Hurricane coming" (154). The residents of the work camp refuse to heed the actions of the Seminoles. A Bahaman called Lias urges Tea Cake to leave, but he staunchly refuses. He observes that the whites have not yet moved, and that "the money's too good on the muck" (156).

Tea Cake is confronted with the oracular warnings of the Seminoles and the oracular Bahaman Lias; but he nonetheless rejects these alternate forms of knowing to place his faith in the presumed authority the of the white foreman. Hurston makes her criticism of imposing white power structures clear by configuring Teacake, a character who, like Joe Starks, is compelled by the desire to defer to white figurations of material wealth and status; as Tea Cake's desire to stay on the muck with the hope of further monetary gain proves to be his undoing. The residents of the work camp soon realize that they are faced with a force of nature that far outweighs their collective strength. As the storm picks up and the waters begin to rise, Janie and Tea Cake feebly attempt to make it out of the work camp on foot. Their companion, Motorboat stays behind in the bedroom to sleep through the storm. As they wade through the falling debris and floating refuse from the storm, they encounter a scene that resonates chillingly with images that accompanied Katrina, the disastrous hurricane that swept New Orleans in 2005. This record storm that devastated one of the nation's oldest and most culturally rich southern coastal cities, forced the nation to confront the racial and economic divisions that plagued the city. Those most disaffected by this event were the city's most desperately impoverished—most of whom were black (Cartwright 744). Keith Cartwright observes the ways in which Katrina compelled the nation to come to terms with the intersecting forces of racial and economic marginalization when he observes that "[t]elevision coverage of Hurricane Katrina's aftermath revealed an incompetent federal response—an abandonment of our most vulnerable citizens—and catalyzed a visceral public reengagement with the workings of race and class in America" (745). Hurston's fictional community of poor blacks is confronted with a similar scenario, in which the faith they place on white 'authority' undermines their survival. In Hurston's novel, this truth manifests in ghastly and horrific ways.

Cartwright astutely observes that in the aftermath of Katrina, bodies of displaced survivors were packed into the New Orleans Superdome to await sluggish governmental assistance; meanwhile, the city's interior was gorged with toxifying waters that carried the bloated and abandoned remains of the dead. Such scenes reified the penetrating grotesqueness and horror not simply as the effects of natural devastation, but the devastation that comes with racial and economic apartheid. In what might even be considered a stroke of prescience, Hurston depicts similar horrifying images that Janie and Teacake witness that illustrate, in visceral terms, the violence of racial-economic divisions. The narrator observes "[t]hey saw a dead man in a sitting position on a hummock, entirely surrounded by wild animals and snakes. Common danger made common friends. Nothing sought a conquest over the other" (*Their Eyes* 164). Hurston's natural disaster and economic marginalization of Hurston's fictional world, and New Orleans reality, had, for a time, relegated man and beast to equivalent status.

As it has been well documented, Hurston composed *Their Eyes Were Watching God* while still in Haiti. Her visits to the Caribbean certainly brought the author into contact with the startling aftermath of natural disasters that targeted that are of the globe. Devastation that followed the 1929 hurricane in the Bahamas likely affected the author and furnished horrific images of which the author's imagination could not fathom. However, Hurston aptly dramatizes the impact of this devastation and the economic-racial divisions that surface in its wake, in the passage in which Tea Cake is impressed into assisting the white men as they bury the bodies of the dead. Black bodies are heaped into common graves, while the remains of dead whites are allotted a more dignified burial in pine boxes. Even in death haves are separated from have-nots; and white is forcibly separated from black. Tea Cake observes woefully to a bystander that "[t]hey's mighty particular how dese dead folks goes tuh judgment…Look lak dey think God don't know nothin' 'bout de Jim Crow law" (*Their Eyes* 171). The macabre aftermath has brought about a reckoning for Tea Cake, as he glimpses the reality of the racial discrimination that has crept into an otherwise insular black existence.

However, as recent scholars argue, the force behind this hurricane lies in Janie's supernatural connection with African goddesses; and the storm is a manifestation of the full impact of her sublimated rage. Cartwright observes that Janie's celestial counterpart, Oya, directs the winds in an effort to clear away the obstacles that obscure ontological realities. Although her methods may be violent and destructive, Oya's aftermath brings restorative clarity to a community of blacks situated on the margins (Cartwright 756). In like fashion, Janie's command of Oya "erupts as a violent reminder to the folk that their passive faith in Euro-Americans, or Christianity, to determine their fate is misguided. The events leading up to the hurricane vividly illustrate the need for self-determination in the collective black consciousness" (Lamothe 166). By calling upon a divine matrilinear heritage steeped in Afrocentric tradition, Janie's performance as conjurer-sorceress discloses the depth of racial marginalization that the whites attempted to bury. Hurston's fictional hurricane and its aftermath provides an allegorical retelling of slaves' traumatic arrival in the New World and the ensuing creation of new Creole connections.

As displaced survivors fumble for new beginnings and set out to recuperate lost stability in familiar surroundings, Hurston's narrative invokes the 'new beginnings' and spirit of forward-moving progress that followed for blacks after centuries of the spiritual marooning and geographic displacement that accompanied slavery. Janie's ancestral command of the elements reveals the historic ties that unite the Circum-Caribbean collective memory to the coastal south. Cartwright observes "[m]oving off the African coast in trade winds that carried Africans to the Americas, Oya's hurricanes work the most dramatic and traumatic links between Africa, the Caribbean, and the coastal South" (Cartwright 746). Hurston created in Eatonville—and consequently in her fictional Starkville—a central and charged locus, or vortex that was the heart of the Circum-Caribbean web of connectivity: a New World Creole origin of sorts that was rich with new cultural forms, and ripe for the sharing of memories that connected to ancient points of origin. Cartwright adds that "[Hurston's] Florida was a fluid, maroon state where new ritual families shared old tales to refamiliarize new ground" (758).

The storm's aftermath produces similar new beginnings and clarity for Janie with regard to her subjective relationships to the men in her life. Her blind dependence on husbands and the eternal quest for idyllic love had ended: and the stark reality bears upon her that strength and autonomy are found within, and cultivated in the protective comfort of a community fortified by common experience. Teacake's death brings the trauma that removes Janie from the idyllic life she knew in the Everglades and sends her back to her adopted origins in Starkville to commence new beginnings with a fresh wisdom. At Pheoby's gate she finds the communion of women she sought, and finds comfort in that bond. She ends her tale with a familiar, but poignant platitude: "It's a known fact, Pheoby, you got tuh go there to know there. Yo' papa and yo' mama and nobody else can't tell yuh and show yuh. Two things everybody's got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves" (192).

Zora Neale Hurston had a lifelong affection for telling a tale: whether it was to tell the lived experience of the Eatonville folk; or the exploits of the hoodoo priestess in New Orleans; or still, to tell the life and loves of a single woman whose spiritual groundings lay in a community of women. Whatever means she chose to convey the beauty and spirit of the Africana communities she loved, she consistently located them in the marvelous: a metaphoric zone in which multiple diasporas converged through collective memory, and the magic that was present wherever a 'folk' community of women convened. Hurston's emphasis on matrilinear traditions, and the prominence of the female conjurer has been lauded and interpreted in multiple ways by scholars and admirers of her work. However it is important to note that *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston constructs the groundwork for a genre of autoethnography that assertively incorporates the magical in folklore, and engages a process of calling upon ancestors to inform and enrich ethnography. By applying these strategies, Hurston emphasized the common cultural artifacts that united women not by race, class, or region, but by historical memory and experience. In recent years, Caribbean authors Erna Brodber and Nalo Hopkinson appropriate Hurston's model, and carry her examples of narrative into new and uncharted territories of Speculative and Magical Realist fiction. Hurston's model of transforming her protagonist into the magically-endowed conjurer of her own tale is carried out by a new generation of Caribbean women who recognize a common 'foremother' in Hurston, and continue to broaden the author's diasporic universe. Wendy

Dutton observes that Hurston “established a tradition of black women writers at the same time that she illuminated the tradition of black women in conjure. She eulogized priestesses like Marie Leveau as if they were role models. And she also produced a portrait of herself, a woman on her own moving amid magic with ease” (Dutton 148).

CHAPTER THREE

"AH WHO SEY SAMMY DEAD": ERNA BRODBER AND A CIRCUM-CARIBBEAN ANCESTRAL TEXT

"This be the kid?"
"This is the horse. Will you ride?"
"Will she do?'
"Best I've seen. Will you ride?
"Let's see if she will" (Brodber 17)

The preceding dialogue is an exchange between two female spirits. One voice belongs to Sue Ann Grant King, a civil rights activist from St. Mary Parish, Louisiana, who supported Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" Movement. The second voice belongs to Louise, a Jamaican woman King met while in Chicago and with whom she formed an abiding friendship. The two spirits appoint Ella Townsend, the protagonist of Erna Brodber's novel, *Louisiana*, to be their channel, or 'horse' through which they communicate their shared history. The central theme of Erna Brodber's novel, *Louisiana* invokes the Vodou/Obeah concepts of spirit communication and possession; the latter being the process in which the lwa/orisha "Papa Guedé " takes possession, or 'mounts' the practitioner, or 'horse' to speak through him and to convey the forbidden sentiments of the postcolonial subject. While Guedé 's performance enables the subject to angrily denounce his imperialist tormenters, the female spirits of Brodber's novel have chosen this mode of communication to circumvent patriarchal modes of recording history and to convey an edifying message. After a lifelong commitment to activism and to strengthening the ties that bind the diasporas of the Caribbean to the U.S., King and her companion wish to communicate a narrative history that has been omitted from historical texts. The spirit contact and possession that forms the central basis of *Louisiana* dramatizes how women's narratives—particularly those of postcolonial, Africana women—have been sublimated and often crushed beneath the weight of western modes of recording history. Brodber's novel not only critiques this tradition; but also speculates on the hidden narratives and relationships that exist among Africana women of the hemispheric South. She does so by invoking alternative forms of receiving knowledge that inhere in the religious and folk traditions of the Caribbean and coastal South to imagine what hidden histories those narratives might yield.

When Zora Neale Hurston began her ethnographic research, she did so with an unwavering conviction concerning the intricate cultural and historical connections among African Americans of the U.S. coastal region and Afro-Caribbeans of Haiti and Jamaica. Her project was to plumb these connections and underscore the common cultural threads for her readers, and, arguably, for her own satisfaction. Hurston recognized her own personal and cultural ties to the 'folk' she was researching. In truth, her own connections to the inhabitants of Eatonville were so intimate that she could not scrutinize the customs and practices of her Eatonville kinships until she was physically removed from them. In an observation that has been frequently repeated by scholars, Hurston observes that "I had known about the capers Brer Rabbit was apt to cut and what the Squinch Owl says from the house top. But it was fitting me like a tight chemise. I couldn't see it for wearing it. It was only when I was off in college, away from my native surroundings that I could see myself like somebody else and stand off and look at my garment. Then I had to have the spy-glass of Anthropology to look through at that" (*Mules and Men* 1). Hurston's project to collect Eatonville folklore and to share it with her readers threw the author's own subjectivity into sharp relief. For the first time, Hurston was forced to look at herself as much a subject of ethnographic inquiry as were the residents of Eatonville.

Hurston's geographic distancing from the subject communities of Eatonville and the Caribbean failed to eradicate the sentimental and affectionate ties the author maintained toward them; however, her intellectual distancing as an ethnographer both forced her to reconcile these sentiments with scientific objectivity. Hurston's propensity to place herself as a subject within the communities she targeted for study earned her the criticism of those who envisioned a more rigorous and scientifically 'pure' approach to ethnography, while others lauded her strategy to immerse herself fully within subject culture—as in her multiple initiations into New Orleans hoodoo—and her efforts to earn the trust of her Eatonville interlocutors. Hurston's strategies benefited her project in ways that fully engaged the prescribed participant-observer role of the social scientist, while reflecting her full engagement and her sensitivities toward the diasporic cultures she investigated. Still, Hurston's legacy has its detractors. As observed in an earlier chapter of this document, even modern critics who favor Hurston's strategy remark that such texts as *Mules and Men* and *Tell My Horse* are difficult to place generically because of the alternating linguistic registers, and the inconsistent form. Others argue that the inconsistent form and style of each these texts reflect the multiple alliances with which the author was forced to grapple. The ever-present control of a white patron, and the demands of placating white publishers and reading audience, conflicted with Hurston's intended project. Further, her return South after a few years of college in the North had made her an outsider to the communities with which she felt such a deep kinship. She discovered she had to recalibrate her approach in order to earn the trust of her interlocutors while assuming the role of the academic while in seclusion over her typewriter.

Graciela Hernández observes Hurston's predicament, yet avers that although Hurston's strategy may have undermined her scientific authority, it nonetheless created the means to expose the many forces that complicated her project. She remarks that "Hurston introduces an authorial presence into her work, eschewing the assumption that the ethnographer stands outside the social relations of the field and subsequent representations of fieldwork…" However, Hernandez observes Hurston's conundrum to appease the powers that controlled her work and to satisfy her own objectives. She allows that "the use of the subjective destabilizes Hurston's ethnographic authority, yet it also provides a vantage point from which to view her shifting allegiances" (Hernández 151). Hurston's unique predicament as the first African American female anthropologist of record may well have gained her more profound insight and empathy toward her ethnographic subjects, and her closeness to the cultures she studied certainly deepened her conviction to imagine their subject positions with heightened sensitivity. This insight enabled Hurston to expand her ethnographic project into her fiction—and in fact transformed her fiction into an extension of ethnography. The result of this strategy appears to be the so-called 'hybrid' text that combines the creative and the scientific, and the factual with the intimately personal that vexes and confounds many critics past and present.

However, despite the controversy Hurston's hybrid model has caused, it has proved to be a desirable one for many Africana authors. Though Hurston's impact on African American female authors has been extensively documented and continues to thrive in the United States, Jamaican-born author Erna Brodber's novel, *Louisiana* demonstrates the pervasiveness of Hurston's example. The example that Hurston set forth in which the narrative of the fiction writer and the objectivity of the scientist intertwine has made a discernible impact on Afro-Caribbean authors who reconsider the strategies of creating ethnography through ulterior, non-conventional—and often controversial—means. Erna Brodber explains that her third novel, *Louisiana*, is a dramatization of her philosophy that there exists a need to emphasize the interconnectedness among African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans, because, "black initiative is weakened by the misunderstanding between Caribbean and U.S. blacks and …and Africans." According to Shirley Toland Dix, Brodber intended for this novel to be a vehicle for her "intellectual and unabashedly activist agenda of rediscovering, reimagining, and reestablishing lost community" (qtd. in Toland-Dix 203). Brodber's observations resonate with Hurston's convictions concerning the intercultural ties shared among the diasporas of the Caribbean and Coastal South.

Shirley Toland-Dix observes that Brodber, like Hurston before her, found fiction to be a fertile ground of ethnographic exploration. Brodber, who is primarily a social scientist, acknowledges the troubled ground that the scientist treads when negotiating matters of autochthonous spirituality and syncretic belief systems. Brodber suggests that the cultural and historical relationships that connect Africana people has as much of its basis a tie to the subjugated religious epistemologies evidenced in the Caribbean and parts of the New World. In terms that resonate with Hurston's experience in the field, Brodber describes how she considers the fictional text to be far more flexible and fertile venue in which to explore these ties to syncretic expressions of spirituality. She asserts that she “initially began writing fiction because it expanded her ability to write about alternative Afro-Caribbean epistemologies and healing practices, material routinely dismissed by the Western academy” (Toland-Dix 191). While acutely aware of the importance of ‘hard facts’ and incontrovertible evidence in the creation of a strictly scientific ethnography, Brodber argues that fiction enables the author to expand freely upon cultural beliefs and folk traditions among Caribbean cultures that contribute to shaping individual subjectivities within ethnography. Within the fictional context, Brodber finds freedom to explore how folklore and syncretic belief systems have historically served as tools through which the social scientist can uncover the lived experience, and in fact—the marvelous real—of her subjects.

In “Beyond the Boundary: Magical Realism in the Jamaican Frame of Reference,” Brodber refers to the myth of the “Flying African,” as an illustrative example of how folk belief revealed the lived experience of Africana slaves. Slaves, she argues, engaged folklore and their imaginations as a psychological means to escape the misery of their brutal realities. The African slave, whose day-to-day existence was marked by toil and misery and the constant threat of punishment, imagined that by digesting salt, he or she would be delivered back to the African continent and to freedom. In this way the slave’s experience in the tactile world of the ‘here and now’ was partly ameliorated through a self-preserving imaginary in which a projected ‘then’ of freedom could be visualized. Brodber avers that the self-protective strategy of creating, and for a time, existing within the imagination was for the African slave, a type of ‘mind-over-matter’ strategy in which two distinct and complementary chronotopes intersected and coexisted: one in which the ‘here and now’ is acknowledged and suffered through; and the chronotope of the ‘then’ or ‘other’ that edifies the self and encourages the struggle toward freedom. By aptly likening the institution of slavery to prison, she explains:

> ‘Here’ and ‘there,’ the ‘prison’ and the ‘other’ would reasonably become for the enslaved an important dichotomy in thinking of the self, so would the empowering of the self to get from ‘here’ to the ‘there,’ from the ‘prison’ to the ‘other.’ With no space in which to plan, to write, to paint, to care, one fell back on imagination of a canvas, book, whatever, in the head. To fly like a bird is a desire found anywhere there are prisons and problems. The enslaved African had four hundred years’ need to engage this simile and the dichotomy associated with it (“Beyond a Boundary” 19-20).

Though the dichotomous mode of understanding the self in the ‘here and now’ as well as the ‘then,’ or ‘other’ of the future serves readily as a means of coping for the African slave, this synchronous configuration of time also resonates with Vodou and Obeah practices of possession and other modes of ritual behaviors as means of negotiating the ‘real’. In spirit possession, the ancestral spirit is animated in the same moment as the worshiper summons her, and in this way, the past, as Stuart Hall might explain, is “always already” very much a part of the present reality. This inclusive strategy of configuring intersecting chronotopes mirrors Brodber’s philosophy of representing postcolonial subjectivity; and arguably invites a more inclusive notion of ‘diaspora’ as explained by Hall. As no one tense or place is exclusively defined in terms of narrow and imaginary boundaries, no notion of diaspora should assume definitive boundaries: the Caribbean epistemological concept of time and identity is also shared by the African American diaspora of the U.S. Coastal South. Hall explains that ‘diaspora,’ then, is definable as “a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall 235). As in the practice of spirit possession such formulations of time demonstrate that the practitioners of these systems engage in a kind of perpetual 'againness,' in which the past is forever present in the consciousness, and the believer consistently aware of—and shaped by—his or her own cultural history. Further, these configurations of time mirror the ways of looking at 'diasporic' subjectivity as inclusive, and not bounded by geographic space or time.

Brodber, like Hurston, draws from the magical, or marvelous aspects of these 'folk' beliefs and integrates them into her fiction to examine the potentialities of creating ethnography that complements western imperialist histories. In the same way that the lwa's horse creates a protective filter of ambiguity to express his anger at oppressors, the magical realist writer explores these subjects with impunity, protected by the countenance of the fictional context. This strategy, at least for Brodber, offers ways to explore the lives of those who can no longer speak for themselves. Although it breeches the laws of 'hard science,' this type of creative ethnography is situated within a fictional context and therefore enables the writer to consider the subjectivity of ancestors by imagining their responses as being transmitted across the imaginary boundary that separates the living from the dead. By transgressing this initial, cosmic boundary, Brodber's strategy imagines the unspoken narrative 'text' of ancestors that exposes and addresses the commonalities among the African diasporas. Rather than to rest on this ethnographic strategy's imaginative potentialities, Brodber regards her task as a duty to imagine the personal responses to historical events that affect all members. Brodber asserts that creative authors "have been in the forefront in bringing past events and their ancestors' response to the to public attention;" and the author "uses his imagination to produce an account of the feelings of the people" (201). The magical realist elements in Brodber's *Louisiana* include spirit contact and possession and otherworldly coincidences that enable the author to imagine ancestral responses and to intuit the predicaments and conflicts they faced. By incorporating modes of 'discredited knowledge' Brodber valorizes these nontraditional modes as means to explore the kinship histories and unifying heritage of African American and Afro-Caribbean folk cultures by portraying the 'hegemony of the spirit' that protagonist Ella Townsend achieves.

Erna Brodber has been the least explicitly vocal concerning the direct impact that Zora Neale Hurston has made on her own creative production. However, her novel, *Louisiana*, illustrates Brodber's explicit desire to locate the common historical and cultural connections among African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans, which she clearly shared with Hurston. Shirley Toland-Dix points out that the novel is divided into six sections, each of which draws its title from an African American or Jamaican folk song, parable, or traditional custom. By dividing the sections of the novel and titling them in this way, Brodber reinforces the cultural links among the Afro-Caribbean diaspora that converges in the tiny localized community of St. Mary Parish. These folktales and customs that helm each division are animated through the performances of the diasporic individuals who populated the novel. A recurring theme throughout *Louisiana* is the scenario in which the Caribbean and African American folk who surround Ella Townsend, gather for sessions of singing and storytelling: ritualized performances that contribute to Ella's spiritual evolution. Toland-Dix adds that "Within the text, intercultural communication is achieved through shared music, shared dances, shared trickster tales, shared death rituals, and so on. Ella/Louisiana has a practice in New

Orleans; her clients are West Indian sailors and African Americans. Helping her clients recover memories of connection is a vital component of her mission as a 'soothsayer' who heals amnesia" (Toland-Dix 201).

Though Brodber has not noted her sentiments toward Hurston's contributions, her novel *Louisiana* suggests homage to Hurston. *Louisiana* begins in 1936 and maps an eighteen-year period in the life of Ella Townsend, a Jamaican-born anthropology student and writer from New York City who arrives in St. Mary Parish, Louisiana. Her trip has been funded by a grant from the Works' Progress Administration to conduct research on the "blacks of Southwest Louisiana." She is assigned to interview Sue Ann Grant King, or "Mammy," a retired activist about whom Ella appears to know very little. Equipped with a "tape recording machine" Ella manages to secure a single live interview with King before the elderly woman dies. Shortly thereafter, Ella undergoes an otherworldly and mystical happening, in which the spirit of the elderly woman takes her over. Afterward, she discovers the appearance of phantom messages from Mammy and her companion Louise, or "Lowly," that surface incrementally each time Ella returns to her tape-recorder. The messages are initially cryptic and disjointed, but Ella pieces them together in order to compile the biography she is there to collect. However, as Ella evolves in her relationship with the spirits—or the "Venerable Sisters," as she calls them—she becomes less concerned about producing an academic report as her talents for second sight increase and intensify. Ella experiences frequent blackouts and trance-like episodes in which fragments of her own memory return to her. Gradually she becomes a conjurer, or seer, for the African American and Afro-Caribbean residents of St. Mary Parish, Louisiana, who come to her for her wisdom and insight. As these events accumulate, Ella locates the connections among these narratives, and to her own. At the novel's conclusion, she becomes fully and intimately absorbed into the circular continuum formed by "Mammy" (Anna) and "Lowly" (Louisa), whom she refers to as "two halves of an orb" (62). Ultimately Ella rechristens herself "Louisiana" as a signifier of her positioning as the third element in the spiritual continuum, and the very cornerstone that connects St. Mary Parish Louisiana to St. Mary Parish, Jamaica. She concludes that she in fact was brought there, as if by divine preordination, to "give people their history."

Brodber appropriates the groundwork lain by Hurston and extemporizes it to the fullest, with the advent and instrumentality of a magical realist strategy. As though testifying to Hurston's valuable contributions and the persistence of her legacy, Brodber positions her protagonist as a fictional parallel to Hurston—even to the extent of recasting Hurston's disappearance from public view to reconsider the full impact of her life and work. The novel opens to reveal that the tape of Ella's experience has evidently been lost. The only remaining record of Ella's life and research in Louisiana is forgotten until a solitary manuscript appears on the desk of one E.R. Anderson of the Black World Press, a black feminist publishing house located in Miami, Florida. According to Anderson, the manuscript arrived at the headquarters of this publishing house four years prior in 1974, with no identifier other than a postmark from Chicago. Even the deliverer of the manuscript is a mystery. The speaker briefly surmises that it may have been Ella's husband, Reuben. However he was rumored to have returned to the Congo and may have perished during the Kasavubu/Lumumba tribal conflicts some years prior.

Adding to the mysterious circumstances surrounding the manuscript is the timing in which it appeared. The speaker remarks with tempered enthusiasm that the package had arrived at a time in which the publishing house was actively scouting for new works by up-and-coming black women authors. The speaker's observation suggests that whoever planned the manuscript's arrival had anticipated that need. Moreover, Anderson observes that the text contained in the package is "opportune" for more than the timeliness of its appearance. "The text argues persuasively that Ella came under the influence of psychic forces" the speaker observes. "Today the intellectual world understands that there are more ways of knowing than are accessible to the five senses; in 1936 when Ella Townsend received her assignment it was not so. The world is ready. We are" (4). For those familiar with Hurston's life and work, these passages provoke a distinct sense of déjà vu.

The speaker's comment that the world had finally ripened to receive a manuscript of this type harkens to Hurston's premature and all-but-total disappearance from the literary scene by the 1940s. Hurston, and her innovative approaches to ethnography, together with her unflagging self-possession were clearly at odds with the comparatively conservative era in which she was most productive. However, the discovery of Ella Townsend's manuscript resonates with Alice Walker's 1970 (re)discovery of Hurston's collective work, even recalling the timeliness Walker reported at her remarkable find. Walker's enthusiasm and affection for Hurston and her work did not overshadow her lament that the literary record she encountered had for so long disappeared: a tragic commentary on one of African American literature's greatest contributors. A foremother had veritably slipped through the fissures of collective memory and was lost to posterity. In retrospect, Hurston's disappearance might be viewed as merely a stage of incubation, in which the world awaited Walker's serendipitous discovery that reinitiated Hurston into the nation’s consciousness and particularly to the African American literary continuum. The fictional Ella seems to have met the same fate.

Brodber’s fictitious editor discovers Ella Townsend’s manuscript with as much mingled awe and aplomb as Walker reported at her rediscovery of Hurston’s literary oeuvre. In an instant in which a ‘magical’ happenstance intervenes on the mundane, Alice Walker had been casually researching African American folklore when she happened upon a collection of work that would contribute most mightily to the emerging Black Women’s Renaissance. The editor’s remarkable discovery of Ella’s manuscript also coincides with the burgeoning movement, in which black women, many of whom identified Hurston as a literary foremother, began to reevaluate their folk heritage, and to engage in their fiction the very the tropes that heritage offered. As Hurston had done in the 1930s, these writers prioritized themes that involved matrilineage, folk magic, and modes of intuition and understanding that was defined, in the words of Toni Morrison, as ‘discredited knowledge’ (Toland-Dix 201). The editor of Ella’s manuscript testifies to the growing trend among black female novelists to discover these alternate strategies that represent the female Africana self and her relationship to alternate forms of self- and communal knowledge. Anderson remarks that feminist publishers eagerly anticipate literature that allows audiences to reimagine past women’s lives by uncovering the silenced voices of ancestors in ever-changing and innovative ways: among them, the potentialities that would emerge from spirit communication.

However, this speaker’s commentary speculates on the full scope of Hurston’s influence as dramatized by Ella’s legacy: that the manuscript in her hands addresses an ever-widening sphere of Afro-Caribbean women bound by common experience and memory. The speaker concludes her commentary by reporting that since no one has come forth to claim the manuscript, or the royalties it might earn, the publisher will move forward with the publication of the book. All royalties will fund the "Ella Townsend Foundation for the study of commonalities in African America and the African Caribbean in the period between the World Wars." As though to comment on Hurston's lasting reputation for bringing together a hemispheric community of women, Ella's legacy speaks to that same collective spirit, which appears to have affected Anderson. The speaker closes by entreating the audience to contribute and saying simply, "Join us" (5).

Brodber's novel is not strictly a hagiographical account of Hurston's contributions. Brodber extrapolates from Hurston's example the difficulties of an Africana female scientist/writer sent into unfamiliar terrain to conduct ethnographic research. Ella's obvious trepidation and discomfiture at traveling into the South to engage with a community virtually unknown to her harkens to Hurston's initial perilous travels into South Florida and the West Indies. One would need only a passing familiarity with Hurston's career as an ethnographer to recognize the marked similarity between the circumstances of Ella Townsend, and the intrepid young anthropologist of the Harlem Renaissance. However, in reimagining Hurston's experience in the field, Brodber appears to be focused primarily on the process of her protagonist's spiritual evolution and the emerging self that results from an engagement with cross-cultural stimuli. Brodber constructs Ella's first encounter with the elderly Mammy King as a retelling of Hurston's initial venture into the field of research and many of the complications she faced. Hurston's tense relationship with patron Mrs. R. Osgood Mason, whose professed interest in anthropology prompted her to send Hurston to the South to conduct research, resurfaces in Ella's narrative. Ella's white professors at Columbia have chosen her for this task because they believe that because Ella is black, she will make relatively easy inroads with Mammy King, whose reputation for her resistance to white interlocutors recalls the 'feather-bed resistance' that Hurston encountered on her initial return to Eatonville. Hurston biographer Valerie Boyd comments on similar circumstances in which Franz Boas, "concerned about [Hurston's] lack of modesty—she was 'too much impressed with her own accomplishments,'" Boas felt that Zora would have greater success in her effort to "penetrate through that affected demeanor" of the blacks of Eatonville, because "she was one of them" (Boyd 143). Conversely, Hurston's fictional counterpart bears none of the overconfidence of her predecessor. Ella disregards the obvious racist and sexist underpinnings of her white professors' request, and accepts the task with uncomfortable stoicism. To facilitate her research, Ella has been equipped with a tape recording device, "the first of its kind" which had been donated to her project "as much for use as for testing" (Smith 89). However, the machine and her subject's recalcitrance present the first of Ella's trials. Ella's nervous fumbling with the tape recorder and her overarching attempts to comport herself as a serious academic dissolve into an embarrassing fiasco. Ella's experience resembles Hurston's initial venture to Eatonville as a student fresh from Barnard College. Hurston reflects in her autobiography that hindsight brought clarity, in which she admitted "I did not have the right approach." With characteristic self-awareness, Hurston reflects on her earliest memories of a less than suave opening line, "I went about asking in carefully accented Barnardese, 'Pardon me, but do you know any folk tales or folk songs?'" (*Dust Tracks on a Road* 687).

Ella struggles to retain her composure, and gently prods the elderly woman with scripted questions. Meanwhile Mammy is intractable, hedging Ella's questions and countering with disconcerting questions of her own. While engrossed in a game of Coon-can, the elderly woman observes the persistent trace of Ella's Jamaican accent surfacing through her stilted academic language. The old woman asks, "Where do you come from child?" Before Ella can respond, Mammy quips, "You really do talk in two different ways. Can't figure it" (19). Mammy recognizes Ella's linguistic connections to the Caribbean, which Ella tries to disguise beneath the poised clinical language of the scientist. Unlike the intrepid Hurston, who ventured alone into the mosquito-infested back swamps of Florida in a recently purchased 1927 Oakland Coupe she playfully dubbed "Sassy Susie", Ella begins her research with considerable trepidation and naïveté, and with an almost compulsive devotion to creating the type of dry, factual ethnographic document she believes her professors expect (Boyd 143). In Ella's first brief interview with the elderly King, Mammy calls her 'child' because she is still unaware of what she has yet to learn. Mammy gently reprimands the younger woman for focusing too intently on the text she will write for her white professors, and suggests that her myopic focus leaves her blind to the text she will discover simply by relaxing her rigid protocol long enough to listen to Mammy. "Little bread and butter and 'them' is all you can think about?" Mammy questions accusingly (22).

Ella's shifting register recalls Hurston's narrative style in which anecdote alternated with scientific reportage. However, Ella's interview with Mammy King disintegrates because Ella does not recognize her connection to the culture she is assigned to study. Having all but completely abjured her Jamaican heritage, Ella dodges Mammy's questions about her parents. When Mammy presses her on her background, she responds tersely "Mammy this is going to sound like I'm trying to shut you up but it's the truth. I left Jamaica when I was an infant. My parents had already migrated. They came back for me. They don't say much about the place they came from" (19). Mammy suspends her questions following Ella's final dismissal, but the subsequent uneasy silence leaves Ella and her interlocutor at a stalemate.

In these passages, Brodber's rescripting of Hurston's experience in the field goes a step further to interrogate the western institutions that had shaped her subjectivity—and inhibited her approach to ethnography. Unlike Hurston, Ella has been bitterly alienated from her parents, and retains only the faintest, buried memories of her childhood, parents, and the grandmother, whom she dearly loved. Since her time in the States, Ella's geographic and emotional distancing has effectively aided her alienation from her heritage and hastened her 'recolonization' by the racial and class ideology of the western academy. Her adherence to her formal western education has immunized Ella against the intuitive knowledge she would otherwise gain if she were to relax and identify with her heritage. However, Ella's western upbringing has distanced her temporally as well as geographically. The western world has reinforced notions of linear time, in which a definitive past is left behind, unseen, phantasmal, and unattended. It does not yet occur to the protagonist that her past is very much animated in the present, and will be a significant influence on her future. For now, the only 'real' Ella feels she must contend with is the tangible world of the 'now,' and the future exists only in terms of the eventual scientific document she is expected to produce. Though Mammy coyly attempts to point this out to her, her realization will come in time, through the tape recorder.

After her interview with Mammy King, Ella returns to her rented cottage and attempts to play back the recording. She is dismayed to find that there is nothing there but silence, save for the sound of her own voice repeating a refrain from a Jamaican children's nursery song, "Ah who sey Sammy dead." Ella's dramatic transformation commences when Mammy dies, and Ella and her companion, Reuben, attend the funeral. It is there that Ella becomes acquainted with Mammy's legacy, and the evident life-long centrality she enjoyed in the community. Mourners come in caravans composed of vehicles that ranged from cars, vans, trucks and buses, and the individuals who arrived in them represented a number of organizations: The Odd-Fellows Lodge, the Independent and Protective Order of Tabernacle, Knights and Ladies of Honour in America—this was reportedly Mammy's lodge—and the Knights of Pythius, among others. Though Ella is not yet fully aware of the significance Mammy held to these people, each of these organizations impressed upon Ella that Mammy was indeed a revered elder and certainly worthy of research, as her affiliations denoted a lasting interest in the survival and welfare of the community.

Ella's momentary fascination with Mammy's impressive legacy is abruptly halted when, as the funeral is underway, Ella is taken over by the spirit of Mammy. The possession strikes like a sudden paroxysm that causes Ella to flail violently and collapse. Though she is terrified at first, she reflects on the occurrence as having somehow been a natural, even preordained event. Ella reflects on the episode, saying "Reuben says I kicked, fought, foamed, stared, had to be taken from the church and given water. Reuben wasn't teasing and he doesn't lie." She concludes her ruminations rather distractedly, musing that "I know nothing of that" (35). Though Ella struggles initially to understand the significance of these events, Reuben is the first to take a definitive note of what is happening to Ella. She recalls that “His walk through the village had handed him a hypothesis: Mammy had passed, leaving her soul with me” (37-8).

Ella discovers that when Mammy’s spirit took over, she awoke to find that the funeral attendees formed a circle around her. Reuben later describes the event of her possession to Ella, telling her that while she “writhed and shouted, they formed a circle around you and did a kind of shoe patter accompanied by deep grunts. It was monotonous; the beat didn’t change. It was only after that that we were able to lift you” (45-6). Ella is positioned the center of this activity in which multiple syncretic religious strains coalesce around her. The Ring Shout, the “oldest African American performance tradition surviving on the North American continent,” locates its origins in the New World as part of the ritualized religious performances of slaves arriving in the earliest years of the slave trade but remains at least one performance tradition that historians assert can be traced to distinct African origins (Rosenbaum 1). Zora Neale Hurston observed the permutations of the ‘shout’ in the various versions of the Sanctified and Pentecostal churches of coastal Florida. According to Hurston, the Ring Shout was “nothing more than a continuation of the African ‘Possession’ by the gods…and is still prevalent in most Negro protestant churches and is universal in Sanctified Churches” (“The Sanctified Church” 902). It is also found in the Jamaican Pentecostal Shouter tradition that migrated into parts of Louisiana and coastal Georgia. As Hurston’s observation implies, the practice conflates with the Vodou tradition in which worshipers form a circle around the possessed adherent as Guedé made his descent.

The typicality of the ring-like formation that is common to multiple strains of African diasporic traditions re-instantiates the connectivity Ella will come to represent for this tiny, localized community. In these passages from Louisiana, Ella is ritually drawn into her community through the enactment of dynamic performance. Through the process of this performed ritual, Ella is invited into a catalogue of historico-cultural memory for which she will be the vessel. Roger Abrahams explains:

> When an experience can be designated as typical, then the doings of the individual and the community become shared, not only with regard to what actually happens under those circumstances, but also how one feels about the happenings. Simply stated, it is not just experiences that are shared but the sentiments arising from them as well: the doings and the feelings reinforce each other. Moreover, this system of typicality of event and sentiment provides us with a linkage between past and future, for the very recognition of typicality rests on others having gone through that experience (or something like it) before. (Abrahams 60).

By encircling Ella, the adepts enfold her symbolically to the multiple diasporic strains that the Shout represents, and reinforce this new union between individual and community through the steady and monotonous ‘grunts’ and ‘patters’ that create a tantric polyrhythm calling Ella into the fold and identifying her as chosen. This ritual, as Ella reflects later, was her induction into an interconnected community in which New World syncretic faith of the Caribbean conflates with that of the Coastal South and extends these connections to continental Africa. By situating Ella physically in the center of the ring formed by these conflating cultural practices, Mammy’s ‘possession’ of Ella frees her from the oppressive institutionalized western forces that would seek to shape her research there. Commenting on Brodber’s novel *Myal*, whose protagonist is also called “Ella,” Melvin Rahming observes “the mental, emotional and psychological problems experienced by the Ella’s of the Caribbean are linked explicitly to the systemic operations of colonial formal education—its linguistic, aesthetic and ideological structures—as it daily informs the people's consciousness and induces their complicity in their own spiritual deracination" (Rahming 3). Having been 'deracinated' by her own eschewal of her family, and recolonized by an overarching conviction to her western scholarship, Ella comes to the fold 'weighted down' by the zombifying effects of her western education. However her possession experience commences the emergence of a new creolized identity, freed from these restraints and confident in her role as the conjurer/seer. In this new role, Ella is awakened to sympathetic memories of Mammy's and Lowly's lives.

Ella's placement at the center of the Ring Shout mimics the central positioning that Mammy represented in the small community of St. Mary Parish. Though she did not recognize it at once, Mammy's ability to draw mourners from vast and varied distances, and her multiple memberships in various societies known for their dalliances in mysticism, foreshadow Ella's ascendance as her successor. Brodber dramatizes Ella's experience with 'possession' and the subsequent events that take place to metaphorize Hurston's full immersion into the folk and religious cultures of the Caribbean and New Orleans. Ella enters into this initiation with reluctant acceptance, and remarks "I had been officially entered. I was going to be, if I was not already, a vessel, a horse, somebody's talking drum" (46). While Hurston willingly subjected herself to indoctrination by over six hoodoo doctors, and made a considerable effort to immerse herself into the culture of Florida turpentine camps and 'jook' culture, Ella's immersion is at once reluctant. Her trepidation, however, sets up the various and remarkable stages of repatriation to her heritage which begins in earnest when she experiences a fuller engagement with the surrounding folk and their traditions.

Ella momentarily dismisses the supernatural occurrences and returns in earnest to her academic work; but Mammy will not be ignored. As in the scene in which Ella is positioned at the center of the Ring Shout, Brodber draws from New Orleans cultural history and Jamaican folklore to situate Ella physically in the center of diasporic cultural confluences. Ella and Reuben, an unmarried couple, who are sharing a cottage are surprised one night when city officials arrive at their door claiming that Reuben, an Afro-European, is there illegally. In order for them to stay in St. Mary Parish, the two must marry. This event is the second orchestrated by Mammy and Lowly, who strategically—and significantly—maneuver Ella and Reuben into place in the center of the French Quarter, where they will reside at a boarding house run by a woman called "Madam Marie." Marie is clearly modeled after the legendary Marie Leveau who was believed to have run a number of boarding houses/brothels from her home in the French Quarter (Long xxxi). Though the Madam Marie of Brodber's Louisiana bears no further literal similarity to the Voodoo queen of legend other than her name, Brodber positions Madam Marie as Ella's mentor—almost a surrogate mother for Ella; and her instrumental role in bringing Ella into the company of the folk of New Orleans harkens to Leveau's legacy as the veritable 'mother' of a succession of New Orleans voodoo queens.

Ella's indoctrination with the 'folk' of St. Mary Parish begins, tellingly, in the domestic space amid mundane domestic duties. One afternoon, Ella goes about her household chores in an subconscious 'nesting' strategy. She and her partner Reuben had discussed the possibility of becoming parents, but the mysterious occurrences that draw her further into the communion with Mammy and her companion distract her temporarily from that hope. When she dusts the recorder, suddenly the messages from Mammy and

Lowly stop. Shortly thereafter, during one of her nightly gatherings in which she hosted the sailors of the New Orleans port in her parlor, Madam Marie tells Ella an Anancy story that conveys a moral about Ella's predicament with the machine. Assuming the voice of a gregarious Jamaican storyteller, Madam explained that Anancy had a magic pot that would always produce food. His wife wondered how, in a 'time of drought' her husband seemed so well fed. At first she suspected he was visiting someone else's wife, so she decided to spy on him. She observed as he approached the magic pot and said, "Cook mek mi see," and food would appear suddenly in plentiful supply. Before very long, there was so much food that Anancy's wife could not store all of it. During her daily housekeeping, she decided to wash the pot. When she returned and issued the command, "the pot made no reply" (79). Ella concludes that when the dust returns to the machine, so will the phantom messages from Mammy and Lowly.

The confluence of Jamaican folktale and the New Orleans legacy of Marie Leveau catalyze further information about Mammy's past. Before much more time has elapsed, Ella receives a watershed of information concerning Mammy's background: a narrative emerges concerning her grandfather, Moses, who had been a slave; his owner, "Massa Sutton," and a mysterious figure called "the thinking man." Mammy's messages signal the emergence of a shared history of slavery, with Moses—an iconic, encompassing figure for whom the grandfather was named, at the center. Joseph Roach identifies charged geographic points at which culture intersects as 'vortices' in which a cultural past is reanimated through performance. Madame Marie's performance of the Anancy narrative reanimates Ella's Jamaican heritage at a charged site in which New World cultures coalesce and intersect. This dynamic intersection that unites the mundane interior world of Madame Marie’s parlor and the external world of spirit galvanizes Ella’s transformation (64). Though Mammy’s messages halt for another interim, Ella’s clairvoyance intensifies as a result of her deeper immersion into the Creolized folklife of Louisiana.

During another evening in Madam Marie’s parlor, Ella begins to note the familiar, intersecting strains expressed in the folk songs performed by Madam Marie’s guests. Ella listens out of bemused curiosity to their songs about “John Crow,” and as the African Americans and West Indians harmonize one tune after another, they too recognize the commonalities among them. Someone begins to sing “Just before the Battle, Mother,” at which point the crowd begins to recall bittersweet memories of how he first encountered that song. Ella initially marvels at the eerie coincidences the songs uncover: a sad fondness for the same song is shared by all the sailors and it occurs to Ella that the same song had been the dirge played at both Mammy’s and Lowly’s funerals. Ella remarks candidly “I couldn’t get the shared experience of those two sets of negroes from two different parts of the world out of my head. I couldn’t get it out of my head that Lowly and Mammy had been buried to the strains of the same song” (86). This spark of clarity precipitates Ella’s insight into the memories of others, including Ben, the West Indian sailor who frequents Madam Marie’s parlor. The dirge recalls a painful memory for Ben, for whom Ella feels a sudden and remarkable kinship. She senses that the two of them share a kind of dual clairvoyance that is grounded on common memory. Ella remarks that “[Ben’s] memory was so deep and painful that he didn’t talk though he more than anyone else, I sensed, wanted to be rid of that memory….I would help him through that memory and he would help me find some memories, but I would have to move slowly.” As she imagines the potentialities located in this strange connection, Ella is interrupted, “Before I could think through a strategy for reaching Ben, I was pushed centre-stage. Unwillingly. Again” (87).

Ella’s attention is arrested when one reveler begins to sing “Ah who sey Sammy dead.” She slips into a trance in which she feels her head to grow large and her limbs grow limp. She slips to the floor while in her mind she glimpses images of her infancy in her native St. Mary, Jamaica. “I saw my Granny in her many layered garb” she begins. “I saw me. A baby no more than nine months, in her arms. I saw her putting that baby in its crib. I saw the baby rise, holding onto the crib rail. I saw my Granny reach for that baby. I saw her fall before her hands could connect” (88). When she was nine months old, Ella’s mother and father had left her with her maternal grandmother, who died while Ella was still an infant. Her grandmother’s death traumatized her, and since that time, she had buried the memory of her grandmother until the refrain of the Jamaican nursery song brought her back to her memory. She is brought back to a time when she passed from one relative’s care to another, and finally to Mass Bobby, a family friend and cosignatory for her Grandmother’s accounts. From there she was passed to aunts and uncles who “declared [her] a good baby.” As she recalls the host of people who cared for her in her mother’s absence, she uncovers the anger she felt toward her mother for having deserted her:

> That good quiet baby was now raining tears on her husband’s knees. Only now it was safe to know the loneliness and the despair, and to react. She sent money to take care of me; she sent parcels; she came when I was 18 months old. She dismissed those days: she never talked about them. It was my tears that cleaned those gravestones of years of accumulated muck and showed me that story. It angered me, angered me deeply, that she had not left the door open for me to say thanks to those people who had cared for me in those crucial years (92).

Ella's traumatic foray into the memories of her childhood marks her return to a metaphorical womb, where she will be reborn as a representative figure of diasporic connectivity. By reinforcing the physical positioning of Ella at the center of a charged, intercultural space among those with whom she has regained kinship, folk performance calls her back to the recollection of her early memories. Though it triggers a shocked and tearful response from Ella who huddles at her husband's knees, sobbing, she passes through this trauma toward becoming the stronger, emerging self: a veritable icon of community. It is worth of note that Ella's persistent remembrances of her relatives' observation of her as a 'good baby' resonates with the birth of Moses, in which the infant was deemed "a goodly child" (KJV, Exod. 2.2). By subtly aligning Ella with the prophet Moses, Brodber suggests a refashioning—or feminization—of traditionally male leadership roles. In this way, Brodber suggests that diasporic connectivity is grounded principally with the feminine, and with a maternal continuum as the keepers and preservers of cultural history. As Ella pieces together the elliptical memories that re-create her past, she restores the gaps and heals the fissures that were created by her own geographic distancing and diminishing cultural memory.

Ella's ephemeral, and fractured retrieval of her earliest memories mimic the manner in which the Venerable Sisters communicate their memories through the tape recorder. Scholars have observed that Brodber's narrative style has often confounded readers of this novel and prompted multiple passes over the text for further clarification. The author's stylistic choice, however, closely mirrors the elusive nature of memory. The opening section of the novel features the dialogue between Mammy and Lowly, who communicate in piecemeal utterances and fragmented messages. The fragmentariness of the spirits' dialogue reproduces the way western renditions of historical narrative would seek to define the condition of the feminine 'fractured' postcolonial subject. However, Ella's transformation and gradual absorption into the continuum of the ancestral spirits enables her to fill in the missing pieces of their narrative. As the narrative wholeness is restored, so too is the wholeness of the individual subjects of the narrative. In this way, it is incumbent upon Ella to contribute the meaning to Mammy's sparse details. In turn, Brodber invites the reader to contribute further meaning and fill the gaps created through the staggered transmission of Ella's memory.

Additionally, one observes that the circular structure of Brodber's narrative mimics the circular nature of Ella's evolution into conjurer/seer and the central figure that binds a community. Circular images recur throughout the novel, such as that of the Ring Shout at Mammy King's funeral, and reinforce the circular trajectory of Ella's spiritual transformation. Ella's trance is brought on as she sits amid a circle of singing storytellers. The reel-to-reel tape recorder that produces more fragmented messages from the Venerable Sisters suggests an ongoing circular movement of Ella's transformation as she is thrust back into her memories of childhood to be refashioned, or 'reborn' as a clairvoyant under the tutelage of Mammy and Lowly. Ella's mnemonic return to infancy is not an erasure of her real self, but a radical refashioning of that self from which she may move forward and be rechristened as conjurer, "Louisiana." Amid the supernatural and otherworldly happenings that surround Ella's transformation, it is a comparatively ordinary object, the tape recorder that prompts her forward to the next and final phase of her ascendance.

Eric D. Smith defines Brodber's introduction of the reel-to-reel recorder as an example of Brodber's propensity toward "Creative Anachronism." Smith observes that the tape recording machine that Ella uses was not fully developed and available for widespread use in the United States until 1945. Whether Brodber was aware of this fact or not, she nonetheless configures the emergent technology as the means by which Ella is able to reach into the past to retrieve messages from Mammy and Lowly. Therefore Ella's new-fangled instrument situates her in a dual chronotope: she is simultaneously engaged with the past while corporeally grounded in the present moment. The latent technology mirrors Ella's yet-to-be realized subjectivity, because it, like Ella, has yet to become—or perhaps prevented from becoming—fully realized. Smith points out that "Ella thus misappropriates the subject-transforming capabilities of the anachronistic device to shape new subjectivities from and for a chronotope that does not yet exist" (Smith 89). Smith argues that Brodber's 'creative anachronism' articulates the postcolonial subject's sense of fragmentation and yet-to-be realized subjectivity against the looming backdrop of imperialist renderings of linear history. Indeed, the ironic effect that the tape recording machine produces is that the voices of the past are summoned in a mode that recreates—and valorizes—'folk' tradition in a 'modern' ethnographic project. Ironically, through Ella's tape-recorder, technology recovers the oral mode of storytelling and restores reiterative performance as a vital component to creating a postcolonial ethnography. However, Ella eventuates to a stage in which the machine is no longer necessary to communicate with the Venerable Sisters: a move that reprioritizes 'discredited knowledge' as the preferred basis of the ethnographic text.

Ella's heightened awareness prompt her to explore her newly discovered gift as seer by exploring various forms of spiritual insight that encompass biblical motifs and elements of from eastern philosophical thought. Madam Marie encourages her to read the Bible and she commences doing so regularly. She identifies initially with the persecuted Witch of Endor; but then reasons that she is more rightly aligned with the prophets Elijah and his protégé Elisha. As though to dramatize the emergence of the female subject from the maligned and hysterical witch to an acceptance of a prophetic role on par with that of male prophets, Ella maps her thoughts in her journal and reflects without extensive comment just how she arrived at a loftier self-visualization. She is drawn to the passage in the Book of Matthew in which God proposes the construction of the Three Tabernacles (KJV, Matt. 17.1-21). Ella imagines herself as part of a trinity with Mammy and Lowly, which grants her greater understanding of her positioning as a kind of prophet. She remarks of the passage "It was meant for me. Earlier I had met the transfiguration—'Let us build three tabernacles'. Two dead people talking to a live one, just like Mammy and Lowly and me. And then now this Elijah/Elisha story, mirroring another aspect of my phenomenon" (100). Her reevaluation of her own positioning as a venerated seer arises from the spiritual communion of women that she shares with Mammy and Lowly.

In addition to her growing psychic awareness, Ella gestures toward a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness among multiple epistemologies. Twice she observes that she has been struck 'right between the eyes' with her revelations discovered in Scripture. Ella's observation creates a scenario in which the understanding she gleans from biblical Scripture has passed through her third eye, invoking notions of the "Third Eye" of the Hindu God, Shiva in an all-encompassing, global level of esoteric knowledge. Brodber casts Ella’s transformation in biblical terms that again recall the iconic figure of Moses, who represented the sympathetic histories of the Jewish and African diasporas. Ella refers to her emergence as “Louisiana” as her ‘getting over’ in a passage that resonates with the biblical ‘crossing over’ of the Hebrews into Canaan. Commenting on her wakening awareness of her purpose, she reports “At least I know from the horse’s mouth what St. Mary had been expecting of me. I know too from that same horse, that there is a name for that state in which your body is depressed into physical collapse and something else is activated, rather like an injection needle is pushed forward and the shell in which it resides, recedes. ‘Getting over.’ I prefer to call it hegemony of the spirit. I had experienced hegemony of the spirit” (99). Ella’s arrival to this level of spiritual awareness dissolves the figurative and literal boundaries that separated the diasporas of St. Mary, Louisiana and those of the Caribbean a hegemonic community connected through memory and cultural links.

As though to complete final stage of her emergence as a community soothsayer, Ella changes her appearance and the way she dresses. She abandons the restrictive western garments to which she had been accustomed for so long, in exchange for flowing kaftans in lush and colorful patterns. She stops pressing her hair and allows her hair to grow naturally, wrapping it stylishly in a fashion that mirrors the tignon Marie Leveau made famous. Her physical manifestations of the interior, spiritual transformation Ella undergoes establishes a connection she feels between Madam Marie and/or her own birth mother. Her ruminations in her journal disclose the conflating images and connection Ella makes between herself and a maternal force, and foreshadow her spiritual alignment with her matrilinear heritage of conjuring women:

> So my dress style has changed and I look different. I am also very observable in the streets. I was never as tall as my mother nor had I before her bearing. With my headdress and my long dress, I know I present a dignity rather like hers and an aura which turns heads. 'Another Madam Marie' I hear them say, though I have done absolutely nothing, have none of Madam's credits to my name. I take it in my stride and wait. I know what they mean Madam is stocky and brown; I am tall and as black as black can be. It is not a physical resemblance they see (99).

Her changed physical appearance aligns her in the eyes of others as 'another' Madam Marie. As Marie Philomene, was also mistaken as her mother, the Widow Paris, Ella carries on as the reanimation of local conjure woman. She appears to struggle to gain an affinity with her birth mother in these passages, and settles on her newly discovered connection to the conjurers who preceded her. Further, her rebirth to a new self ameliorates the troubled ties between Ella and the mother she lost. The circular, crystal pendant that Ella wears replaces the tape recorder through which she once communicated with the Venerable Sisters, and that pendant signifies the continuum of women to which she now belongs. Ella, now Louisiana, reflects on the symbol, and remarks that "I am the link between the shores washed by the Caribbean sea, a hole, yet I am what joins your left hand to your right. I join the world of the living and the world of the spirits. I join the past with the present…I am Louisiana. I give people their history. I serve God and the Venerable Sisters (125).

Ella dies without having become a 'mother' in the traditional sense. However, she leaves behind a transcribed history of Mammy King and Lowly—and the intermingled history of her own transformation. This history is both her progeny and her gift to the diaspora that populates the geographic vortex that unites St. Mary Parish, Louisiana and St. Mary Jamaica.

Though Brodber has not committed herself to an appraisal of Hurston's contributions as author of the marvelous real—or as an ethnographer, Louisiana bears the effects of Hurston's legacy. Brodber too recognizes the same diasporic links that bind Afro-Caribbean communities to those of the coastal U.S. through a vast network of historic and cultural memories. Brodber imagined the fictive narrative as the metaphorical 'horse' through which lost ethnographic histories could be revealed, she extends this notion to situate protagonist Ella Townsend as the 'horse' through which the spirits of Mammy and Lowly convey a history of which Ella is intrinsically part. Ella's role as conjurer/seer reanimates Hurston's legacy in a reiterative performance that testifies to the invaluable worth of 'discredited knowledge.'

While Ella Townsend's transformation from student to seer dramatizes how esoteric, and intuitive forms of knowing contribute to the archive of history, Ella's story dramatizes the ways in which that knowledge—and its recovery—allows the female postcolonial subject to reclaim her position as a valued, and whole member of a broadening diasporic community. Where Hurston invoked the marvelous real as an imaginary context where performance reiterated cultural memory, Brodber further demonstrates how the realm of the Magical Real enables the author to juxtapose the quotidian ordinariness of day-to-day living with a series of magical events that enable us to examine the reality of lived experience at the point in which these two, seemingly opposing forces collide.

PART II

NEW FRONTIERS: NALO HOPKINSON AND THE ROBBER QUEEN

As the Magical Realism of Brodber's *Louisiana* expands on Hurston's model of the conjurer situated in a Circum-Caribbean Marvelous Real, Nalo Hopkinson's novel, *Midnight Robber* conveys Hurston's model a step further into the genre of Speculative, or Science Fiction. Within this genre, Hopkinson's novel re-visions Hurston's autoethnographic portrayal of Janie Crawford's journey toward self-discovery, and engages the conventions of science fiction to reconsider the role of folktale, folk tradition, Creole dialect, and community in the actualization of the postcolonial female subject. *Midnight Robber* portrays the coming-of-age of its protagonist, Tan-Tan, in a future world in which a radical disruption catalyzes her confrontation with history and heritage. Presented as a frame narrative, *Midnight Robber* opens in the present day with the tale of Tan-Tan as told by a nameless and unidentified griot. The old woman regales her audience with the story Tan-Tan, a legendary folk hero of the planet New Halfway Tree. She presents this tale as an anansi story, one with a moral to follow, but at its center are the exploits of one heroic woman. "It had a woman, you see, a strong, hard-back woman with skin like cocoa-tea" the narrator begins. "She two foot-them tough from hiking through the diable bush, the devil bush on the prison planet of New Half-Way Tree. When she walk, she foot strike the hard earth *bup*! like breadfruit dropping to the ground" (1). The epic tone of the old woman's tale resonates with the opening lines of Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*: this is no ordinary tale, and no ordinary protagonist. The audience prepares to hear the story unfold about an extraordinary journey of how one woman survived the harsh environs of the planet New Halfway Tree, a frightening world and the dystopian counterpart to the Edenic community of Toussaint. The griot's tale sets the larger, allegorical framework for Hopkinson's novel, and reappears throughout to map the progression of the solitary maverick Tan-Tan. On a broader scale, the novel allegorizes the Afro-Caribbean diasporic history of the Middle Passage, the horrors of slavery, and the triumph of freedom, and reevaluates the instrumentality of folktale to facilitate communal survival. Finally, Hopkinson's novel focuses on the performative aspects of Junkanoo, the Christmas celebration of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago; and the Carnival as traditionalized modes of sustaining communal connectivity and social order. Throughout the novel, these performative elements—particularly that of the wily, gibberish-talking trickster, the Midnight Robber—illustrate the circum-Caribbean links that bind the African diaspora of a hemispheric South. Finally, Nalo Hopkinson's novel reprises Hurston's model of the conjure woman as ethnographer by recasting the protagonist as the 'traveler': a popular convention of the science fiction novel, who objectively records the events of her journey through her maturing perceptions. As Tan-Tan evolves, she remakes herself into the Robber Queen, a feminization of the trickster figure, and a reappropriation of this uniquely Caribbean folk figure as the conjurer of an encompassing tale.

Hopkinson opens Tan-Tan's narrative to introduce the harmonious and idyllic world into which young Tan-Tan has been born. The serene tenor of the opening passages concerning the child's life create the stage for a tremendous and horrific fall from grace for the small community in which the young girl lives. The narrative focus shifts from the present day of the griot's tale to introduce Tan-Tan as the eight-year-old daughter of Antonio, the mayor of Cockpit County, on the planet of Toussaint. There

Tan-Tan enjoys a childhood filled with the warm companionship of two loving parents, and doting droids who attend her every whim. The android that she calls “Nursie” tends the child from morning to night, and entertains her with bedtime stories. Beyond the polished marble of the mayoral mansion, Toussaint is a peaceful and technologically advanced Caribbean folk community where life moves along with relative ease. The streets are filled with hustling pedestrians, “pedicabs,” and bicycles and the atmosphere is friendly and unrushed. The placid and leisurely life of Toussaint is facilitated by evolutionary advancements in communication technology. In Toussaint, phones and computers have been rendered obsolete, as residents have evolved to be born with an implant, or ‘earbug’ in the ear through which they are able to communicate to each other through a network called the “anansi.” Within the network each individual’s home has been assigned an artificial intelligence called “eshu” that serves as the transmitter of messages that travel from user to user.

A parallel, dystopian universe called New Halfway Tree contrasts the harmony of Toussaint. To ensure the solvency of Toussaint, its twin planet exists as a penal colony where miscreants are sent for penance and safe riddance. New Halfway Tree is the nightmarish and horrific alternate universe to Toussaint and represents the condition Toussaint was in before the advent of Granny Nanny. In her melodic Creole, the griot recounts the history of the two universes to her listeners, characterizing the appearance of the Granny network as the result of actions from a foreign, futuristic, capitalist force that once raped the land of Toussaint. She explains “New Half-Way Tree is how Toussaint planet did look before the Marryshow Corporation sink them Earth Engine Number 127 down into it like God entering he woman; plunging into the womb of soil to impregnate the planet with the seed of Granny Nanny" (2). Hopkinson reconfigures the Middle Passage and occurrence of slavery, recasting the slave ships as The Marryshow Corporation: the foreign entity that invaded their planet and enslaved their people. However, the inception of the "Granny Nanny" network became the unifying and ameliorative force that restored community in Toussaint. Marryshow exists in the present day only as a shadowy, ephemeral memory responsible for the rapid technological advancements that occurred and brought about a new way of life for the residents of Cockpit County.

Hopkinson draws from Jamaican folklore and African Yoruba tradition to construct the basis of her fictional communication network. The Jamaican folk tale of Grandmother Spider who weaves her web to create the universe is the basis for Hopkinson's elaborate system of communication that conflates the function of modern cell phone and Internet. The eshu originates from the Yoruba lwa Esu-Elegbara, or Eshu, the messenger of African cosmological tradition who mediates between the adherent and the gods and communicated prayers (Gates, *Signifying Monkey* 6). The technological communication network created by the anansi in *Midnight Robber* is alternately called "Granny Nanny" or "Nannyweb," and serves to ensure the solidarity of the community through highly specialized modes of communication. The Nannyweb is a significant part of the foundation upon which the harmonious and idyllic world of Toussaint is built. In Tan-Tan's futuristic world, programming and computer technology have displaced 'folk' or 'esoteric' knowledge, and computer scientists are the necromancers, seers, and conjurers. Programming languages have become the mode of communicating information and recording it. "Nannysong" the language developed by Granny Nanny as a means of creating a code that Marryshow could not translate. This Nannysong stands in for Creole languages—the performative instrument of establishing and perpetuating community and historical ties. Mako, a computer programmer/conjurer, explains to Tan-Tan how Nannysong came to be and how it served to ensure the survival of the people of Toussaint:

> Just trying a thing, he run the Nanny messages through a sound filter; tonal instead of text-based, understand? The day them was set to wipe she memory, Nanny start to sing to Marryshow. She brain didn't spoil, it just get too complex for Eleggua to translate the concepts she was understanding no more; after Nanny was seeing things in all dimensions—how a simple four-dimensional programming code would continue to do she? So, she had to develop she own language (52).

By conflating new-age technology and the traditional culture of the Jamaican folk, Hopkinson dramatizes the dual chronotope recognized by Afro-Caribbean subjects, and the ways in which diasporic traditions serve to congeal the community to its heritage and history. Hopkinson's novel illuminates the resilience of postcolonial history: even in the futuristic world of Toussaint, the specters of the past still reside in the present real.

The New Year tradition of Jonkanoo, broadly celebrated throughout Jamaica, the Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, reappears in Hopkinson's novel as a central and transformative trope. The binary holidays of Christmas and Carnival appear in the novel as principle modes of both commemoration of a diasporic heritage and as modes for keeping social order that are largely shaped along geographic and linguistic boundaries. Reporting on the Christmas and Carnival festivities in the peasant communities of St. Vincent, Roger Abrahams explains that these twin celebrations represent the double facets of social life on the island: that of propriety and reverence; and that of debauchery and licentiousness. These opposing, though complimentary facets are delineated and defined according to the physical site in which specific speech acts are performed. Christmas is the holiday in which the birth of Christ is celebrated, and it is a time of high reverence and formality. Accordingly, participants prefer decorous, formal speech that is categorized linguistically by the populace as “talking sweet” (90). Geographic margins delineate the dual facets of social behavior at the time of Christmas and the subsequent Carnival that follows. During Christmas celebrations, revelers gather in the yard—considered an extension of the private home—for fellowship and to hear the speeches of the “man-of-words”: the appointed spokesperson/griot of the community. All oratory on Christmas night must fit the sacred tenor of the celebration, because along with the Christian significance that attends the holiday, Christmas is perceived to recommit each individual’s belonging to the community within the sacred confines of the home and hearth (100).

Conversely, Carnival is the diametric compliment to the Christmas celebration. Traditionally a end-of-year celebration that follows Christmas, Jonkanoo is a Carnival that takes place in the open street—a public space considered suitable for the nature of Carnival: a time in which regulated chaos, unruliness and bawdiness have free reign. In a way similar to the Bacchean festival, Jonkanoo is a time set aside for staged inversions of the public order and prescribed categories of propriety and social convention are challenged and interrogated. Women may dress as men and men as women; and masked performers outfitted in elaborate and outlandish costumes challenge one another and boast openly of their exploits. Of the Jamaican Junkanoo celebration, a chief trickster figure known as the Midnight Robber makes his appearance. Celebrants outfit themselves in the Robber costume, which often consists of a long cloak, shoes made to resemble alligators, and an outlandish style of hat that may be fashioned in the form of a ship or a coffin. The hat resembling the ship is often styled as a slave ship and may have representations of skulls and crossed bones. Some "robber" hats are of the simpler bandolier style, trimmed with fringe but banded with a series of miniature skulls—all significant images that represent collective diasporic memory of slavery and the Middle Passage.

The performer acting in the persona of the Robber may step into the street firing toy pistols and bragging in his customary nonsensical "Robbertalk." Robbertalk consists mainly of antagonistic and recalcitrant bravado, or 'nonsense' that is considered a feature of "talking rude" or "making commess" in the St. Vincentian Carnival. In the social culture of St. Vincent, "*Nonsense*," Abrahams explains, "is often used as a term of disapproval, but nonsense acts are not necessarily regarded as always and altogether useless or disruptive" (90). The trickster Robber recalls the insubordinate rule of Guedé of Haitian Vodou tradition, whose performance enables the celebrant to release his store of frustration and act out with impunity against his aggressors. Guedé's counterpart in the Jamaican Jonkanoo celebration behaves in a similar fashion, by directing his mangled oratory at passersby. However, his speech eventually transforms into an assertive diatribe that recalls the history of ancestors in slavery. Abrahams points out that "Whereas Christmas underlines the aesthetic potential of decorum and community solidarity, Carnival explores the realms of aesthetic transport involved in sudden freedom from restraints" (103). The performance of the Midnight Robber, in his own positioning as an aggressive and bawdy "man-of-words" of Junkanoo, represents the stored frustration of the peasant population entire. Hopkinson's narrator explains that the "Robber King's stream-of-consciousness speeches always told of escaping the horrors of slavery and making their way into brigandry as a way of surviving in the new and terrible white devils' land in which they'd found themselves" (Hopkinson 57). The antipodal celebrations of Christmas and Carnival foster community cohesion through reiterative performance; and further provide the celebrating Caribbean cultures to create a mode of maintaining social harmony and structure by setting aside annual events in which the facets of social order and chaos each has its day. Tan-Tan's narrative in *Midnight Robber* evolves a solitary woman's escape from sudden and horrifying enslavement to the unexpected "devil" that plagues her.

In *Midnight Robber*, the author recasts Jonkanoo as a folk and fantastic commemoration of the arrival of slave ships to the New World, with the arrival of the fictional The Marryshow Corporation as a signifier of the European slave ship arriving to port to enslave thousands of African and Native American subjects along with numerous others. In these passages folk tradition and performance come to vivid life to reunite the postcolonial diasporas affected by the European slave trade in Jamaican history. The solemnity of the subject is overshadowed by a sense of joy and celebration. Returning to Joseph Roach's observations concerning postcolonial conceptualizations of past events, the onlookers' joy is located in the knowledge that the event was completed past action, and the threat of its recurrence is gone (35). Hopkinson focalizes the mood of celebration through the young Tan-Tan:

> Finally it was Jonkanoo season; the year-end time when all of Touissaint would celebrate the landing of the Marryshow Corporation Nation ships that had brought

> their ancestors to this planet two centuries before. Time to give thanks to Granny Nanny for the Leaving Times, for her care, for life in this land, free from downpression and botheration. Time to remember the way their forefathers had toiled and sweated together: Taino Carib and Arawak; African; Asian; Indian; even the Euro, though some wasn't too happy to acknowledge that there bloodline (Hopkinson 18).

The young Tan-Tan's excitement grows with the anticipation of the holiday celebration. She has been chosen to sing a traditional folk song with the other participants; and her father, whom she loves dearly, has presented her with a Midnight Robber costume—complete with shoes made to resemble alligators with eyes that glow. Antonio is scheduled to appear in a match against Quashee—his best friend—in a spectacle for which the whole town appears. The Carnival is underway with parades of floats and reenactments, speeches and revelry. Tan-Tan walks alongside her mother, Ione, and suddenly the brash and vulgar Robber King corners them with a string of Robbertalk and embarrasses Ione. Some time earlier in the narrative Antonio came home unexpectedly and found his best friend Quashee and Ione in the act of lovemaking. Unbeknownst to either Ione or her lover, Antonio skulks away to brood over his revenge: Antonio visits Maka, a programmer and chemist, to concoct a poison that will slow Quashee in the fighting ring. In the meantime, as Ione and her daughter make their way to the tournament, the Robber King, whose objective is to continue talking until he is shushed with monetary payment, stops to humiliate her. Opening with a strand of Robbertalk, he bellows, "I wrestle the warptenned flying ship from the ensorcelled dungmaster, the master plan blaster in his silver-fendered stratocaster with wings of phoenix flame…" Ione attempts to silence him by foisting coins on him, but the Robber King, aware of her indiscretion, presses on. "Get thee behind me, horny horning whore of Babylon," he bleats. "Thine gelt shall not tempt me, too wise am I to be clasped by your thighs" (57). The esu has transmitted the news of Ione's infidelity to the entire community, but the wily Robber King, like the conjurer, and his Haitian cousin, Guedé, serves as the articulator of story.

During the stadium games of the Jour Ouvert challenges, and before the eyes of his family and the residents of the small community, Tan-Tan's father murders his wife's lover. In light of Caribbean conventions concerning gender roles in the public and private spheres, Antonio's horrific actions impose multiple compounded violations to the harmoniousness of the family and community—in addition to the obvious brutality of his murderous act. His crimes rapidly erode his daughter's world. The murder of his wife's lover, Quashee, who was also his friend, violates a code of conduct incumbent upon male members of the Caribbean community. According to Abrahams, males are consigned to the exterior world of business, and "are expected to spend most of their time at work or pursuing friendships in male meeting places like the rum shops and the crossroads…" However, Antonio's actions are catalyzed by his wife Ione's original infidelity. By permitting a male into the private environs of the household—particularly one who was not her husband—she violated a social taboo. Abrahams points out that women in traditional Caribbean homes are the keepers of heritage and the cornerstone of the family, while "men must maintain their reputation by being good and active friends, especially to their peers (Abrahams, "Christmas" 99). One argues that Antonio's actions and motivations that arise from being cuckolded present a monstrous dystopian version of the controlling male as presented in Joe Starks of Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* Acutely conscious of his visibility and centrality as mayor of the town, Antonio's pride cannot withstand the shame his wife has brought upon him; and that shame compels him to publicly take back what he believes was taken from him. As the marshal of the tournament announces the combatants, Antonio takes this public moment—and public space as his stage on which to assert himself and to announce his objectives. "Is me, Marshall. Antonio, mayor of Cockpit County, against Quashee, the man who take away me wife honour from me" (59). Like Hurston's Joe Clark of *Their Eyes*, Antonio vests his reputation in the virtue and appearance of his wife. Ione's virtue, like her body, belongs not to Ione, but to him as an extension of his greatness as the most powerful man in Cockpit County. Already Ione's violation of the sanctity of her marriage and that of the home has become public knowledge; however Antonio's public retaliation against this injury to his pride extends beyond the boundaries of the private, domestic sphere, and transforms this incident into a communal spectacle that further violates the interior world of the home and escalates his daughter's security and sense of stability. The events that follow create a pastiche that dramatizes the fall of an individual nuclear family of Toussaint, Tan-Tan's brutal coming-of-age, and the allegory of a larger, diasporic history and its ability to transcend the horrors of violence, exploitation, and dislocation.

Antonio is charged with the murder of Quashee, and sentenced to jail. Overwrought and determined to remain with her father, Tan-Tan follows him to the courthouse. Maka has secreted a small memory device called "datastock" in which the key to Antonio's salvation from jail is stored. The device contains instructions on the Halfway Tree: a vacuum-like tower that transports Antonio and his daughter through dimension veils, in which the child can feel herself shape-shifting from human to animal. She envisions that she sprouts a long, bare tail like that of a "manicou rat's." The narrator observes that "the figure beside her looked more like a man-sized mongoose than her father. He smelt like food, but food she wasn't supposed to eat. Family. Tan-Tan sobbed and tried to wrap her tail tightly around herself" (74). The wickedness of New Halfway Tree has begun to exact its influence to devolve Tan-Tan and her father, as each transforms, in his or her own way, into predatory animal, and notions of family connectedness begin to disintegrate. The violent change that has occurred is the utterly transforming trauma of dislocation: there is no turning back once one has reached New Halfway Tree. Strange faces and inhospitable, foreign scenery replace all familiar ties and surroundings. The narrator adds that "[Tan-Tan] and Antonio didn't look no different, but Tan-Tan could feel the change the shift tower had made inside her, feel her heart begin to harden against her daddy who couldn't tell her where they were, who couldn't make everything right again. She felt she didn't know him anymore." Tan-Tan's experience parallels that of the African slave who has been torn from all familiar surroundings and human connection, separated from family and home. The little girl is resigned to a sobering thought, and the narrator solemnly concludes that Antonio's words rang true, adding that "Once you climb the half-way tree, everything change-up" (77).

Antonio and Tan-Tan arrive on the colony planet to find themselves in a jungle bush radiated in red light: an eerie perversion of the lush familiar world of Toussaint. Though the narrator focalizes Tan-Tan's impressions and responses to her new surroundings, the child's mental notes record her experience as though in a travelogue. A creature approaches them and offers to take them to water and food—and to others like them on the planet—in exchange for goods. The small, peculiar creature looked like nothing Tan-Tan had ever seen: it was short in stature, with bulbous eyes on either side of a strangely-shaped head; fingers that ended in rounded protrusions; and it stood on "goat feet; thin and bent backwards in the middle. Its feet had four long toes with thick, hard nails" (92). The strange creature identifies itself as a douen, which horrifies Tan-Tan. "Douen! Nursie had told Tan-Tan douen stories douens were children who'd died before they had their naming ceremonies" the child muses. "They came back from the dead as jumbies with their heads on backwards. They lived in the bush" (93). During her first encounter on New Halfway Tree, Tan-Tan encounters the racial and class stratifications that mimic the early plantation system of the Caribbean islands. The human inhabitants, who are enslaved as a condition of their punishment, consider themselves superior to the creatures that inhabit the planet. These creatures from Jamaican folklore have assumed dimension and life as the lowest rung on the evolutionary ladder according to the hierarchical social structure of New Halfway Tree. The douen, called "Chichibud," is relegated to the position on par with that of the African slave. His references to his wife are matters of some jocularity among the human inhabitants on the planet, who consider the very idea of a douen having a wife to be ludicrous. This narrative trope recalls the prohibition against slave marriages as a mode of dehumanizing the slave on the plantation, and allows the reader to observe, through a child's innocent responses, the very inhumanity of the institution. In Hopkinson's novel, this maligned creature evidences qualities that prove him to be far more human in character than his naysayers would suggest. Chichibud becomes Tan-Tan's ally, and instructs her on strategies of survival in the bush, cultivates her in the ways of self-protection against predators. Further, as an embodiment of a folk past, the creature and assists her as she emerges as the Robber Queen.

Meanwhile the Mako Jumbie bird accounts for the balance of life on the planet, and represents the hidden horrors of the strange new world. The brutal and frightening New Halfway Tree is at first utterly unrecognizable to Tan-Tan, but with the aid of the douen, she gradually acquires the necessary strategies to survive the dystopian horror of New Halfway Tree. While this social ordering on the planet mimics and critiques the hierarchical structure of the early plantation, it also suggests a critique of the ways in physical dislocation and removal causes a diasporic community to dissociate from its folk heritage. To literalize a reunion between Tan-Tan and her folk heritage, Hopkinson portrays Tan-Tan's sixteenth birthday as a landmark moment in which she is symbolically reclothed in that heritage. As a gift for Tan-Tan, Chichibud's wife has woven her a beautiful yellow sarong and blouse that is embroidered with small, animated figures who dance across the hem. The figures perform the story of the girl's life. The narrator reports that the creature's wife "breathed on it and with her breath, Bois Papa had sent her the story she'd woven into it. 'It is the story of your life, doux-doux. You go have plenty adventures'" (151). Through the character of Chichibud, Hopkinson dramatizes the dynamic that Erna Brodber observes, that the elements of folklore were and remain principle instruments of survival (Brodber, "Beyond the Boundary" 20-22). Additionally, Tan-Tan's sarong, ornamented with the animated figures that perform the story of her life recall the 'tight chemise' Hurston could not see for wearing. At sixteen, Tan-Tan does not yet know how her story will play out; yet the portentous last line of the douen's words gesture to her upcoming 'adventures' in becoming the recorder of her own marvelous reality and the history of her community.

As Tan-Tan comes of age, however, Antonio succumbs to the harshness of life on the new planet, and he is driven mad by grief over the forced removal from his wife and home. Consequently as his madness deepens and mingles with the effects of alcohol, Antonio turns his rage on Tan-Tan. Antonio's behavior recreates the dominant male archetype of plantation household that Joe Starks re-presents in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, but to a much more sinister effect. In Antonio, Hopkinson creates a postcolonial male character so psychologically damaged by the effects of displacement and figurative bondage that he cannot differentiate right from wrong. In the same way the plantation Master drove a divisive line between his wife and the slave mistress he kept, Antonio creates tension between his daughter and his new wife, Janisette, by upsetting boundaries concerning sexual tensions and parental/filial loyalties. Reduced by the perverse circumstances he created, Antonio begins regularly molesting Tan-Tan when she is thirteen, and again when she turns sixteen. His drink-addled mind mistakes his daughter for his first wife, and the illusion drives him to commit yet another unspeakable act. Hopkinson configures Anthony the nightmarish extreme of the postcolonial subject whose moral base has been violently upset by jealousies and trauma. In turn, Tan-Tan can only process what is happening to her in silence: her voice has been suppressed as a result of persistent loyalty to her father despite his vile breech of trust.

However, the tenuous ties she retains to her earliest memories of innocence are still moored in the folkloric custom she enjoyed as a child. In the moment of greatest trauma, she imagines herself the Robber Queen: her own creation of a fearless and empowered feminized version of the Midnight Robber. Her affinity for this character ultimately redeems her. However, as her father commits his unspeakable act for the last time, Tan-Tan goes through a type of out of body experience. She no longer associates any connection with the person to whom this is happening, and her mind reaches for the salvation that comes in her empowered alter ego. Her father's legacy of violence begets yet more violence, and she kills him, driving a knife into him. The narrator explains, this entity rises from the depths of her memory to save her:

> Something was scraping at her waist. Her hand found it. The scabbard. With the knife inside. A roaring started up in her ears. It couldn't have been she. It must have been the Robber Queen who pulled out the knife. Antonio raised up to shove into the person on the bed again. It must have been the Robber Queen, the outlaw woman, who quick like a snake got the knife braced at her breastbone just as Antonio slammed his heavy body right onto the blade (168).

Her father's body falls lifeless on top her and blood gushes from his mouth. Waiting in the silence she struggles to get out from under the weight of his body, and, aware of her indignity, she struggles to cover herself. Chichibud arrives and heaves Antonio's body aside and covers her body. He clicks, "Sh, sh, doux-doux. I could read the signs for myself I know he attack you" (169). Symbolically the little creature restores her dignity and comforts her. However, now Tan-Tan's actions have made her a fugitive.

Tan-Tan escapes with Chichibud to the bush that lies beyond the isolated townships of Junjuh, the county seat of New Halfway Tree. There she encounters the paradisiacal, self-contained world of the douens that resembles an idealized earthly rainforest. She learns that all douens are males who intermarry and procreate with hintes, giant female birdlike creatures that communicate in high-pitched stridulating sounds as opposed to the Jamaican Creole of the douen. It is noteworthy that Hopkinson characterizes the hintes as both weavers and the developers of their own unique language and modes of communication; this combination of skill suggests that the females of this fantastic fictional creolized world are the creators of language and story. The hinte dialogue, like the anansi tales of the griot that appear throughout the novel, appear in boldface type, signifying the newness and difference of the griot's language as she "weaves her tale" of Tan-Tan, the Robber Queen. The emphasis on Creole language and the assuaging power of speech plays an instrumental role in Tan-Tan's metamorphosis.

While adjusting to life among the douen people, Tan-Tan learns that she is pregnant with Antonio's child. This discovery causes her to lose sleep and the voice in her head of the "bad Tan-Tan" accosts her, making her feel responsible and ashamed. The pregnancy and the rape have fractured the protagonist into two separate beings: a "bad" self who caused the rape; and a "good" self characterized by the nascent Robber Queen persona who represents wholeness, virtue, and self-possession. Anxious to rid herself of the unwanted child, Tan-Tan ventures with Abitefa, the female offspring of Chichibud and Benta into a depressed and unseemly neighboring settlement called Chigger Bite in search of a doctor. There she encounters Aloysius, who offers to direct her to a doctor, but his mother appears behind him yelling insults and swinging at him with a strap. She accosts him and accuses him of squandering time chasing after Tan-Tan. In an instant, Tan-Tan reacts angrily. As though taken in possession by the Robber Queen, she wrests the strap from the woman and warns her in the flourished and dazzling style of the "woman of words" saying assertively, "Woman, what a way your son lean; lean 'pon you, lean because of you, inclined to be a mama-man for love, for lovie-dove. What a way your son love you, like two cooing doves in a cote. I go coat my throat with words of wisdom; come, and pay me heed" (245-6). Emboldened by the experience of having intimidated Gladys, Tan-Tan returns again to the village to intervene in the doings of the people there, and much like a comic heroine, setting things to rights. However her frequent trips incognito to the township of Chigger Bite end in her in trouble: her stepmother finds her and tries to get revenge on Antonio's death. Despite the outcome of Tan-Tan's meanderings, her frequent travels earn her the education she requires to fulfill her transformation and arrive at the wellness she seeks.

The Hopkinson's narrative in *Midnight Robber* responds to multiple forms of oppression at historical and present moments; and at private and public levels. Antonio's crimes against his child represent the most horrific hyperbole of displacement trauma, one that he passes on to his own child as a personal conflict that leaves her grasping for reconnection to a heritage that nourishes her and returns her to wholeness. Through the machinations of the Science Fiction travelogue, the novel focalizes the protagonist's subjective responses to the horrifying traumas of dislocation by re-presenting these horrors as time/dimensional travel, and life in a fugitive state. However, she overcomes the violence, and incest of her past by fully engaging with the animated myths and myth-making strategies of her folk heritage. Tan-Tan transforms herself into the Robber Queen to escape the trauma of her childhood that splintered her. By fully embodying the persona of the trickster figure, the protagonist figuratively makes her way home to the present in Toussaint, in the form of folk legend, and the embodiment of female power and resistance.

In her introduction to *So Long Been Dreaming*, an anthology of Caribbean Science Fiction narratives, Hopkinson quips that "[t]o be a person of colour writing science fiction is to be under suspicion of having internalized one's colonization" (*Dreaming* 7). Though there has been comparatively little critical attention directed toward Africana writers of Speculative and Science Fiction, and on Midnight Robber in particular, Hopkinson's narrative not only challenges the notion of being trapped in a lingering postcoloniality, it offers a means to examine, challenge, and append that postcolonial history from the perspective of its silenced female subjects. Hopkinson's narrative further enlarges on Hurston's positioning of the conjure woman as a performer and recorder of women's experience. By engaging the conventions of Magical Realist and Speculative genres, Brodber and Hopkinson augment the conjure woman's performance repertoire as she traverses the boundaries of time and space to uncover hidden narratives and attempts to recover herself and her community from historic and personal trauma.

CONCLUSION

A BACKWARD GLANCE TOWARD A MARVELOUS FUTURE

Hurston's engagement of the Marvelous Real, as I have suggested here, aligns Hurston's project to that of Cuban writer, Alejo Carpentier, who first expounded his theories of marvelous reality in 1945. The observations of the marvelous in the Caribbean and New Orleanian cultures that Hurston explored tie her work to that of Carpentier; but also to the work of another prominent author and ethnographer whose career flourished alongside that Hurston's. Lydia Cabrera, a Cuban-born writer and folklorist, enjoyed her most productive period during the 1920s and 1930s, though she continued to write into the 1950s before disappearing into obscurity in Miami.

Scholarship concerning the lives of Zora Neale Hurston and Lydia Cabrera reveals that each woman possessed a rare, precocious intellect and imagination, and, despite the many privileges each enjoyed through their association with the intellectual elite, sustained and cherished an unflagging affection for the folk communities they encountered early on during their respective Floridian and Creole Cuban upbringing. What is known of Cabrera's early life is that she was born to a moneyed and prestigious family. Edna Rodriguez-Mangual notes that Cabrera's mother, Elisa Marcaida Casanova, was the daughter of a prominent Havana family. Her father, Raimundo Carera Bosch, owned the journal *Cuba y America*, and enjoyed a lucrative and varied professional life, in which he served as a "lawyer, jurist, writer," and politician, and once played an instrumental role in the struggle for Cuba's independence from Spain. It was his position as owner and editor of *Cuba y America*, however, which had immediate impact on his daughter. As editor, he prepared a site in which Lydia's literary career could emerge. At the age of thirteen, Cabrera authored a column in her father's newspaper entitled "Nena en sociedad," in which the precocious youngster demonstrated the depth of her political interests and sardonically critiqued the Cuban government (Rodriguez-Mangual 7).

Though Hurston's beginnings in Eatonville, Florida were comparatively humbler than Cabrera's, Hurston too had a father who was an instrumental force in his daughter's burgeoning literary imagination. While Cabrera's father created opportunities for his daughter's self-expression, Hurston's father fed his daughter's imagination by providing the basis for a series of amalgamated folk characters that she would later develop in her fiction. As the daughter of John Hurston, a fiery Pentecostal minister and the mayor of her hometown, Eatonville, Florida, Zora Neale Hurston came of age in a home in which the dominant patriarch governed the family. According to what Hurston herself has recorded of his life, John Hurston further extended his influence beyond the home to the pulpit, in which he held sway over the minds and souls of those in the closely-knit, nurturing environment of Eatonville. John Hurston's life contributed to Zora Neale Hurston's characters that included John Pierson of *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, and Joe Starks of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. From the pen of Zora Neale Hurston, John Hurston emerged as one of Hurston's primary exemplars of the folk, and a vehicle through which Zora Hurston conveyed the African American folk experience to readers. The real figures—as well as figments of African American folklore that included Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox—populated Hurston's childhood imagination, and contributed to the real experience of growing up in first the all-black, incorporated town of Eatonville.

Cabrera grew up in the privileged social caste of Cuban society; but her elevated social status did not diminish her interest in—or passion for—the folk. Her brush with the folklore of the Afro-Cuban folk appeared quite early in her childhood, and from an intimate source: Tata Tula, her black governess; and Teresa (also called Omí Tomí), schooled the young girl on folktales and fables that included the exploits of the trickster, a turtle called Jicotea. By the time she had reached early adulthood, Cabrera left Cuba for Europe, where she was exposed to the literary and artistic trends of the day. These expressive trends were permeated with the influence of African culture. Cabrera located the elements of African cultural forms in the paintings of Picasso, Modigliani, and Matisse, and in the literature of André Breton. Later she traced these artistic representations to similar syncretic expressions in Cuban culture. The folktales and fables told to her by her childhood governess reemerged in Cabrera's imagination when a close friend of hers, Teresa de la Parra, became terminally ill. Cabrera recited these stories to amuse her ailing friend, and they were later published in the volume entitled *Cuentos negros de Cuba* in French by Gallimard Press in 1936 (8). Cabrera had spent her young adulthood among the Cuban and European elite, and traveled around the world to come home again. Rodriguez-Mangual notes how Cabrera observed this irony to have traveled across the Atlantic only to "rediscover Cuba on the Seine" (11-12). As each entered a promising literary and academic career, Hurston and Cabrera each sought to uncover, and to validate the African diasporic cultural forms that at the time of their writing, had either been disregarded by the scientific academy altogether, or had been consistently lampooned, marginalized, and *othered* by white anthropologists in the main.

Cabrera, like Hurston, preferred highly contested, unorthodox approaches to ethnography. Unlike her colleague, Cabrera was not a university-trained anthropologist; nevertheless her lack of formal training did not deter the author's impulse to uncover and reveal the vibrant complexity of the Afro-Cuban folk culture to national attention. Perhaps it was this lack of university training that enabled her to strip her ethnographies of formalized scientific discipline and stoic detachment, and infuse her writing with discernible compassion and creativity. In her writing, Cabrera preferred to combine ethnography with fiction, and eschewed many of the prescribed scientific methodologies involved in ethnographic research in favor of a more subjective, participant-observer approach that immersed the author fully in her subject culture. In this way, Cabrera was able to foreground the voices of the Afro-Cuban subject, and to convey his humanity with acute and rarified insight. Cabrera's ethnographic research in the impoverished barrios of Cuba resonates sharply with the record of Hurston's experience in the villages of Haiti and Jamaica. Cabrera returned in 1937 to La Quinta San Jose Marianao Cuba, where she lived among Afro-Cuban peasants in the barrio called Pogolotti. There she recorded the folktales, fables, songs and performances of her Afro-Cuban subjects. Her explorations into this folk culture included an investigation of Santería, through which she became acquainted with the syncretic religion and the relationship the Afro-Cuban peasant shared with the *orishas*—the gods whom the santeros and santeras—Santería priests and priestesses—called upon assist in the matters of day-to-day living. Her affection for Afro-Cuban folk, and her stubborn resistance to the de-humanizing methodologies of the scientific academy that relegated the folk to the position of *other* galvanized Cabrera's ethnographic project.

In the collections *Cuentos negros*, and in her most acclaimed volume, *El monte*, Cabrera re-presents the folklife of the Afro-Cuban by relegating the voice of the white ethnographer to the margins and foregrounding the voice of the Afro-Cuban subject in the narrative. Scholar and biographer Edna Rodriguez-Mangual points out that Cabrera's strategy creates an imaginary, literary space in which the voice of the subject controlled the narrative, and made the author/ethnographer merely a "transcriber of other voices—and those other voices are installed in a black universe that [Cabrera] creates" (107). In much the same way Hurston identified the individuals she encountered as the real authors of their ethnography, Cabrera too, preferred to foreground the voice of her Cuban subjects, and merely served as compiler and transcriber of the folk material she collected.

Though there is little evidence that the two women scholars were ever acquainted, or that they even knew of the other's professional projects, there are striking similarities concerning the methodologies and revelations contained in their ethnographic projects that merit consideration. Cabrera, as did Hurston, observed the Marvelous Real in Afro-Cuban culture, and this shared observation further bridged the professional lives and creative production of Hurston and Cabrera. Hurston observed that the magical, spiritual, or phantasmagoric was as real, and as integral a part of daily existence in the Vodou culture of Haiti and in the Spiritualist Church of New Orleans, as was anything else in the material world. By examining the relationship with the magical element in the diasporic cultures she studied, Hurston discovered how the lived experience of her subjects could be revealed through their relationship to the spiritual; and from there, she revealed how hegemonic cultures consistently othered diasporic cultures by filtering their impressions of that culture through their own biases.

In her ethnographic research, Cabrera discovered that the Afro-Cubans' relationship to the marvelous was structured by a fundamental practicality, and disclosed the vast chasm that separated the priorities and immediate concerns of the Afro-Cuban populace from the European tourists who visited the island seeking their counsel. Firmly steeped in the realities of existence on the economic margins in which access to political, legal, and financial power was prohibited, the santero summoned the orishas for their help to cure a child of a debilitating illness, to avenge a wrongdoer, or to settle interpersonal disagreements and legal disputes. Mangual observes that "the influence constantly exerted by wizards and magic over the lives of Afro-Cubans is the result of their supernatural perception of their surroundings. Due to the sense of immediacy Cubans have of their surrounding reality, they do not use divination for the purpose of knowing the future such as in fortune-telling, for instance, but instead to solve current problems affecting their lives". In this sense, rather than to observe the spiritual beliefs of the Afro-Cuban as a product of a desperately impoverished peoples' mystical solution to daily obstacles of poverty, Cabrera, like Hurston, observed that the ongoing kinship with the marvelous, or spiritual was a mirror to the real-life concerns of Santería (or Vodou) practitioners. Conversely, the values and motivations of European tourist who sought out the aid of the santero were similarly enlarged through the context of the marvelous. The European opted for long-term, grander goals of finding true love, amassing greater fortune, or attaining further professional successes—attainments that were far removed from the purview of the peasant (111-12).

The 'marvelous' context of Santería reveals the irony inherent in the revealed desires of the impoverished Afro-Cuban peasant and the wealthy European tourist: while the tourist has all of his immediate needs satisfied, such as adequate nourishment, access to modern medical resources, and legal and political protection, access to these luxuries is denied the Afro-Cuban peasant whose daily struggle to survive precludes such fanciful aims. Hurston's observations of Guedé's Vodou performance, in which the god lambasts and ridicules his European persecutors creates a marvelous context that mirrors the similar dynamic taking place in the interaction between the Afro-Cuban santero and the European tourist: The European visits the santero as though he were a quaint folk amusement who represents 'authentic' Cuban folk culture. Meanwhile, the authenticity he seeks is lost by the fact that he remains insulated by his own cultural bias, and remains smugly oblivious to the Afro-Cuban's relationship to his spirituality and hence, to his daily reality. Hurston's and Cabrera's observations of the Marvelous Real in African American and Afro-Caribbean diasporic cultures recall those observations made by Alejo Carpentier in which he suggested the "Marvelous Real" is an imaginary context in which the experiences and lives of diasporic subjects could be understood more fully through an examination of their relationships with the marvelous.

The common observations that Hurston and Cabrera make of Marvelous Reality can be observed in Cabrera's ethnographic re-collection of Afro-Cuban fables. "Bregantino Bregantin," a folk parable that Cabrera recorded in *El Monte*, presents significant correlatives to Hurston's rendering of Moses in *Moses, Man of the Mountain* by revealing the insistent, presence of a subversive female power understructure beneath the superficial male power structure. The fable introduces a young princess, Dingadingá, who approaches her parents and announces her decision to marry. Her father, the King, conveys his wish that his daughter marry the strongest and most virile male in the community of Cocozumba. However, her choice is ultimately contingent upon her mother's choice, as the male hopeful who makes the queen dance (despite her bad knee) will be her next son-in-law. The Earthworm, a talented musician and drummer who plays the best, wins the hand of the princess. According to Cabrera's re-telling of the fable, the happiness that the princess and her new husband share is cut short after a mere three years:

> Earthworm decides to return to the depths of the earth because he cannot live outside it. So, the Earthworm arranges to have the Bull take his place, since he has been a loyal server for many years; the Earthworm tells him: 'I can only be happy underground…As a reward for your services, I leave you my wife, belongings, my drum; I leave you everything without any conditions. May you be the king of Cocozumba'. Both the princess Dingadingá and her parents are pleased with the change, as the Earthworm left an 'admirable' successor 'of exceptional gifts'. In any case, they had never been happy that the Earthworm—'a filthy creature'—had won the contest (128-9).

However, the Bull, called Bregantino Bregantín, proves himself to be a cruel and vicious tyrant. Once he ascends to the throne, he murders the king and sends the queen to his dungeon to starve. Compounding this disgrace, he asserts that he should be the only surviving male in the kingdom. Therefore he orders that all of the men—and his own sons—should be killed, and that all the women of Cocozumba belong to him. The bull king slaughters any son born to any woman of the kingdom, and once this has been accomplished, he climbs to the summit of the mountain to declare himself as the only surviving male, shouting "Me, me, me!" Later during his reign, the Bull King orders that all masculine pronouns be written out of the language, unless of course, the text refers to him specifically. For further good measure, he orders that all masculine-gendered words revert expressly to the feminine form. The fable of the Bregantino Bregantín exposes the extreme folly of the Bull King's hubris, and his blindness to the self-effacing inconsistency of his desires. In his campaign to assert his male centrality by eradicating all that is male in his kingdom (except for himself), he leaves himself in a precarious position of minority in which he is grossly outnumbered by women, and his reign is supported by a culture and language dominated by the feminine who turn against him. The bull's mimicry of western discourses of power dramatizes how he has undermined his own campaign of dominance. In accordance with the metaphor that Nalo Hopkinson intones in her Introduction to *So Long Been Dreaming*, that the "Massa's tools" have torn down the "Massa's house" (*Dreaming* 8).

In a way similar to Hurston's strategy to deploy an image of Moses that pantomimed male hubris, Cabrera's fable both allegorizes how white European power structures sought to centralize male power, and to alter the language to its own ends—including a script of history that was designed to aggrandize white European culture and fit its own agenda. Mangual observes "[t]his fable of the patriarchal dictator bull constitutes a sociocultural space that portrays the subjugation of slavery, at the same time that it paradoxically disarticulates its own violence. Moreover, the pretension of being the only many in the kingdom is a parody of masculinity" (129-30). And, similar to Hurston's strategy in Moses, "Bregantino Bregantin" utilizes the marvelous reality of folk fable to project the rise of the female subject who exposes, and then vindicates these atrocities. The Bull King's doomed campaign to assert his power and to relegate his female subjects to the margins has failed by his own hand: the women have instead become centralized by sheer numbers, and has produced from those numbers a courageous woman named Sanune who dethrones and overpowers Bregantino Bregantín by calling upon the orishas.

Sanune, "a rebellious woman, stubborn, strong, and disobedient," discovers she is pregnant with her seventh child. During his campaign to destroy all the male children in the kingdom, Bregantino Bregantín had all six of her previous male children murdered.

Embittered, angry, and determined to keep her child, Sanune escapes into the jungle where she encounters the Orishas, Ochosi and Oggun, who appear to her as two "'arrogant, beautiful' black men." She falls into a deep sleep, and awakes in a "dark room with an old woman who counts snails." The woman gives her coins and cloths of various colors to offer the god Chango in exchange for her prayer. Later she gives birth to a son, but he is murdered by one of the Bull King's executioners who stabs the child in the neck. Sanune, appears dejected, and simply walks away. However, Ochosi revives the infant, and promises the woman that he will "grow strong and that his voice will be heard around the world" (Mangual). Sanune's son grows up, and by his twentieth year, returns to the mountain where he encounters the Bull King chanting his "me, me, me" song to the heavens, and kills him. Sanune's son becomes king, and peace returns to their kingdom (128-132).

In distinct ways, each narrative engages fable—or folktale—and its magical components to configure a speculative wish fulfillment scenario: *Moses* and "Bregantino Bregantin" introduce a solitary woman who, with the aid of mystics and spiritual forces, undermines a dominant, male power structure. Hurston's narrative gender-play in *Moses, Man of the Mountain* configures a female power behind her critique of the biblical Moses, while Cabrera's fable of the Bull King configures Sanune as the key figure who destroys the monstrous male tyrant. Sanune capitulates to and undermines the male power structure by giving birth to a male who will become the liberator of the nation. Hurston's Moses alternately mimics and militates against dominant European discourses in a narrative that prefigures the conjure woman as the mystic who leads her people to freedom. The speculative impulse in each fable forcefully asserts itself by projecting the marginalized victim's subtle and subversive victory over her oppressors powered by the sheer force of one's individual faith. This marvelous reality that Hurston and Cabrera have captured in Moses and Sanune recalls that which Carpentier identified in the legends of Francois Macandal, in which he observed that "thousands of men, anxious for freedom, believed in Mackandal's lycanthropic powers to the extent that their collective faith produced a miracle on the day of his execution" ("The Marvelous Real in America" 87). These narratives speculate on what *can be* achieved, by the sheer determination and the force of one's will? Additionally, the marvelous real of Hurston's and Cabrera's fiction creatively reflects on the past trials and traumas that have been historically endured and overcome by individual women. By speculating on the historic triumphs and trauma of women of color, each author prompts us to consider, what can be *collectively* overcome in the future?

Hurston and Cabrera appear to have shared many of the same philosophies concerning ethnography and its intimate companionship with literature. Each writer engaged ethnography as a means to explore women's identities and how their historical memories might connect them to a larger network of kinships; and engaged literature to further expound on this potentiality. The conflation of these genres gave rise to a new and insightful means to explore the meaning of subjectivity and community. Their shared attitudes toward their literary and scientific projects seem to have been developed early; as even the incidental details of each woman's life indicate that Hurston and her Cuban-born colleague shared positive, self-affirming attitudes that helped to shape each woman's professional philosophy in significant and compelling ways. These parallels appear to begin with the issue concerning the precise years of their births. Robert

Hemenway observes that Hurston consistently avoided questions concerning the exact year of her birth, and, depending on the document, Hurston listed her birth as having occurred any year between 1898 and 1903. Hemenway speculates that Hurston may have prevaricated because she was simply unsure, due to the paucity of reliable documents. Or, perhaps Hurston merely obfuscated her age out of self-conscious vanity that arose as a result of her late entrance into high school at the age of twenty-seven. Further, Hurston's autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* has exacerbated the confusion, and, consequently, increased the consternation of many Hurston scholars who wish to ascertain just when the author was born. In the chapter in which Hurston discusses her birth, she refers to the event by asserting glibly that, "I got born" (*Dust Tracks*). If Hemenway is correct, Hurston's dismissal of this detail might have indicated to some readers that the author was reticent to reveal her true age because she was merely ignorant of the actual date. Or, perhaps the author simply chose to exercise her right to augment her mystique by just playing it cagey. Nevertheless, this reader tends to agree with those who argue that Hurston's propensity to aggrandize her life and to self-mythicize motivated her to avoid the issue. From what is known about her life and work, and her famous spirited confidence, Hurston preferred to subordinate the mundane details of her personal life, because they simply did not matter. By dismissing questions of her specific birth date, Hurston prompts her reader to focus more squarely on the subsequent events and marvelous experiences that contributed to the emergence and grandeur of the "Cosmic Zora": the phenomenal self that she imagined herself to be from an early age.

The precise date of Cabrera's birth, too, has yet to be substantiated to critics' satisfaction, and Cabrera herself has permitted the uncertainty to persist. Cabrera claimed to have been born in Havana the youngest of eight children, in the year 1900. However, documented sources including her passport and other documents indicate that she was born in New York in 1899. By flouting the persistence of scholars to clarify the exact time and of their births, Hurston and Cabrera each suggests that such dry facts are ultimately inconsequential: the precise hour—or even the year—in which their lives began is not important: the mere *fact* of each author's existence is evidenced in her ability to announce her existence, and to speak on her own behalf—a trait that was paramount to each woman, and to their philosophies concerning the folk cultures they loved. Such shared iconoclastic and perhaps, eccentric impulses made Cabrera and Hurston an exclusive and rare sorority of artists whose lives reflected their art. Hurston and Cabrera shared a lifelong love of the folk, and sought to identify and to characterize New World ontologies by emphasizing that the voices of the Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American were the recorders of their histories—not the scientist. Hurston's and Cabrera's mutual propensity to challenge the authority of written records—the *archives* that Diana Taylor describes—in which the one's existence is defined through the prescribed categories of a dominant culture, was insufficient. Instead, each imagined that existential proof was located in the non-western, non-literary *repertoire* of embodied, dynamic performance to document individual and communal experience. The combined work of Hurston and Cabrera suggests the potential for further examination of the emerging trend among Afro-Caribbean and Latin authors who explore the magical and marvelous in folklore to forge a growing genre of ethnographic fiction.

As part of her legacy as a prominent, and beloved literary foremother, Zora Neale Hurston left behind a literary model in which she introduced the conjure woman as an instrumental figure who navigated within the imaginary context of the marvelous real: a fictive site in which the fantastic was not only possible, but a characteristic element in folk culture in which ancestors' voices were recovered. This strategy seeks to reclaim a common heritage that bound not strictly African American women writers, but women of the broader circum-*Caribbean* diaspora. Hurston—and Cabrera—left a legacy that envisioned the cohesiveness of a hemispheric community bound by an intuitive understanding that was rooted in historic memory and experience, and was not simply dependent upon the identification of a specific faith, creed, color, or regional placement, to determine belonging.

It is my hope that this project will offer new insight into the scope of Hurston's contribution to Afro-Caribbean women writers discussed here, and to the ways Hurston has reprised Alejo Carpentier's theories concerning the Marvelous Real. Like her contemporary, Lydia Cabrera, Hurston sought ways to utilize the marvelous real as a mode through which to illuminate the common histories that bound women across geographic and temporal margins. Their collective work offers insight into the genesis of the ethnographic novel as the new direction Afro-Caribbean and Caribbean authors may take in the future as women continue to discover the bonds of common experience. Jamaican writer Erna Brodber has clearly enlarged upon Hurston's example, by engaging the protagonist in the dual role of conjurer and ethnographer, situated within a context of magical realism. Her contemporary, Nalo Hopkinson, is, at the time of this writing, a regrettably understudied Afro-Caribbean woman author, whose novels demand further serious and lengthy consideration, particularly as Hopkinson's speculative fiction takes Hurston's strategy a dramatic step forward into the fantastic and imaginative realm of speculative fiction. Here, she introduces groundbreaking and revelatory means of discovering new ways to present women's identity. As though she had reached through time and space to identify with a distant foremother, Hopkinson casts her protagonist Tan-Tan as the conjurer of her own narrative, and as the traveler-ethnographer who allows readers a glimpse into one woman's odyssey. That odyssey begins with the traumatizing effects of disconnection, displacement and spiritual fragmentation, to arrive at the triumphant acquisition of wholeness and selfhood.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrahams, Roger. “Ordinary and Extraordinary Experience.” The Anthropology of Experience. Eds. Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1986.

---. “Christmas and Carnival on St. Vincent.” The Man-of-Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1983. 98-108.

---. “Sense and Nonsense on St. Vincent: Speech Behavior and Decorum in a Caribbean Community.” The Man-of-Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1983. 88-97.

Bhabha, Homi. The Location of Culture. London: Routledge, 1994.

Bowers, Maggie. Magic(al) Realism. London: Routledge, 2004.

Brodber, Erna. Louisiana: A Novel. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1994.

---. “Beyond the Boundary: Magical Realism in the Jamaican Frame of Reference.” Sisyphus and Eldorado: Magical and Other Realisms in Caribbean Literature. Ed. Timothy J. Reiss. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2002. 15-24.

Byrd, Veronica and Craig Dominey. “The Boo Hag.” The Moonlit Road. 2010. December 2010.<http//www.themoonlitroad.com>.

Carpentier, Alejo. “Baroque and the Marvelous Real.” Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community. Eds. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris. Durham: Duke UP, 1995. 89-108.

---. The Kingdom of this World. 1949. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

---. “On the Marvelous Real in America.” Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community. Eds. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris. Durham: Duke UP, 1995. 75-88.

Cartwright, Keith. “Voodoo Hermeneutics/The Crossroads Sublime: Soul Musics, Mindful Body, and Creole Consciousness.” Mississippi Quarterly 57.1 (2003): 157-171.

---. “To Walk With the Storm: Oya as the Transformative ‘I’ of Zora Neale Hurston’s Afro-Atlantic Callings.” Global Contexts, Local Literatures: The New Southern Studies. Spec. issue of American Literature 78. 4 (2006): 741-767.

Clifford, James. The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988.

Collins, Derek. “The Myth and Ritual of Ezili Freda in Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God.*” Western Folklore 55.2 (1996): 137-154.

Dalgarno, Emily “Words Walking Without Masters”: Ethnography and the Creative Process in *Their Eyes Were Watching God.*" American Literature. 64.3 (1992): 519-541.

Davis, Wade. The Serpent and the Rainbow: A Harvard Scientist’s Astonishing Journey Into the Secret Societies of Haitian Voodoo, Zombis, and Magic. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985.

Desmangles, Leslie G. The Faces of the Gods: Vodou and Roman Catholicism in Haiti. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1992.

Deren, Maya. Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti. 1953. McPherson, 2004.

Dutton, Wendy. "The Problem of Invisibility: Voodoo and Zora Neale Hurston." Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies. 13.2 (1993): 131-152.

Edwards, Erica. “Moses, Monster of the Mountain: Gendered Violence in Black Leadership’s Gothic Tale.” Callaloo. 31.4 (2008): 1084-1102.

Emory, Amy Fass. “The Zombie In-As Text: Zora Neale Hurston’s *Tell My Horse.*” African American Review. 39.3 (2005): 327-336.

Faris, Wendy B. “Definitions and Locations: Magical Realism Between Modern and Postmodern Fiction.” Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2004. 7-16.

Fass-Emory, Amy. “The Zombie In-As Text: Zora Neale Hurston’s *Tell My Horse.*” African American Review. 39.3. (2005): 327-336.

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. “The Black Arts Movement.” The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Nellie Y. Mckay. New York: Norton, 2004. 1837-50.

---. The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism. New York: Oxford UP, 1988.

Hall, Stuart. Cultural Identity and Diaspora: Community, Culture, Difference. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

Hill, Lynda Marion. “Hurston’s Hieroglyphics: The Word Magic of Ritual Action.” Social Rituals and the Verbal Art of Zora Neale Hurston. Washington: Howard UP, 1996. 127-169.

Hemenway, Robert. Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1977.

Hernandez, Graciela. “Multiple Subjectivities and Strategic Positionality: Zora Neale Hurston’s Experimental Ethnographies.” Women Writing Culture. Eds. Behar, Ruth and Deborah A. Gordon. Berkeley: U of California P, 1995.

Hill, Lynda Marion. “Hurston’s Hieroglyphics: The Word Magic of Ritual Action.” Social Rituals and Verbal art of Zora Neale Hurston. 127-169.

Hoffman-Jeep, Lynda. “Creating Ethnography: Zora Neale Hurston and Lydia Cabrera.” African American Review 39. 3 (2000): 337-353.

Hopkinson, Nalo. Midnight Robber. New York: Warner, 2000.

---. Introduction. So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction and Fantasy. Eds. Nalo Hopkinson and Uppinder Mehan.Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004. 7-9.

Hurston, Zora Neale. Dust Tracks on a Road. 1942. New York: Perennial, 1996.

---. “Hoodoo in America.” Journal of American Folklore. 44.174 (1931): 317-417.

---. Moses, Man of the Mountain. 1939. New York: Harper Perennial, 1991.

---. “Mother Catherine.” Hurston: Folklore, Memoirs, & Other Writings. New York: Library of Amer. 1995. 854-860.

---. Mules and Men. 1935. New York: Perennial, 1990.

---. “The Sanctified Church.” Hurston: Folklore, Memoirs, & Other Writings. New York: Library of Amer. 1995. 901-905.

---. Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica. 1938. New York: Perennial, 1990.

---. Their Eyes Were Watching God. 1937. New York: Perennial, 1990.

Jacobs, Claude F. and Andrew J. Kaslow. The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans: Origins, Beliefs, and Rituals of an African-American Religion. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1991.

Kaplan, Carla. Every Tongue Got To Confess: Negro Folk-Tales from the Gulf States. New York: Harper Collins, 2001.

---. Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters. New York: Anchor Books, 2003.

King James Bible. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970.

Kristeva, Julia. The Powers of Horror: Essays on Abjection. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982.

Kutzinsky, Vera. "Borders, Bodies, and Regions: The United States and the Caribbean." A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003. 171-191.

Lamothe, Daphne. "Vodou Imagery, African American Tradition, and Cultural

Transformation in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God." Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God: A Casebook. Ed. Cheryl A. Wall. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. 165-189.

Long, Carolyn Morrow. A New Orleans Voudou Priestess: The Legend and Reality of Marie Laveau. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2006.

---. Spiritual Merchants: Religion, Magic, and Commerce. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P,

2001.

McDowell, Deborah. "Lines of Descent/Dissenting Lines." Foreword. Moses, Man of the Mountain. By Zora Neale Hurston. 1939. New York: Harper Perennial, 1991. vii-xxii.

Morrison, Toni. "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation." Black Women Writers (1959-1980): A Critical Evaluation. Ed. Mari Evans. Garden City: Anchor Press, 1984. 342.

Musgrave, Megan. "Phenomenal Women: The Shape-Shifter Archetype in Postcolonial Magical Realist Fiction." FEMSPEC 6.2 (2005): 65-86.

Pryse, Marjorie and Hortense Spillers. Introduction. Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction, and Literary Tradition. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985. 1-24.

Raboteau, Albert. Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978.

Rahming, Melvin B. "Towards a Critical Theory of Spirit: The Insistent Demands of Erna Brodber's *Myal*." Journal of Commonwealth Literature 42.4 (2007): 53-63.

Reed, Ishmael. Foreword. Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica. By Zora Neale Hurston. 1938. New York: Perennial, 1990. xi-xv.

Renda, Mary. Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1919-1940. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2001.

Roach, Joseph. Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance. New York: Columbia UP, 1996.

Rodriguez-Mangual, Edna M. Lydia Cabrera and the Construction of an Afro-Cuban Cultural Identity (Envisioning Cuba). Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2004.

Rosenbaum, Art and Margo, Johann S. Buis. Shout Because You're Free: The African American Ring Shout Tradition in Coastal Georgia. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1998.

Ryan, Judylyn S. “Spirituality and/as Ideology in Black Women’s Literature: The Preaching of Maria W. Stewart and Baby Suggs, Holy.” Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity. Eds. Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker. Berkeley: U of California P, 1998. 267-287.

Schmidt, Hans. The United States Occupation of Haiti: 1915-1934. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1995.

Scott, James. Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts. New Haven: Yale UP, 1990.

Senn, Bryan. Drums of Terror: Voodoo in the Cinema. Baltimore: Luminary Press, 1998.

Smith, Eric D. “The Ghost Machine: Spiritualism, Anachronism, and Alterior Acoustics in Erna Brodber's Louisiana.” Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies 12.2 (2005): 84-99.

Taylor, Diana. The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas. Durham: Duke UP, 2003.

Tallant, Robert. Voodoo in New Orleans. New York: Pelican, 1946.

Taylor, Koko. “Voodoo Woman.” I Got What it Takes. Alligator Records, 1975.

Toland-Dix, Shirley. “'This Is the Horse. Will You Ride?': Zora Neale Hurston, Erna Brodber, and Rituals of Spirit Possession.” Just Below South: Intercultural Performance in the Caribbean and the U.S. South. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2007.

Trefzer, Annette. "Possessing the Self: Caribbean Identities in Zora Neale Hurston's *Tell My Horse*," African American Review 34.2 (2000): 299-312.

Walker, Alice. "Zora Neale Hurston: A Cautionary Tale and Partisan View." In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens. New York: Harcourt, 1983. 83-92.

Wall, Cheryl A. Chronology. Hurston: Novels and Short Stories. New York: Library of America, 1995. 1013-1032.

Washington, Teresa N. "Un/Complementary Complements: Gender, Power, and Ajè." Our Mothers, Our Powers, Our Texts: Manifestations of Ajè in Africana Literature. 165-197.

---. "Power of the Word/Power of the Works: The Signifying Soul of Africana Women's Literature." FEMSPEC 6.1 (2005): 58-70.

Wells, Kimberly Ann. "Screaming, Flying, and Laughing: Magical Feminism's Witches in Contemporary Film, Television, and Novels." Diss. Texas A&M U, 2007.