

MIDNIGHT'S GRANDCHILDREN:
ADOLESCENCE IN CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL LITERATURE

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by
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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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Presented by Marissa Fugate, a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy, and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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ABSTRACT

“Midnight’s Grandchildren: Adolescence in Contemporary Global Literature” assesses the trope of adolescence in contemporary global literature, as it is employed to describe and act as a metaphor for emerging nations. My inquiry reads against the prevailing idea of adolescence as a pejorative term indicating a transitional state, and argues for adolescence as an enduring and distinct realm of infinite possibility. I chose to investigate how this social information is delivered through narrative art, which has a long history of works on adolescence, such as the *bildungsroman*. Unfortunately, most narratives look specifically at how the adolescent grows up, or what happens while they are looking forward towards adulthood. These types of literature play a part in the intimate link between the accepted cultural definition of adolescence as a space to outgrow and the rhetoric used to discuss and ultimately exclude emerging nations from participation in the global community. The ramifications of reading adolescence as a transitory place that always begets maturity is a systematic marginalization of nations – and associated literary output – that do not fall into and comply with the expectations of late-stage global capitalism. One effect of this marginalization is an insistence that the emerging nation novel acknowledge its debt to the colonial “parent.” I contend that the anxiety provoked by adolescent reproduction maps on to social anxiety about emerging nations. By re-imagining adolescence in the novel as a distinct plane of existence without the baggage of “growing up,” I argue that it is possible to reimagine emerging nations on new terms that devalue and destabilize the current order.

Introduction

The Adolescent

The labyrinth is simultaneously inextricable and impenetrable.

Those inside cannot get out and those outside cannot get in.

--Gerald LaRue, *Ancient Myth and Modern Man*

In the opening passage of William Golding's classic novel *Lord of the Flies*, readers meet Piggy and Ralph, both survivors of a plane crash on a deserted island somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. The boys, both adolescents, take stock of their surroundings and announce, first questioningly, then happily that no "grown-ups" exist on the island. "Aren't there any grown-ups at all?" Piggy asks Ralph. "I don't think so" is Ralph's reply. "The fair boy said this solemnly; but then the delight of a realized ambition came over him. In the middle of the scar, he stood on his head and grinned at the reversed fat boy. "No grown-ups!" (2) The novel traces the creation and dissolution of an ersatz "no adults allowed" community on the abandoned island, with Ralph and another pubescent boy, Jack, as leaders. Over the past sixty years, *The Lord of the Flies* has been read and re-read, written about and re-written and can be read as a cautionary tale of what happens when teenagers are left alone to govern themselves; according to Golding, nothing good can happen when teenagers are left alone to govern themselves. Salvation arrives in the form of a British naval officer who chides Ralph for his "poor show" as

leader, while Jack is reduced once again to “A little boy who wore the remains of an extraordinary black cap on his red hair and who carried the remains of a pair of spectacles at his waist.” The officer is taken aback by the condition of the boys and asks what, to him, would be the logical question: ““Are there any adults – any grownups with you?””(234). When the boys lose their composure and begin sobbing, the officer looks out into the distance at his destroyer while the boys (now they are again boys) gather themselves together.

Golding’s novel continues to hold a space in the imagination as a kind of horrible warning: left alone, teenagers will revert to the lowest common denominator – savagery has no option but to take over and run rampant. Ralph and the others are only redeemable by the fact that they had the steady hand of adult influence before their crash landing and after, a “grownup” officer with “white drill, epaulettes, a revolver, a row of gilt buttons” (233) looking off to the distant shores of Britannia, reminding them of their ineffectual, juvenile attempts at brokering a new nation while they are still just *teenagers*. This project explores perceptions of adolescence as a rhetorical framing device to connote lack of readiness, immaturity, and weakness in nation building. Moving from Haiti to Ireland, Trinidad to South Africa, Zimbabwe to Zaire, this work investigates the rhetoric of adolescence in contemporary global literature.. Through these texts, I attempt to recalibrate the idea of adolescence, making the case for redefining adolescence as a provisional, impotent, threatening state and reimaging it as a fixed place of limitless imagination and reinvention.

Current research and scholarship reaffirms the prominence of the adolescent as a subject of scrutiny and – more often than not – confusion. Most recently, neurologists

have suggested two differing theories on how the adolescent brain works. Frances E. Jensen, with co-author Amy Ellis Nutt, presents her theories on the hypothalamus in her new book *The Teenage Brain: A Neuroscientist's Survival Guide to Raising Adolescents and Young Adults*. Jensen challenges long accepted beliefs about how the brain develops. The brain is configured over time through pruning of select neurons based on external stimuli or lack thereof (what some call “turning off” or “turning on” receptors) and myelination – covering over with fatty tissues – of neurons in order to facilitate faster transmission of signals along neural pathways. In conjunction, pruning and myelination create a unique brain map that allows for specialization within brain function and full myelination helps create lush pathways and connections among neurons.

Earlier theories of brain plasticity saw pruning and myelination as a process that ended around age five; however, new research indicates that the process actually finishes much later, perhaps as late as the early twenties with a long period of increased plasticity in the teenage years. Research also indicates that pruning and myelination occurs front to back in the brain, beginning with the amygdala and other “primitive” parts of the brain, which are responsible for flight or fight responses to stress. The last places to fully myelinate are the cerebral cortex and frontal lobe, the areas of the brain where logic, reasoning, and emotional self-regulation reside. For teenagers, this means impulse control is still a largely deregulated activity in the brain, leading to poor decision making and reckless behavior. But perhaps more importantly, this period of greater plasticity means that, beginning in early adolescence and lasting almost ten years to the early twenties, people experience a greater surge of brain development and growth than any other time in their lives. Previously, such development and opportunity were seen as the hallmark of

early childhood, only lasting about four years (from ages one to five). Because of such suppositions, adolescents have traditionally been seen as having mostly formed and static personalities with little development, growth, or opportunity.

A competing theory held by Laurence Steinberg, author of *The Age of Opportunity: Lessons from the New Science of Adolescence*, contends that teenage brains aren't underdeveloped but rather overdeveloped in certain areas. Working with C57BL/6J rats, Steinberg found that, given access to alcohol and morphine, adolescent C57BL/6J rats routinely ingested high quantities of both substances, but ingested nearly twice as much ethanol when they were placed in a cage in pairs of twos and threes with other adolescent rats. The problem, Steinberg suggests, is not that the frontal lobes aren't underdeveloped in teenagers, but that the *nucleus accumbens* – the pleasure center of the brain – is at its largest during adolescence. He writes: “The notion that adolescents take risks because they don’t know any better is ludicrous” (85). Instead, Steinberg argues that the *nucleus accumbens* begins developing in childhood, reaching its full growth in adolescence before it begins shrinking through adulthood. At the same time, dopamine receptors begin filling in, creating a lush pleasure field in the adolescent brain.

The adolescent brain is primed for pleasure. Steinberg argues that there is no other point in life in which pleasure is felt as keenly as it is in adolescence. Teenagers do not engage in activities which appear stupid or risky because they are less capable of assessing risk, but because teenagers are biologically and evolutionarily driven to find pleasure. In evolutionary terms, the greater the risk, the greater the reward: our primates ancestors had to venture out of their birth groups in order to find reproductive partners. Venturing out meant dangerous terrain, potential conflict, and the threat of starvation,

attack, or getting lost, but the reward for such activities was sex, an act that not only ensured reproduction, but stimulated the pleasure centers of the brain.

Whether the biological cause of adolescent risk-taking and poor decision making is rooted in an enlarged pleasure center or a lack of development in the decision-making areas, it all leads down the same path – teenagers are willing to take higher risks, engage in unhealthy and potentially life-threatening behaviors, act impulsively, and think irrationally. They can't help it. But, the other side of that argument suggests that teenagers are more willing to take big risks that can result in big payoffs. Teens are capable of experiencing much deeper pleasure and higher highs than children or adults. They are willing to think outside of standard protocols handed to them by the establishment. Their brains are growing and changing and developing at an extremely rapid rate. In short: adolescence is a self-contained space that presents almost limitless opportunities, *as well as* the right mix of irrationality and confidence to act on those opportunities. Neuroscientists are slowly catching up to the fact that the teenage brain is not only worthy of study, but is a separate entity to the child's or adult's brain, and worthy of separate study.

Biologically speaking, adolescence is a phase, one that is grown into and then, just as quickly, grown out of. Technically speaking, childhood and adulthood are also phases, though the entry point of childhood is infancy and the exit point of adulthood is death. Despite this, adolescence suffers from a kind of middle child syndrome, and has been coded as a not-quite-serious stage of development that must be suffered through. Though some attention is being paid to the teenage brain, the liminality and exclusion of the adolescent is reinforced through culture and custom, as well as legal and social

structures. This work concerns itself with two rhetorical representations – first, the adolescent in literature and second, the “adolescent” nation – and explores the ways in which these representations appear to bolster the idea of adolescence as an in-between state. Sifting through legal, historical, cultural, and social depictions of teenagers in novels from developing and emerging nations, I argue for adolescence as a place of infinite opportunity and limitless possibility in contrast to the old axiom of progressive development that dismisses teenagers as only good for, as Shakespeare says in *A Winter’s Tale*, “getting wenches in child, wronging the ancentry, stealing, fighting ...”

By examining the confluence in the early twentieth-century of:

- the emergence of adolescence as a separate period of life;
- the age of nations;
- and the rise of adolescent protagonists in literature

I argue for adolescence, and specifically the adolescent nation, as more than a short-lived developmental phase. I disrupt the accepted notion that the growth of nations is linear and that emerging nations will eventually grow up into something resembling the “adult” nations of the world – that is to say, resembling former colonial powers and current global economic and cultural leaders. Opening up space to think about these nations as something other than impulsive, argumentative, engaging in risks, and/or childish, this argument allows them to be seen outside of the linear growth narrative. In rethinking this narrative, I argue for a radical reconsideration of emerging nations within the global conversation through a radical reconsideration of adolescents in literature from these nations.

Adolescence as a stage of development is, as anthropologists John and Virginia

Demos note, “one of our most widely held and deeply embedded assumptions about the process of human development” (632). Teenagers and adolescents are marketed music, television, books, and clothes. Educators spend countless hours figuring out how to reach teens. Laws become tangled and complicated when teenagers commit crimes, and have, over the past thirty years, created new categories of legislation. Despite entrenched beliefs of adolescence as a simple biological and cultural fact, what we know of adolescence as a defined stage of development is a relatively new one and began in the last two decades of the twentieth century, crystallizing just at the turn of the century. As Demos and Demos point out, “one could almost call [adolescence] an invention of that period; though it did incorporate, in quite a central way, some older attitudes and modes of thinking,” (632) specifically trajectories of American¹ childhood and child behavior.

Prior to about 1825, books about child-rearing and child behavior came chiefly from the United Kingdom and offered little more than platitudes about childhood which reinforced notions of children as small adults. One of the more famous manuals, Scottish physician William Buchan’s 1804 *Advice to Mothers*, proposed

there are few instances of human folly which would astonish us more, than that of a fond mother, who, in order to protect her child from a little pain or uneasiness when he is young, multiplies his sufferings when he reaches maturity. Strange infatuation! to sacrifice the man to the infant, and, through over-solicitude for a year or two after his entrance into life, to shorten its natural extent, and to fill up that contracted span of existence

¹ Though adolescence is a universal condition, many critics contend that “teenagers” are a uniquely American phenomenon, or, at least, the original conceptions of how adolescence is viewed are uniquely American.

with weakness, irritability, and disease! Did anybody ever think of rearing an oak plant in a hot-house, thence to remove to a bleak mountain? And is a puny, enervated nursling better prepared to endure the transition from the lap of softness to all the accidents of a rugged and stormy world? (213)

Such manuals took cues from the Enlightenment perspective of children as *tabula rasa* awaiting direction from adults, as advanced by John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as well as the increasing popularity of Calvinist perspectives that saw such relationships as a battle of wills between the sinful child and the parent. Problems of tantrums, toilet-training, sleeping, and discipline were considered issues of character, and the parent a bulwark against the slippery slope into sin.

Manuals like Buchan's were readily available in the United States and went through numerous printings, often bundled together with works such as John Cadogan's *An Essay Upon Nursing, and the Management of Children* (1804) and M. Berquin's *The looking-glass for the mind, or, The juvenile friend: being a valuable and collection of interesting and miscellaneous incidents, calculate to exhibit to young minds the happy effects of youthful innocence, and filial affection* (1815). However, around 1825, books about child-rearing from American authors began to appear and slowly took over sales from books by British and other foreign authors. According to Demos and Demos, the public interest in childrearing manuals by American authors can be traced to three major factors: first, an interest in childhood as a separate category from adulthood, a concept that was taking hold in England as well; second, the rise of nationalism in the United States suggested that English books were no longer "suitable" for American children; and finally, "the new and authentically 'native' literature on this subject reflected deep

anxieties about the quality of American family life" (133).

The major source of anxiety in childrearing literature of the time came from one focal point: authority. Alarmingly, new trends placed the child front and center of family life. In this new formation, children were now considered the focal point of the family, swaddled and pampered and dressed in frills and ruffles for the consumption of friends and family. Discipline, the bedrock of the Enlightenment and Calvinist perspectives, crucial for avoiding the licentiousness of sin or the ravaging influences of nature, was now falling by the wayside. Lydia Child's *The Mother's Book* (1831) advises readers to avoid exercising direct authority upon children, lest they rebel against their parents:

I have said that example and silent influence were better than direct rules and commands. Nevertheless, there are cases where rules must be made; and children must be taught to obey implicitly. For instance, a child must be expressly forbidden to play with fire, to climb upon the tables, &c. But whenever it is possible, restraint should be invisible. (43)

To this end, Child writes in her Preface:

WHEN I wrote the 'Frugal Housewife,' some booksellers declined publishing it, on account of the great variety of cookery books already in the market. I was perfectly aware of this circumstance; but among them all, I did not know of one suited to the wants of the middling class in our own country. I believed such a book was needed; and the sale of more than six thousand copies in one year has proved that I was right in my conjecture.

If the same remark is made with regard to adding another to the numerous books on education, I have the same answer to give – I do not know of one adapted to popular use in this country. (14)

Here, Child explicitly links American sensibilities to coddling children and inhibiting direct acts of authority in deference to the child's emotional well-being.

While child-rearing manuals were picking up prominence in the United States, the notion of manuals for teenagers were also becoming more popular. The idea of adolescence as a specific period of transition was not unknown to Victorian authors. In fact, alongside the proliferation of handbooks on children, handbooks designed for the "youth" market also increased. Geared mainly towards the moral and ethical life of youths, both instructive manuals and in novels such as Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) were rife with anxiety about the changing landscape of urbanization, as well as the wickedness and debauchery that lay in wait for susceptible young people. Chapters in books about child-rearing were devoted to adolescence (including Child's *The Mother's Book*, which concludes with "Chapter X: Management During the Teens"). Although they did not acknowledge the physical changes adolescence wrought by adolescence, these morality guides (as well as the aforementioned child-rearing manuals) spoke of adolescence as a period of malleability, change, and plasticity. Hence, the anxiety of influence upon such easily-led young people. Without proper care and guidance from adults (and books written by adults), these young people could easily be led astray by the less-palatable elements of the urban area: crass economic and commercial desires, frenzied social expectations, unsavory entertainments.

In the latter half of the nineteenth-century, psychologist G. Stanley Hall began a long-term study of childhood based on large samples of American parents and children, whom he engaged in surveys, written reflections, and research groups over a period of several years. This study, published in part in 1882 as “The Moral and Religious Training of Children,” in the *Princeton Review* was the first mention adolescence as a time of great emotional and physical upheaval. Hall writes: “It is therefore not surprising that the statistics show … that far more conversions, *pro rata*, take place during the adolescent period, which according to the best authorities, does not end before the age of twenty four or five, than during any other period of equal length” (“Moral” 43-44). Although Hall’s work focuses on the religious education of children, it goes on to make the argument that not only is adolescence a period of great change, it is also a period of extremes:

It is the golden age of life, in which enthusiasm, sympathy, generosity, and curiosity are at their strongest and best, [...] but it also a period subject to Wertherian crisis, such as Hume, Richter, J.S. Mill and others passed through and all depends on the direction given to these new forces. The dangers of this period are great and manifest … the feelings are most often perverted and lack emotional steadiness, violent impulses, unreasonable conduct, lack of enthusiasm and sympathy are very often caused by abnormalities here. The previous selfhood is broken up … and a new individual is in the process of being born. All is solvent, plastic, particularly susceptible to outside influences. (“Moral” 45)

With this article, Hall popularized the idea of the adolescent as a transitional figure, caught between total imagination and total despair. The final result is a creature

with no hard borders anywhere – Hall’s use of “plastic” is repeated over and over in the resulting literature. In 1904, Hall published his two-volume set *Adolescence: its Psychology, and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime Religion, and Education*. The work takes the idea of adolescence as a transitional time and stands it up against Darwinian ideas of taxonomy. Hall uses this platform to promote Ernst Haeckel’s 1886 theory of recapitulation, most often rendered as “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.” In other words, Hall felt strongly that each person develops (both physically and psychologically) in a way that corresponds to human development, e.g., the infant is correlated to our simian ancestors and the child is a savage living in the jungle, prone to self-preservation and selfishness at the expense of everyone else. The adolescent, Hall argues, is linked to – and beyond – the most recent burst of human development. The enormous potential for growth Hall sees in the adolescent “is carried for a time beyond the present point of civilization” (Hall, qtd in Demos and Demos 136). Such a statement is not without its contradictions, and Hall makes clear the interplay between many aspects of adolescence, such as happiness and depression, fanaticism and apathy, fetishism and ennui, cruelty and tenderness, combine to create a near-constant feeling of *sturm und drang* in the adolescent.

Just as the birth of adolescence as a separate category of life came into prominence through texts on child-rearing, *adolescent nations* – or emerging nations – and concepts of nation-building also have a lineage attached to texts. In the early American republic, literature for children (including the aforementioned morality tales) undertook the role of bringing children up into ideal citizenship; the affection children naturally felt towards parental figures became, through these texts, inextricably connected

to affection for the nation. Critic Courtney Weikle-Mills explains: “children’s books, which entailed both an extension of parental power and a translation of parent into text, acted as an intermediary step in [the] chain of political associations, creating an affectionate citizenship that was training for, and enactment of, the citizen’s relationship to nation and law” (38). Familial duties eventually overlap with political duties and, while children and citizens are quite different – children are subjects of their parents, while citizens are subjects of the more intangible (or possibly imagined) concept of the law, this intermarriage suggests the importance of texts to “train” the young reader into ideal citizenship. The American republic depended on spreading the idea of democracy as rooted within the people – in order to make this concept viable, laws had to somehow feel as if they were “derived from … friends, families, and neighbours” (39).

Continuing through the end of the 19th-century, children’s texts played a pivotal role in instructing children on how to grow up into ideal citizens. They exploited the submission of children to their parents by replacing the authority figure of the parent with the authority of the text. The republic was able to take advantage of the domestic loves children already nurtured by employing texts as an educational device to instruct children in the proper ways to behave: good children were always rewarded, bad children came to bad ends. *Lessons for Infant Schools* (1845), published by the Sunday School Union, reminded children: “In the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; If sinners entice thee, consent thou not; and The wages of sin is death.” McGuffey’s *The Eclectic Third Reader* (1853), the standard text in American schools, included chapters on proper behavior: “Effects of Rashness,” “The Consequences of Idleness,” “Advantages of Industry,” “Punctuality and Punctuation,” and “How to Guard Against Temptation.” The

story of George Washington and the cheery tree (“I cannot tell a lie”) did not originate with the McGuffey Readers, but claimed a place in American history after McGuffey printed it in his fourth reader. In fact, the Preface to *The Eclectic Fourth Reader* informs instructors: “[This text] is deliberately intended to lead the mind of the pupil, as often as practicable, beyond the pages of the book in his hand.” Thus, the book buttresses itself as an authority in both behavior and national identity.

Concurrently, across the globe, the ideas of nationalism and national identity were becoming more popular. In the crucible of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century, I argue that the idea of adolescence and nationalism were forged together, creating an inextricable link between the two ideas that has not yet been explored fully. G. W. Freidrich Hegel defined nationalism to mean the banding together of people with common religions, values, languages, and geography were the glue of the modern nation when dynastic ties deteriorated. Indeed, beginning around 1848, after the failure of the German Confederation, what we know as modern European nations began to coalesce into geographic areas united by religion, values, and language in the absence of traditional monarchies or dynasties, per Benedict Anderson’s famous decree that the nation “is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6-7). Between 1804 and 1920, Germany, Italy, Romania, France, Bulgaria and others formed into nation-states, while other countries such as Greece, Ireland, and Albania participated in uprisings against ruling nations, sparking long independence movements that lasted for decades (and continue, in some cases).

One cornerstone of these nationalistic movements was the appropriation of characteristics from established nations, such as England (circa 1600)² and the Netherlands (circa 1581)³. Those nations boasted successes in the global economy, predicated heavily on the attainment of colonies for both imperial and colonial uses, as well investment in industrialization and capitalism as a collective mechanism designed to engage the community in an “act of affirmation,” as defined by Ernest Renan, to seal the collective sensibility. In the late nineteenth-century, newly constituted nations such as Germany and France swiftly engaged in the colonial game, scooping up colonies and overseas protectorates as a means to procure raw materials and human capital to aid in their inclusion to the cadre of “adult” nations as global economic peers.

One cornerstone of the nation was affinity. As Anderson defines it, affinity encompasses “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (224). While most interpretations of Anderson suggest that this affinity is one of geopolitical borders, each co-constituting a nation, the idea can be similarly applied to the idea of what Frederic Jameson called “first-world” nations. In other words, becoming a nation in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe involved feeling an affinity for your (European) peers. This involved both emulation of established nations, but also use of xenophobia designed to unite disparate groups under one banner.

It is in this environment that Stanley Hall launches his idea of adolescence, rooted

² Critics argue that England constituted itself as a nation during the Middle Ages, though many scholars treat the signing of the Magna Carta as the start of the nation of England that we recognize today. See also Adrian Hastings *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism* (1997).

³ In 1581, seven provinces confederated under a central government, called the States General, seated at The Hague. In 1795, The Batavian Republic was established as a unitary state and continues today, with some changes in geographic borders (notably the loss of present-day Belgium and Luxembourg in 1830).

in recapitulation theory. Though Hall only spent about a year in Germany, from 1878-1879, he was highly influenced by German philosophies of *Volk* and Hegelian idealism, going so far as to co-author *Hegel, as the national philosopher of Germany* in 1874 and publish two articles on Hegel in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* in 1878. Hall drew heavily on Germanic theories of racial segregation and *Volk* in his theories of the adolescent, going so far as to classify adolescence as a time of *strum und drang* – directly connecting it to late eighteenth-century German arts and culture and, by extension, the emergence of modern German nationalism.

Bringing these two ideas together suggests that adolescence, as presented by Hall and influenced by the colonialism and xenophobia of newly forming nationalisms in Europe, became a kind of shorthand used to classify nations. In the taxonomic sense, European and American nations with robust capitalist systems and colonial enterprises became the “adults” of the global enterprise, while countries that were digging out of colonial relationships, such as Ireland, Greece, Albania, et. al., were considered adolescent – fighting for independence, suffering the storms and stresses of growing up, but expected, with the right guidance, to pull out and become adult nations. Therefore, the colonized properties of these adult nations became children: subject to paternal relationships, closer, as Hall would have it, to primates than humans. Identifying colonies as children serves the purpose of significantly othering them and therefore justifying subjugation on the principle of inherent superiority.

The idea of adolescence as a mid-point gave a convenient place to park nations that were obviously white and European and therefore not as base as the African or Eastern colonies. These countries were on the cusp of adulthood, or full inclusion in the

world of nations. As independence movements came about in the post-WWII world, and the baser elements of the world fought to sever colonial ties, it became clear that these nations could no longer be classified simply as children: inclusion in the United Nations, involvement in geopolitical affairs, and entrance into the world economy all kept these new nations from total infantilization. Adolescence again became a convenient way to categorize nations that the “adults” weren’t ready to admit to the global ruling class. History, however, has shown that these nations have not – or have not been allowed to – mature into models of European or American nationalism. Forces of globalism, destructive economic policies, civil wars, lack of natural resources, and a myriad of other limiting factors have created a space where emerging nations have “failed” to reach their full potential. Looking back to the early twentieth century, defining a transitional figure in between childhood and adulthood was a necessary step in defining the nation and creating a nationalistic buy-in. But, in contemporary configurations, this transitional figure – the adolescent – is viewed with some trepidation: if reaching towards “adulthood” is no longer possible, then how does that change expectations about the linear path to national identity? If, in these newly emerging nations, as critic John Marx argues, “the ideal of citizenship cedes center stage, [and] competent management [becomes] as an aspiration every bit as compelling as the goal of national liberation it displaces” (597), then how does the fluid state of adolescence continue to bear relevance? In what ways does the deterioration of such linear progressions open the door for differing ways of defining the nation?

The term *failed state* carries with it a very specific connotation of total state failure to provide food, resources, infrastructure, and/or protection. But, as Charles T.

Call notes in *Why Peace Fails*, this definition of state failure assumes a complete breakdown on most, if not all, levels of governance. Instead, Call suggests a “gap framework” to help define the condition of a state, rather than a strict dichotomy of “failed” vs. “successful” states. Taking my cues from Call, I have defined *adolescent nation* as a nation that carries with it the potential to thrive in the current geopolitical climate. This potential includes, but is not limited to: free and open elections; ability to provide food and resources for the citizenry; a pro-democratic society; security from hostile takeovers (both external and internal); and legitimacy of governing bodies and persons. An adolescent nation may have the internal structures to support some or all of these frameworks, but may not have the social or economic capital to fully integrate them into the national narrative.

in literature and This project specifically defines the *adolescent nation*

While these concerns often seem better suited to the social and political sciences, fiction has “a stake in the state’s future” (Marx 597). The novel produces a narrative of lived life that rarely exists outside of old-fashioned anthropological studies. This alone is a compelling argument for the inclusion of the novel as a meaningful contributor in discussions of how nations work. However, the “lived experience” of the novel is more than just verisimilitude amid statistical tables and arrays. The novel illuminates what development expert Christine Sylvester calls “inconsistent objects” – that is, anomalies that don’t fit neatly into tables or charts. Beyond illuminating oddities and objects of interest that lie outside of the statistical norm, these inconsistencies play a crucial role in examining national identity.

One novel I examine in this book, Pat McCabe's 1998 *Breakfast on Pluto*, presents the transgender prostitute Patrick "Pussy" Braden as the protagonist. Pussy is tasked with telling the story of his life parallel to the story of the Troubles and Ireland's attempt to violently wrest her independence from lingering colonial influence. By giving Pussy center stage in telling the story of the nation, McCabe is pulling the veil back from the "official" narrative of 1970s Ireland, which excluded non-heteronormative narratives of gender and sexuality in favor of highly politicized Catholic ones. This allows McCabe to engage in what Marx calls the "counterdiscourse" of failed state fiction: "While fiction does offer a humanizing counterpoint to the cold facts of statistical calculation, it also portrays life in the failed state as an education—the sort of education, in fact, that might make one more expert than the experts" (599). In the case of *Breakfast on Pluto* and other novels I analyze, I argue that making the already-queered protagonist an adolescent doubles down on Marx's contention in two ways: the teenager may be in better position to be an expert on life in the failed state than the adult because adolescence offers a range of possibilities outside the scope of adulthood.

The potential for the adolescent to be more expert than the experts is a cause of deep anxiety in fiction. The adolescent, newly categorized as such, begins to appear as a protagonist in novels around the same time as the rise of nations. Unlike his literary predecessors, the adolescent in literary novels was not a character used as a puppet to relay morality tales or a marionette dancing to the tune of religious education⁴. Novels such as Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Gustave Flaubert's

⁴ Which is not to suggest that such tomes did not continue to do brisk business. *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *Pollyanna*, The Bobbsey Twins series, et. al. continued to cloak morality in the form of entertainment.

Sentimental Education (1869), Alexander Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter* (1836), or Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) present adolescent protagonists as fully-formed and serious characters. Unlike previous works featuring adolescents, such as Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), these new novels featured adolescence as a place of equilibrium, rather than a phase on the journey to adulthood. Ihab Hassan notes that these late nineteenth-century adolescents "already qualified the traditional view of [...] adolescence. But in the works of Twain and Crane, at least, the emphasis remained on the viable possibility of initiation to the adult world" (312). The adolescent, however, does not stay a static figure as the nation changes. Hassan argues that adolescents in literature from World War I "sought to understand the past rather than reach into the future" and "after World War II, the image of adolescence persisted, often assuming a nostalgic or whimsical or frankly regressive character" (313). These formulations suggest the role of the adolescent protagonist devolves over time from a character with the possibility to integrate into the world at large to a character who is unable to look forward to adulthood, or perhaps demonstrates a lack of interest in looking forward. That the adolescent has some part to play in telling the story of the nation – or that the adolescent is more of an expert in telling the story of the nation – seems patently absurd in the face of these criticisms.

This work assesses the trope of adolescence in literature, as it is employed to describe and act as a metaphor for emerging nations. My inquiry reads against the prevailing idea of adolescence as a pejorative term indicating a transitional state, and argues for adolescence as an enduring and distinct realm of infinite possibility. I chose to investigate how this social information is delivered through narrative art, which has a

long history of works concerning the adolescent, as shown above. Unfortunately, most narratives look specifically at how the adolescent grows up, or what happens while they are looking forward towards adulthood. These types of literature play a part in the intimate link between the accepted cultural definition of adolescence as a space to outgrow and the rhetoric used to discuss and ultimately exclude emerging nations from participation in the global community.

The ramifications of reading adolescence as a transitory place that always begets maturity is a systematic marginalization of nations – and associated literary output – that do not fall into and comply with the expectations of late-stage global capitalism. One effect of this marginalization is an insistence that the emerging nation novel acknowledge its debt to the colonial “parent.” In Chapter One, I explore this idea by pairing Robert McLiam Wilson’s Northern Irish novel *Eureka Street* and K. Sello Duiker’s South African novel *Thirteen Cents*. Both novels foreground the orphaned adolescent as a primary storyteller, and situate themselves as neo-*bildungsromans* with no clear “growing up” narrative. By removing the “parent,” or colonial oversight from the narrative, these novels offer a literal, physical space for both the protagonists and the emerging nations to reimagine a present that isn’t tied to expectations of growing up into a “family” narrative.

In Chapter Two, I read Edwidge Danticat’s 1994 Haitian novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* as a novel of ritual. The violent self-mutilation by the protagonist is read as a replacement for more traditional, but equally violent, rituals of transition in Haitian culture. Through this line of inquiry, I contextualize national violence as a refiguring of ritual meant to be read as an act of imagination, rather than a degenerative turn. Danticat’s novel is written in three parts, the longest of which chronicles Sophie’s

adolescence and the ritual of “testing” her mother, Martine, forces on her nightly. Though this novel does not read structurally as a narrative focused only on adolescence, I argue that the tripartite structure showcases a clear separation of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, suggesting that each can be read as a complete narrative that is not dependent on the other sections to tell a full story.

In Chapter Three, I look to the future by focusing on family, birth and inheritance as traditional markers of adulthood. Shani Mootoo’s Caribbean novel *Cereus Blooms at Night* and Pat McCabe’s Irish novel *Breakfast on Pluto* both consider the uneasy relationships between the adolescent and their reproductive capacities. I contend that the anxiety provoked by adolescent reproduction maps on to social anxiety about emerging nations. By re-imagining adolescence in the novel as a distinct plane of existence without the baggage of “growing up,” I argue that it is possible to reimagine emerging nations on new terms that devalue and destabilize the current order.

Finally, Chapter Four reimagines schooling as a place of imagination and creativity outside of the service of creating citizens. Traditionally, the boarding school, which owes a specific debt of structure to the colonial framework, is read as a dull and boring space that has one final outcome: to turn out good citizens. By interrupting that reading, I argue that the boarding school series novel, as a closed set, is not about creating citizens for the outside world, but rather a circumscribed place of infinite possibility, existing outside of traditional time and space. Examining the boarding school series novel – instead of the single boarding school novel – allows readers to clearly see the continuation of this closed world. To this end, I examine Jan van der Ruit’s *Spud* series, set in South Africa, and the first two novels of Tsitsi Dangarembga’s unfinished

Tambudzai series *Nervous Conditions* and *The Book of Not*, both set in what is now Zimbabwe.

Since the 1950s, the adolescent has held a privileged place in Western cultural understanding – to the extent of becoming the largest- and fastest-growing market segment. The attendant anxiety that continues to cling to the adolescent, despite the fact that teenagers (and the new category of “tweenagers”) are fully integrated into all aspects of social, economic, and cultural life, suggest a deeply held apprehension surrounding this phase of life. As such, the idea of the adolescent becomes an invective hurled at emerging nations and used to categorize those places as “not quite.” By examining the potential of the idea of adolescence, I believe it is possible to open up a conversation about the potentiality of this stage of life and to remove some of the anxiety of the term.

Chapter One

The Orphaned Adolescent

“It’s a good excuse, though, orphanhood. It explains everything—every mistake and every wrong turn. As Sherlock Holmes declared: she had no mother to advise her. How we long for it, that lack of advice! Imprudence could have been ours. Passionate affairs. Reckless adventures” (30). Margaret Atwood, in her experimental essay “Orphan Stories” from *The Tent*, elucidates one facet of the multiplicity of fascinations orphans hold in contemporary imagination – the orphan as a freewheeling creature, free of rules and expectations. Just as often, the orphan is painted as a tragic figure, abused and confused without a family to guide him. Regardless of the prism through which orphanhood is viewed, literature featuring orphans tends to resolve loose ends by restoring the orphan to a new family – biological or otherwise. He may find a group of friends, a lost relative, a parent returned from the brink of drugs or abandonment or self-absorption; she may attend a magical school with caring professors, or marry a man who completes her need for a closed circle. Rare is the orphan who slides through literature without ending up in a familial embrace.⁵

⁵ Michael Newton, in *Savage Girls and Wild Boys: A History of Feral Children*, suggests that the archetype of the orphan fulfills a specific purpose in mythology and literature. Tales of orphaning are, at the heart, reversals of fortune intended to right the wrongs of a society gone off the rails. He writes:

Restorations and substitutions are at the very heart of the Romulus and Remus story. Brothers take the rightful place of others, foster parents bring up other people's children, the god Mars stands in for a human suitor. Yet the crucial substitution occurs when the she-wolf saves the lost children. In that moment, when the infants' lips close upon the she-wolf's teats, a transgressive mercy removes the harmful influence of a murderous culture. The moment is a second birth [.] (5)

In this incarnation, the orphan in literature is a sign of instability, a potent physical symbol of a society in turmoil. The continued existence of the orphan represents the failure of one system and family structure to protect the child and the need for a different – but established – system to take over the care and growth of the child. Through the care and help

However, before absorption into a new family, the orphan can occupy a place of troublesome liminality, existing just outside the embrace of one family and leaning towards – but not quite inside – the embrace of another. In this in-between space, the (prior-to-finding-a-new-family) adolescent orphan presents a doubly worrisome figure armed with the social and economic capital necessary for independent living, but not the experience or (perceived) maturity. This same rhetoric is often mapped on to the emerging nation. While the nation may possess social and economic capital, they are often treated as a threat until they fall in line with policies and protections meant to restrict and control their behavior on the global stage – until they are enveloped by the familial embrace that includes structural adjustment, monetary policies, UN compliance, and the like. I explore this theme through two novels that feature adolescents who do not re-integrate into new families: Robert McLain Wilson's *Eureka Street* and K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*. I argue that these novels re-appropriate and re-present the perceived liminality and anxiety of orphaned adolescence as a place of infinite potentiality. Though this chapter asks readers to think of orphaned adolescence as a fertile place of imagination, I do not suggest that it is a uniformly generative state, nor an idea that should be applied to the emerging nation wholesale. Rather, Wilson's and Duiker's novels open up a conversation about the presumptive threat of the orphaned adolescent and the limited usefulness of dialogue that reads them as threatening.

The choice to become emancipated, rather than find another structure to settle into, is constitutive of what I call the *determined orphan*, a term that applies equally to the adolescent orphan and the adolescent nation. The determined orphan refers to the

of the kind stranger, the orphan recuperates his identity as part of – and within – a recognized domestic arrangement. His “second birth” is through his incorporation into another family, where he can grow up into a useful citizen.

active choice of emancipation and subsequent existence outside the influence of a parent or colonizer. This occurs for a variety of reasons, including a lack of protection of freedoms by the parental figure, usually evinced by lack of interest – emotional abandonment – or by the exploitation of the dependent. For both the adolescent and the emerging nation, this emancipation is complicated by the fact that this newly emancipated orphan does not fit neatly into pre-existing structures of family or law. Because of this, the adolescent orphan is uniquely placed to interrogate and disrupt traditional expectations of law and family in two ways. First, by removing the “parent” or colonial oversight from the narrative, novels featuring adolescent orphans offer a space to reimagine a present that isn’t tied to expectations of growing up and into predetermined family narrative. Second, the adolescent orphan intensifies anxieties about time and opportunity encoded in the reclamation narrative. To explain this, I will map the rise of the novel against the rise of Lockean social contracts and discuss how orphans speak to anxieties about these two new structures. Then, I will quickly trace the history of the orphan to show how those anxieties have not only continued but intensified over time. Using this as a jumping off point, I will then read Wilson’s and Duiker’s novels against these anxieties to show how the novel can question the presumptive idea that adolescent orphans are threatening.

This chapter investigates two contemporary novels: Robert McLiam Wilson’s 1997 novel *Eureka Street* and K. Sello Duiker’s 2000 novel *Thirteen Cents*. Both novels foreground the orphaned adolescent as a primary narrator and situate themselves as neo-*bildungsromane* with no clear recuperation narrative. Each novel is set preceding major changes in governmentality; *Eureka Street* is set in Belfast in the weeks just before the

ceasefires that led to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, while *Thirteen Cents* offers a glimpse of South Africa in the months just before Nelson Mandela leaves office and the ANC takes power in 1999. By setting these narratives during periods of enormous social change, Wilson and Duiker allow the novel to do the work of mapping the emerging nation onto the body of the orphaned adolescent, creating a space to read both the adolescent body and the emerging nation as places of infinite opportunity outside the traditional and historical parameters of family and law.

Eureka Street's Roche is a street urchin who forms a familial relationship with reformed hard man Jake Johnson and an economic relationship with Chuckie Lurgan, a reluctant criminal mastermind. Roche's inclusion in the narrative highlights the adolescent body as a place of inscribed growth that also anticipates the growth of a (new, unified) nation. Whereas the child emphasizes the possibility of education and socialization to provide seamless entry into the adult world, the adolescent body stresses the precarious nature of this growth by providing an intimate reminder, in the form of the almost-grown body, of the instability and frustration in what David Lloyd calls "a nation [that] isn't ready to grow up."

Roche's designation as an adolescent and as a determined orphan⁶ allows him to function in the novel as a double disturbance to the precarious social order: the poor orphan who exists outside of the law and family (and who dares to *choose* to exist outside of the family, as it were) and as an adolescent that further complicates the timeline of "growing up" by offering too little time to the state or the family to shape him into a

⁶ Roche has what appears to be a stepfather, most likely an abusive one: when Jake takes him home one night, Roche is met by "a big guy in a dirty T-shirt" and as Jake drives away, he says "I could have sworn I heard the sound of blows. I couldn't be sure but I was sure. The big guy looked like he would. He looked like he did" (206). However, Roche appears to be emancipated enough to choose adoption at the end of the novel: his status as an orphan is determined by his own decisions, not by the death or absence of his parents.

productive citizen. In this duality, Roche exists in a place of punctuated reality – he is unable to “grow up” because he doesn’t have the appropriate tools at his disposal. And even if he could, he wouldn’t have enough time to adequately learn what he needed to know to become a good citizen. As the book follows along the violence that precedes the Good Friday agreements, it becomes clear that the anxiety over Roche’s compressed timeline closely matches the emotional trajectory of Northern Ireland as it plunges from long-held violence into the tenuous peace of the Good Friday Agreements.

Azure, the thirteen-year-old protagonist of *Thirteen Cents*, lives on the streets of Cape Town, working as a car attendant and turning tricks. He has come from his home near Johannesburg to eke out an existence on the streets of Cape Town after his parents have supposedly been murdered by Gerald, a leader of Cape Town’s most notorious prison gangs, the Twenty-Eights. Azure’s orphan status is ambiguous and, like his equally ambiguous ethnicity, age, and sexuality, serves to unsettle easy categories of belonging and classification that served the apartheid government and later, the ANC.

Azure believes he is an orphan, telling the reader: “I lost my parents three years ago. Papa was bad with money and got Mama into trouble. The day they killed him I was away at school. I came back to our shack to find them in a pool of blood. That was three years ago. That was the last time I went to school” (6). However, Azure’s choice of words belies the ambiguity of his status. “The day they killed **him**,” (emphasis added) he says, only clearly naming his father as the victim of the Twenty-Eights. He then switches his use of pronouns to suggest that he found both parents dead: “My friend Bafana can’t believe that I saw my dead parents and didn’t freak out. But I told him. I cried and then it was over” (6). Throughout the novel, it is unclear if Azure has left home of his own

accord or if his mother is, in fact, dead. He repeats “My mother is dead. My father is dead” from the first pages to the last, but conversations with Gerald suggest that his mother is figuratively dead – that Gerald has convinced Azure that his mother is dead (to him) in order to exercise control over Azure and pimp him out in Cape Town.

Like Roche, Azure’s determined orphanhood and his status as an adolescent highlights anxiety about the teenager in the social landscape. His utility is compromised by his childhood/youth. Azure is too young to get a real job and he can’t survive without the protection of his ersatz family: Joyce, the auntie who banks his money and sometimes feeds him, Allen, the gang member who offers some protection against Gerald and calls him “my *laaitie*⁷ in moments of tenderness, and Liesel, Gerald’s girlfriend who keeps Azure apprised of Gerald’s moods. Azure’s only recourse is in his economic utility, which is predicated on his youth. His desirability as a prostitute is because he is young, as Gerald points out: “You say you are thirteen, but your *piel*⁸ looks like you are five” (88). The precariousness of Azure’s position is written on his unruly, unpredictable teenaged body – his physical development is inevitable. Once he goes through puberty, Azure becomes a threat to his protectors – and to Gerald, who is invested in keeping him under control for economic gain. Unlike the family, Azure’s protectors have no investment in shepherding him into adulthood, intensifying the anxiety surrounding his impending adulthood. Azure is without the tools or the time to develop into an autonomous, productive citizen, but his disorderly body is a ticking clock, an unstoppable reminder of the inevitability of adulthood.

The double disturbance of Azure’s “I” is metonymic of the greater South African

⁷ My boy.

⁸ Dick (vulgar).

“we”. The slippage in his pronoun use begins with the account of his parents’ death, but continues through the novel, so that South Africa slowly emerges as a parallel to Azure’s narrative. In 1997, South Africa existed in a bubble of benevolence – after shaking off almost fifty years of apartheid rule under an Afrikaans-controlled government, Nelson Mandela’s rise to the top of the ANC and into the presidency tapped into a cushion of worldwide goodwill. By the time *Thirteen Cents* was published, however, that goodwill had crumbled as Mandela prepared to leave office and the precariousness of the nation was exposed. On the cusp of change, the nation personifies the idea of the determined orphan adolescent and its attendant complexities.

By mapping the anxieties of the adolescent nation on to the bodies of Roche and Azure, *Eureka Street* and *Thirteen Cents* investigate those double disturbances through the narrative form of the novel. Tony Tanner, in *Adultery and the Novel*, calls the novel’s emergence in the eighteenth century a

transgressive mode, inasmuch as it seemed to break, or mix, or adulterate the existing genre-expectations of the time. It is not for nothing that many of the protagonists of the early English novels are socially displaced or unplaced figures – orphans, prostitutes, adventurers, etc. They thus represent or incarnate a potentially disruptive or socially unstabilized energy that may threaten, directly or implicitly, the organization of society.

(3)

By the twentieth-century, however, that transgressiveness is coded into the body of the “socially displaced” orphan in a different way. Tanner’s suggestion that the displaced figure of the eighteenth-century novel is to be read as a disruptive force that threatens

society in a negative way – that the body of the “orphan, prostitute, adventurer, etc.” is a negative force in emerging society, disrupting a tenuous balance constructed by the “organization of society.” Tanner’s organization is focused on one main goal – the family. Orphans and, in Tanner’s case, adulterers, are the cause of “disruptive or socially unstabilized energy” precisely because they violate the basic tenets of the Lockean social contract. For Locke, the family depends upon the social contract within the state and the hierarchies and organizations contained therein. Likewise, the state depends on the family to create and uphold the hierarchies and organizations necessary for the state to function. The paradox, it seems, lies in the delicate balance between the natural rights of man and the sovereign rights of the state: on one hand, as Sir Henry Sumner Maine suggests in his seminal volume *Ancient Law*, society is governed by the “gradual dissolution of family dependency and the growth of individual obligation in its place. The individual is steadily substituted for the Family as the unit for which civil laws take account” (Maine 163), essentially creating a contract-driven state. On the other hand, Maine attempts to use *Status* as the starting point from which the citizen can then define himself solely by *Contract*.⁹ This, Tanner argues, is the sticking point. Status is defined through your position in the family; therefore, if you are defined through your familial hierarchies, there is no real way to move to a completely contract-driven identity. “Indeed the tensions between the two states,” writes Tanner, “is often near the center of many of the classic European novels” (5).

⁹ “The word Status may be usefully employed to construct a formula expressing the law of progress thus indicated, which, whatever be its value, seems to me to be sufficiently ascertained. All the forms of Status taken notice of in the Law of Persons were derived, and to some extent are still colored by, the powers and privileges of the Family. If then we employ Status, agreeably with the usage of the best writers to signify these personal conditions only, ... we may say that the movement of the progressive societies has hitherto been a movement from Status to Contract” (Maine 170).

Children are the ideal illustration of tension between the contractual power of the individual and the patriarchal power of the family. They are, in John Locke's famous words, "not born *in* this full state of Equality, though they are born *to* it" (182). Though Tanner argues that absolute power and absolute lack of power both constitute threats to the family, the orphan occupies a special place in this logic. The orphan exists as a character that is wholly indebted to the state, but is not able to contract with the state. Unlike Samuel Richardson's Clarissa, the orphan does not struggle for some contractual autonomy from an absolute patriarchal power, but rather forces the state to enact absolute power over the orphan *as* patriarchal power. This inversion of the traditional power dynamics of the individual and the state makes the orphan a transgressive figure, threatening society by his very existence. In this way, the eighteenth-century orphan is the appropriate subject of a new form of literature that itself transgresses the previous contract of what and how literature performs.

The eighteenth-century novel places the adult in the center of anxiety about family and law. A character like Moll Flanders is outside of family and outside of law. Daniel Defoe creates a character that begins life outside of family and law, by making Moll an orphan at her birth (an orphan by lack of parental care, not by the death of her parents). The full title of the work suggest all the trials and tribulations Moll suffers:

The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, &c. Who was
Born in Newgate, and during a Life of continu'd Variety for Threescore
Years, besides her Childhood, was Twelve Year a Whore, five times a Wife
(whereof once to her own Brother), Twelve Year a Thief, Eight Year a
Transported Felon in Virginia, at last grew Rich, liv'd Honest, and died a

Penitent. Written from her own Memorandums.

The anxiety of the displaced/disruptive body of Moll is recuperated at the end, a moment that comes only at the end of the title: “Grew Rich, liv’d Honest, and died a Penitent.” This placement highlights the tension inherent in Moll’s narrative. Will she be able to reconcile her life with family and law? How could she possibly do that, considering her long history as an outsider?¹⁰

In the eighteenth-century morality novel, the state is a stable entity that is threatened by a lack of familial structure and discipline – the same state that produces Tanner’s “classic European novel.” Unlike these cautionary novels of the early eighteenth century, which focus on the wayward adult who must enter back into the family in order to receive redemption, the *bildungsroman* redirects focus to the adolescent as the disruptive body that threatens the nation, but is easily folded into a recuperation narrative once he ages out of adolescence.

Bildungsroman refers to the novel of German origin which deals with the education, maturing and development of a young (usually male) protagonist. The *bildungsroman*, defined in 1819 by Karl Morganstern and refined by Wilhelm Dilthey in 1870, is a journey narrative, focused on the period of time when “a young male hero discovers himself and his social role through the experience of love, friendship, and the hard realities of life” (Labovitz 2). Morganstern notes a tendency towards “an

¹⁰ For example: Moll's life is easily portrayed as a Lockean failure of absolute lack of familial power. Moll's last words in the novel reflect her remorse at having attempted to live a life of simple social contract with the state. It is not until Moll settles down with Jemy to become a moneyed landowner in the New World and is safely ensconced in the role of woman, wife, mother that she reflects back on her sordid life and announces she and her husband “resolve to spend the Remainder of our Years in sincere Penitence for the wicked Lives we have lived” (428).

As a moral and social manual, *Moll Flanders* allows for the rising middle class in America and Europe to see mimetic reflections of their own mores and values. Moll's story does not necessarily reflect the reality of the middle class, but having Moll settle down and receive her rightful inheritance in the end suggests in no uncertain terms that morality and repentance are rewarded, and that marriage and gainful employment allow a person to become moral and repent of sins, as well as to fit smoothly into the state as a person within the appropriate confluence of family and law.

individualistic conscience, consideration for the careful tending, the shaping, the deepening of one's own personality" (3). The *bildungsroman* follows the convention of the eighteenth-century morality novel in offering a reflection of the morals and values of the middle-class reading audience. Hegel, in *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, points out the "conciliatory, conservative nature of the genre – the hero's ultimate assimilation into existing society" (14). Thus the adolescent is allowed to be disruptive, but only until he corrects his course, and since that correction is inevitable, he is ultimately defanged.

Moll Flanders is abandoned by her mother, but in the end, it is her mother's inheritance that allows her to confess to Jemy and settle down as a proper lady. Wilhelm Meister is orphaned in the course of his search for meaning, but inheriting his father's estate allows him to eventually marry Natalia. In these configurations, the orphaned protagonist – adult of adolescent – is drawn back into the morally corrective family. As a destabilizing influence, these orphans are quickly pulled back into the more stabilized embrace of marriage, land-ownership, and fealty to the state; the tension Tanner notes is resolved. The orphan is saved by the very parent(s) he lost; their loss becomes his gain of wealth, money, prosperity, land, respectability, and wholeness.

The early novel, then, became the place where questions of burgeoning individualism and difficult questions of contractual citizenship and societal expectations can be explored, although often they are questions that get resolved easily. The orphan is often dismissed as a figure of disruption until he is "cured" by the law/family. Once that "cure" happens, the orphan is then absorbed into the nation/family. All's well that ends well. As a subject of fascination in the novel, the orphan fits in well with these new questions: he is a juridical subject, simultaneously shaped and ultimately disciplined by

the twin barrels of the state and the family. In this configuration, the orphan as a site of inquiry makes sense: the unruly and disreputable subject exists outside the saving graces of a law that shapes citizens through contractual relationships as well as the outside of the family, which engenders those same contractual relationships through personal relationships, but in an unexpected turn (often fortuitous), the orphan is thrown right into the twin arms of law and family and becomes settled, defined, productive. In light of anxieties about individualism and what havoc it might wreak upon the nation, this confirms that even the bad child, the wild seed, the outlier might be tamed and turned to fit into whatever “productive” citizens look like. If this were the case, then the investigation of the orphan in the eighteenth-century novel would be a fairly simple, straightforward one. But the orphan is more than just the disciplined subject who reinforces the idea that individuality should be shut down in service of the state and family. And the idea of the citizen is more than one who blindly adheres to expectations.

In *The Policing of Families*, Jacques Donzelot notes that the conception of the poor orphan in eighteenth century (and, by extension, the foundling narrative) provides an opportunity for the “order of families” to be grafted on the “order of the state” (qtd. in Nixon 29). In the larger context, the practices of giving up unwanted children cleansed the bloodlines and allowed for poor families to normalize and codify a set of expectations, namely that the bourgeois family would continue to value property and proper lines of heredity, while the poor would emulate this at the cost of any children that might trouble this expectation. This normalization coincides with the larger institutionalization and normalization of discipline in the state.

While discipline in the state and the family is certainly one part of the story of the

orphan in the eighteenth-century, it is not the only part and does not fully define the ways in which the orphan may also serve to help understand the negotiations between the state and the individual. This delicate balance is the very conflict that Locke addresses: how might we, as citizens, negotiate between what we expect from the state and what the state expects from us? And in turn, how does the rise of the novel coincide with this expectation? Nixon writes:

in valuing the orphan, the eighteenth-century novel is intent on valuing the social individual, specifically the individual who plays a valued role in, and thus can experience, evaluate, and critique those social structures. *In plots such as these, the orphan asks a fundamental question: how can the individual be valued? The novel provides an answer by showing how narrative structure confers value on the individual, demonstrating in the process that the novel's new forms of plotting are valuable. The orphan gives narrative structure to an emerging discourse of individualism and, in turn, the orphan highlights the value of the narrative construction of the individual.*" (13; emphasis mine)

Here is it clear that the orphan is not easily dismissed in the eighteenth-century novel as a disciplined subject, one that is taken in by the law and "straightened out," nor one that is handed into a family for the same outcome. Instead, the orphan raises more complex questions about how literature employs the orphan to investigate questions of individuality within the new system of contractual citizenship can become a site of imagination and expectation, rather than one of discipline and normalization.

Looking back to *Moll Flanders*, we can see that Moll is not just an unruly

outsider, bent on destroying the society in which she lives. Instead, Moll's journey and her subsequent reunion with her mother and her property suggest a deeper understanding of what the orphan can do, and does do, in eighteenth-century literature. Moll is what Nixon calls a "desired subject." Her story is not a marginal one, nor is it a story that attempts to shunt Moll into the shadows until she is caught up in the web of discipline. Instead, Moll is treated as a valued subject – one that has does not simply exist to have value placed upon her via the disciplining state or family, but one who disciplines. Nixon writes: "this reading does not capture the orphan's ability to critique the law as part of his or her reconstructing process. The orphan forces the law to articulate its definition of the individual, creating a narrative space in which he or she can then interrogate that definition" (31).

In this configuration, the novel works as an outlet for the individual to write and rewrite narrative and, in doing so, allows confrontation of the disciplinary structures of the emerging national consciousness. By placing the orphan at the locus of this interrogation, it might be argued that, far from being an excluded figure, the orphan alone possesses the freedom to make these interrogations. Being outside of the law and the family, the orphan is able to test boundaries and ideas that are unavailable to those participating in the Foucauldian maze of power and discipline. The novel acts as a way to escape and rewrite the strictures of law and discipline while granting the individual a voice – the novel, with its focus on the story of one (generally one) main character and verisimilitude, provides the basis for the kind of storytelling that acts as part of the institutional framework while still allowing for creative retelling and imaginative space.

Nixon and other literary critics have spent a great deal of time focusing on the rise

of the novel in the eighteenth-century and with good reason. While the social conception of the orphan seems to change over time, the orphan in the Western novel continues to function in much the same way it did in the eighteenth-century. In *The English Novel in History*, John Richetti suggests that eighteenth century fiction is imperative to understanding why the homogenized self (and, concurrently, the recuperation narrative) is still a prevalent theme of the novel, despite postmodernist claims of decentering and destabilization. Richetti writes:

Eighteenth-century fiction is important for the understanding of this evolving entity, the socially constructed self. [N]arrative ... is increasingly (if implicitly) concerned with the problems of what it means to be an individual, with the value or significance of the particular experience of individuals as they seek to exercise agency, and of course with the related question of what constitutes the best community to support the individual. The novel begins as a heightened, almost obsessive, attention in narratives of various sorts to problems that cluster around issues of self-consciousness and social and moral authority and allegiance. [...] much narrative from the eighteenth century voices a progressive, even utopian, conviction that things should be different than the way they have always been and that the new order is full of opportunity for the hard-working and meritorious. Perhaps such attitudes are perennial, but they have a recurrent centrality in narrative [...] since the early eighteenth century. (4)

Ihab Hassan, in “Towards a Concept of Postmodernism,” calls history a “continuously moving line” that incorporates the ideas of the past within the present. In such a

configuration, the line between the eighteenth century novel and contemporary world literature is carefully threaded. As argued above, the novel is a place where the orphan (and other disenfranchised characters) can write back – in the present – against prevailing historical notions of the unified self in an institutional framework. Continuous revision allows for history to fill in the fissures that open up, creating a bricolage of past and present. The adolescent body forces readers to think about the future as a structural certainty. Indebted to their eighteenth century counterparts, emerging nations novels add another layer of interrogation, and ask readers to consider the imbrication of the past, the present AND the future.

Wilson's novel *Eureka Street* addresses this imbrication through the adolescent body of Roche, as well as through a multiplicity of intertwined stories. He creates a complex narrative that addresses the possibilities, the losses, and the frustrations attendant in the ordering of a new national identity. The novel alternates chapters between the first-person narrative of Jake Johnson, a Catholic tough guy described by Wilson as "a satire of a reformed hard man," (Farquharson 65) who eventually finds love and settles down with the protest-happy Aoighe and his cat, and a limited third-person narrator that follows Chuckie Lurgan, a fat, Protestant loser who has become a dubious self-made millionaire. Wilson describes Chuckie on the morning after his birthday as a man about to surf the rising tides of good fortune: "Chuckie felt that much was beginning for him. Though in the pockets of his grimy trousers he had only three pounds and something near sixty pence Chuckie was large with potential. Chuckie was thirty now. Chuckie had plans" (23). Having been for so long on the margins of society, Chuckie is redeemed and brought in the recuperation narrative by virtue of his age – he is thirty now, an adult – and

his economic potential.

In contrast to Chuckie, who is on the cusp of adulthood and recuperation, Roche is presented as a liminal figure – outside the family, outside the law. Despite Jake’s suspicion that Roche is the perpetrator of a graffiti series around Belfast that threatens the precarious peace process, Roche nonetheless forms a familial relationship with Jake and an economic one with Chuckie. Though he is not a main character, Roche pops in and out of the narrative at irregular moments, underscoring the ambivalence and precariousness of his orphaned adolescent experience. *The Independent* describes him as “a foul-mouthed twelve-year-old,” but Roche is almost erased from critical responses to the novel. This lack of attention (save for approximately two critical articles) to Roche is curious and suggests a certain squeamishness on the part of critics and fans over Roche’s liminal state. On the one hand, he is couched as a helpless child in need of guidance through a thoroughly adult narrative that features giant dildos, police brutality, at least 70 uses of the word fuck, and a lost weekend of 46 pints and only two meals; on the other hand, he is a calculating (and thoroughly adult) political actor.

This squeamishness to liminal states is embedded in the narrative as well. At the midpoint of the novel, the focus moves away from Chuckie and Jake for one chapter to examine the victims – both dead and alive – of the (fictional) Fountain Street bombing, including Rosemary Daye, a vain young woman in love who stops to buy a new skirt in the Queen’s Arcade and simply “stops existing” (222). This chapter also features the deaths of eight-year-old Natalie Crawford and her sister and mother; a French tourist; the paramedic and firefighting teams of Belfast; and

Martin O’Hare (aspirant astronomer), Kevin McCafferty (unemployed,

couldn't sing), [...] John Mullen (never ate his salad and bacon *baguette*), Angie Best (the owner, a forty-two-year-old divorcee with two children and a twenty-five-year-old lover she was about to dump), William Patterson (never met him), Patrick Somebody-or-other, a woman called Smith and six unnamed others. The list is pointless. The list is easily forgotten. (231)

The description of the Fountain Street bombing does not include any conversation about Jake Johnson, Chuckie Lurgan, Roche, Max, Aoighe, or any other major or minor characters, but instead pulls away from the alternating narrative to suggest another double disturbance – the bombing exists out of time and (narrative) place. Immediately prior to the Fountain Street chapter, the unnamed narrator reminds readers that “in Belfast [...] it is always present tense,” (217) a sentiment echoed in a larger sense by Cal, the teenaged protagonist of Bernard McLaverty’s *Cal*, set in Ulster in the 1960s: “I feel sorry for it,” he tells his father. “[Ireland] is like a child. It’s only concerned with the past and the present, the future has ceased to exist for it” (118). Placing the bombing at the exact midpoint of the novel reminds readers of the familiar binary of the family institution – childhood, then the explosion of adolescence, followed by a period of recuperation and redemption – and grafts it on to an act of state violence.

In “The Language of Violence in Robert McLiam Wilson’s *Eureka Street*” Danine Farquharson, suggests that anchoring the novel in a multiplicity of experience allows Wilson to “destroy, and then recuperate, his own narrative” (66). I argue that instead of recuperating the narrative or reimagining how the narrative might reassemble and then continue stately progress towards some type of peace and reconciliation, Wilson uses the

bombing and the character of Roche to suggest that Ireland *cannot* continue marching forward and, in fact, chooses not to reinvent itself in or around the linear construct of “growing up.” In the first chapter, Jake muses on the nature of constant violence in Belfast:

What were bombs like? Well ... explosive, naturally. And loud. And frightening. They were loud and frightening in your gut like when you were a child and you fell on your head and couldn’t understand why it hurt like panic in your belly. They were fairly irreversible too. Bombs were like dropped plates, kicked cats or hasty words. They were error. They were disarrangement and mess. They were also -- and this was important -- knowledge. When you heard that dry splash, that animal thud of bomb, distant or close, you knew something. You knew that someone somewhere was having a very bad time indeed.

It wasn’t the bombs that were scary. It was the bombed. Public death was a special mortality. Bombs mauled and possessed their dead [...] The bombed dead were spilled on the street like cheap fruit. And finally, unfuckingbeatably, the bombed dead were dead. They were so very, very dead. (15)

Deeply suspicious of the codified routes into citizenship and belonging, as well as institutional recuperation, *Eureka Street* offers an alternative view of citizenship and belonging. When Jake notes that the dead are “unfuckingbeatably ... so very very dead,” he is reminding readers that traditional recuperation narratives for Belfast no longer apply. The dead cannot return, the city cannot be repaired in her current condition and

made over into an adult nation. Jake's narrative relies on disrupting the traditional understanding of family, the state, and adulthood and settling into a moment of potentially infinite liminality, a space that opens up possibilities outside the old order.

Critics have noted the novel's lack of interest in redemption. Richard Kirkland (in "Bourgeois Redemptions: The Fictions of Glenn Patterson and Robert McLiam Wilson") and Linden Peach (in "Posting the Present: Modernity and Modernization in Glenn Patterson's *Fat Lad* (1992) and Robert McLiam Wilson's *Eureka Street* (1996)") both note that the novel is very much concerned with "in-between-ness" and flux. And, as discussed previously, Farquharson contends that the focus on the Fountain Street bombing is indicative of instability and disruption. This small sampling of ideas suggests that critics aren't timid about the idea of an unstable narrative that concerns itself with the liminal and the ambiguous, but the exclusion of Roche in this discussion is still a puzzling concern. Roche's presence not only highlights the interstitial nature of Belfast during the ceasefires, but also points towards a larger desire for self-determination that is constantly sabotaged by social, economic, and legal frameworks. This constant undermining of identity points toward the larger difficulty of attempting to integrate multiple expectations for Ireland as a country.

The first time Roche is introduced into the narrative, Jake and his ecumenical and multicultural group of friends are sitting in the Bolshevik, a local pub. The discussion turns on the intense anxiety each member feels about the current state of Belfast. Jake ruminates on the troubles that currently plague Ireland (this is just prior to the ceasefire): "I had often hoped that the future would be different," he muses. "That from out of the dark mists of Ireland's past and present a new breed would arise. The New Irish" (164).

This wish for the future reflects Jake's anxiety about the present. The current Ireland feels so completely broken to Jake that only a new version could fix anything. This idea is mirrored in Jake's self-proclaimed "hilariously broody" nature. He wishes ardently for a child to arrive ("importantly motherless") on his doorstep "five years old and already reading Pushkin" (309). As Jeffrey Nealon reminds us in *Foucault Beyond Foucault*, changes in power structures do not simply happen one day, but are instead the result of the intensification of structures already in place, a kind of "tipping point" effect. In contrast, Jake's dream of a motherless child and a New Ireland insists on an originary point of development and quickly finds itself stuck – without a mother, then a child cannot even be born; without an intensification of power structures already in place (according to Foucault), a country cannot be born. But for Jake, the motherless child represents a way for Ireland to shake off the shackles of the past and to move forward into the next – hopefully peaceful and stable – stage of history. The orphaned ("importantly motherless") child provides an unencumbered way forward – no pesky parents would hold this child back. Instead, the child ("already reading Pushkin,") would be inculcated by concerned parties (including Jake) in the educational and legal frameworks that would allow it to be not just a member of society, but a worldly one, a "new Irish."

However, Jake finishes his reverie on the New Ireland by saying "I decided I wasn't going to hold my hand in my arse waiting for any Utopia" (164), and, in this moment of doubt and despair, Roche enters the narrative. He approaches the table of friends to sell them a newspaper and is quickly rejected. Undaunted, he tries to sell a joke instead. When he is insulted by Billy (one of the friends at the table), Roche asks: "Does

your dick reach your arse?’ Billy was unamused. ‘What do you mean?’ ‘Well, if it does, then you can go and fuck yourself easier’” (164). It is no coincidence that Roche’s appearance (the dream child sans mother) coincides with Jake’s impotent daydream about a New Ireland and culminates in a joke that features the most impotent act of all – not only non-reproductive sex, but non-reproductive sex with oneself.

Roche’s joke earns him a slap in the face and he is thrown out of the bar by the owner for causing trouble. Jake goes outside to help him pick up his newspapers, which are now dirty and wet from falling on the sidewalk. Roche’s attempt at independence through economic means (and by reinventing himself as a producer of social, cultural and economic output) is effectively ruined by the social frameworks that place adults (and bar owners) in higher social positions than him. Publicly humiliated and treated as a child, Roche is thwarted in his attempt to move forward with a new life by the structure of the adult-child relationship, which requires that he subvert his own desires to the larger and more powerful machinations of social order. To add insult to injury, he is further belittled and treated not only as a child, but as a child with no utility – becoming the butt of increasingly crude homosexual jokes, including a suggestion that one of Jake’s friends wants to “fuck the wee snotbag, to which another friend replies “I’m sure he’ll let you for a fiver” (165). These imaginative insults highlight Roche’s failure to produce on even the most basic level of an “adult” – and never mind his failures on the social, economic, and cultural levels – thereby refusing him the agency to “grow up” and participate as an equal with those in power.

Roche is an adolescent, stuck in the throes of G. Stanley Hall’s *Sturm und Drang*. However, unlike the adolescent in Hall’s configurations, *Eureka Street* fails to give Roche

the opportunity to be “reborn” – not as a “new individual” (as Hall would have it), nor as a figure of the New Ireland (as Jake wishes it). After Jake helps Roche pick up his now-ruined ruined papers, he is faced with having to walk with him until their “ways could part.” During the short walk, Jake probes Roche on his status, attempting to find out where he fits into his predetermined understanding of the world of children:

‘What age are you?’

‘Fifteen’

I looked at his tiny, wizened face and his little boy’s physique.

‘Aye, right,’ I said.

‘Ok, fourteen.’

I laughed.

‘Thirteen?’

‘If you don’t know, kid, who gives a shit?’

‘Twelve.’

‘Why aren’t you at school?’ (167)

That Jake focuses his inquiry on two salient issues – the proximity of Roche to adulthood, and Roche’s relationship to the school as an apparatus of discipline. Roche responds to his question with the correct amount of smart-assery (““It’s half past five, you dumb fuck””), earning him a glare from Jake. Jake’s glare is as much a condemnation of Roche’s flippant attitude as it is a condemnation of the fact that Roche cannot be considered the child of Jake’s daydreams, and any hope of taming him through the disciplinary structures of the state is long past – Roche’s relationship to school is so tenuous that his ability to read is called into question just a moment later and continues to

show up in the narrative as a point of consternation for Jake.

Along with Roche's schooling, Jake attempts to place Roche into the traditional narrative of redemption: Roche has a stepfather, but this pathetic attempt at "family" is proven to be a bust; Roche doesn't appear to go to school and can't read or write effectively; Roche goes to work for Chuckie Lurgan, operating "some sinister form of subcontracting" (246) until Chuckie closes his businesses and kicks Roche out on the street; and Jake himself attempts to house and care for Roche, a proposition that goes south after only one day after his lawyer friends make clear the ramifications of taking in a homeless twelve-year-old boy who likes to cry rape when he finds himself in difficult spots.

All of these attempts mirror Jake's own journey as an orphan. As a teenager, he was placed with Matt and Mamie, who specialized in taking in hard cases, namely teenaged boys:

They had no children and had made up for it by fostering the kids nobody would touch. That basically meant males over the age of fourteen. They'd had some shockers: delinquents, hardmen, wide-boys, and paramilitaries of every description [...] we kids had stolen from them, cheated them and assaulted them [...] but Matt and Mamie had continued loving them all, absolutely and unconditionally. Eventually these wide-boys, these halfmen just had to learn that language. (104)

Jake's understanding of the boys in Matt and Mamie's care is that they were placed into the familial system in order to become proper citizens: "they were lawyers, doctors, builders; they were husbands and fathers. Matt and Mamie had fostered generations of

the city's scum and persistently and without reward made human beings out of them” (105). Despite his joking attempts to discredit Matt and Mamie’s influence on the young miscreants of Belfast (“Matt and Mamie were weird”), Jake finds himself embarrassed by their scrutiny of his life choices – his girlfriend has gotten an abortion and left him, he’s working as a repo man, his friends are engaged in shady business deals involving giant dildo refunds – revealing his desire to have his family (even his foster family) validate and codify his place.

Immediately after he takes in Roche and then preemptively kicks him out again, Jake visits Matt and Mamie to break the news to them. Their disappointment at Jake’s decision leaves him paralyzed and on his way back to his house, he runs into Ripley Bogle, “tramp, waster, tosspot” (346) and former classmate of Jake’s (coincidentally, Bogle is also the star of Wilson’s previous novel *Ripley Bogle*). Jake, still stinging after Matt and Mamie’s disappointment, gives Bogle their phone number because ““You’re frightening, Bogle. You’re very expensively educated. It’s spooky to see all that going down the plug. You’re a symptom of the grand malaise in our society [....] You scare the piss out of me”” (348). In this moment, Jake attempts to recuperate the narrative of the reclaimed or redeemed orphan through the body of an adult. Continuing home, he muses that he didn’t really expect to change Ripley’s life, but he was “stubbornly jubilant” anyway.

Jake’s decision to try and recuperate Ripley through traditional ways and means is stunningly undercut by his next encounter with Roche. Leaving the pub right after he talks with Ripley, Jake walks into a skirmish between the “helmeted and shielded Royal Ulster Constabulary” and “the forces and supporters of national liberation” (359). In the

midst of the riot, seemingly caused by the early release of a British soldier who had killed two young (presumably Catholic) joyriders, Jake begins to hear rumors of a “kid who had been given a baseball bat beating by the boys down at the bottom of Leeson Street. He’d broken into a senior IRA man’s car at the beginning of the riot. He hadn’t driven it away, he had simply urinated on the driver’s seat” (362). The kid is, of course, Roche. Jake finds him in the hospital, “tubed and bandaged.” In his grief, Jake takes his frustrations out of Aoighe, calling her out for her political ambitions, her false belief that protests and political sabotage will change anything in Ireland or Northern Ireland or Belfast or her own life. She exits the hospital room in tears, leaving Jake behind with Roche:

‘That was some routine with the girl there,’ he said, as I was walking away.

‘What?’

‘Your big screaming match with your woman with the funny name.’

‘Aoighe? [...] I thought you were asleep,’ I said guiltily.

‘Nah, I was keeping an eye on you. You really gave it to her [...] She seemed sorry.’

‘I don’t think so,’ I replied. ‘She’s not the sorry type.’

Roche settled down into his bed. ‘Yeah, maybe not. Nice tits, though.’

(367)

Eureka Street’s ambivalence hangs on this paradox – Jake’s overriding longing to see the world anew, fresh, different than before and not in relationship with the previous world contrasts with Roche’s desire to become new at whatever cost. The character of Roche is an uneasy reminder that the past doesn’t tidily dissolve or fit on a shelf in a neat

box when the desire for something new comes along. Roche's beating, though brutal, finally confirms his status as a fully integrated citizen (that is to say one who can be punished by both the juridical system and the public non-juridical system for political issues), which is then swiftly and completely undercut by the information that he is going to be placed in a foster home (under the care of the state). His reaction upon finding out he is to be placed with a family is summed up by Roche as such: “I was just thinking of the groovy foster mum I’d get if they take the photographs tomorrow [...] The way I look, I’d arouse the maternal instincts of any late-twenties piece of ass you’d care to mention” (366). At this point, he is neither child nor adult but something in between, something that allows him to be a player, but possibly a player with limited influence. And he seems fine with this turn of events. At the moment when Roche could stand as a figure that will inevitably leave behind childhood (dependence) and head towards adulthood (independence), he does neither.

Jake’s attempts to recuperate the narrative after the bomb blast continue as usual, with the usual results – his Belfast at the end of *Eureka Street* is much the same, despite the peace accords and the sense of goodwill Jake finds himself willing to give to the city. Looking out over the streets, he whispers “Oh world [...] aren’t you pretty? Aren’t you big?” (396) and settles into a relationship with Aoirghe. Chuckie Lurgan finds himself a father and a husband and the sole caretaker of his (traumatized, recently-outed lesbian) mother. “*What war?*” thought Chuckie when the peace accords were signed. “No one he knew had been fighting” (379) and the rest of gang goes on with whatever mischief and heartache, difficulties and joys they were experiencing before. The only character whose narrative even gives some wiggle room for change is Roche. The bomb blast is meant to

stand as a moment of change, a moment in which the narrative falls apart, only to rebuild itself and continue forward through the peace talks and into the New Ireland of everyone's (not just Jake's) dreams. Wilson makes clear that the bomb blast has cleared the way for change, perhaps even change that could create the new Ireland of Jake's dreams. Speaking of the volunteers and journalists, Wilson writes "All of these people possessed a new knowledge. For all their lack of understanding, they comprehended something of which they had been ignorant [...] They had all learnt that from revolution runs blood, runs all our human waters" (230). Yet that change curiously doesn't occur – time marches forward and relationships blossom, children are conceived and born, jobs are lost and found, but through it all, the core frustrations and desires remain the same. Stopping time through the narrative rip of the bomb blast allows Wilson to explore alternate histories and expectations.

This exploration cannot occur in the same way through the linear narrative. Jake has to make choices about his love life, Chuckie has to have a baby with Max (this hyperbole is even more accurate considering this is Ireland in the 1990s), life must march on. But in the glimmering, liminal spaces in between, there is hope that a revisionist history can be written, that a new Ireland might exist in the cracks where history isn't about linear growth and moving forward towards a prescribed plan. In the character of Roche, we see the potentiality that lies between and inside of the traditional spaces of growth and development. By choosing to be both a child and an adult, Roche has given himself the room to investigate how he might fit into the world on his own terms and how he might navigate the way forward. Neither Jake nor Roche can pinpoint a definite originary point from which their parallel dreams of full subjectivity can spring, but the

notion of the adult-child relationship offers a clue as to how the existing structures are imbricated and how they can, potentially, be intensified to grant that subjectivity.

Another novel that engages with the question of how adolescents are imbricated into a society that desires for them to simply grow up and into the role of adult is K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*. This novel, set in Cape Town in the late 1990s, is an exploration of the life of Azure, an orphan turned street kid in Green Point. Azure lives in the new Rainbow Nation, one still presided over by Nelson Mandela – his life is meant to be open and full of the promise inherent in the new multicultural nation of South Africa. He is thirteen at the beginning of the novel ("I'm almost a man. I'm nearly thirteen years old"), which would suggest that he was about eight when the ANC took power. All of this points to Azure's role in this new national identity – he is meant to grow up into the new South Africa. He is "almost a man," in much the same way that South Africa has "almost" grown into her status as a nation that can be taken seriously by the superpowers of the world; however, Duiker's novel deliberately sets itself in 1999, the moment in which the Rainbow Nation and various policies of the Mandela administration and the ANC were being called into question. After the successes of the 1997 South African Music Awards, the 1995 Rugby World Cup, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, South Africa looked poised to enter into the world stage as a major player. However, by the end of Mandela's first (and only) term as President, citizens of the country were becoming disgruntled by the lack of change and stagnation in the new Rainbow Nation – much of it attributable to the ANC. According to Irina Filitova, "Africanism is a much more powerful card to play than 'rainbowism'... at this particular

moment of South Africa's history a nationalist stance offers a better political potential to the ANC than non-racialism, whether based on class solidarity or on 'rainbow' all-inclusive nationhood" (Filitova 54).

All of these ideas converge in *Thirteen Cents*. The story gives us Azure, an orphan living on the streets. Like Roche, Azure's status as an orphan and an adolescent creates a double disturbance in the social landscape. On the one hand, some of the "grown-ups" that he encounters see his childhood status as an impediment – something to get past in order to grow up into a life of utility. In one back and forth, Allen – a gang member – questions Azure's loyalty:

'Do you always listen to everything I say?'

'Yes, Allen.'

'And that's why you're on the streets and I'm here. Stupid fuck, just grow up.' (39)

On the other hand, Azure's childlike status is endearing. Allen, when he's not admonishing Azure to grow up, calls him "my *laaitie*," my boy, my child.

Azure himself is conflicted by his state of liminality. He refers to himself as "almost a man, I'm nearly thirteen years old" (5), yet he knows that he doesn't engage with the trappings of discipline that would make him into a man. When the fruit sellers in Green Market Square yell out "*julle fokken mannetjies moet skool toe gaan*,"¹¹ Azure reminds himself "[i]t's easy for them to say that. I lost my parents" (6). Azure lives in between the grown-up world of his prostitution and street life and a desire to have a family to take care of him. Shaun Viljoen, in his introduction to the novel notes that this

¹¹ You fucking boys should be in school.

bifurcation of desires is not unique to Azure: “[T]he protagonist in [the] novel exists primarily as exceptional individuals, as an “I” rather than, as was the case with much (black) under apartheid in which the individual was metonymic of the greater (racial) community, as an ‘I’ who is at the same time ‘we’.”

Early in the novel, Azure runs afoul of Gerald, a higher-up in the Hard Livings gang, by accidentally calling him Sealy, the name of one of Gerald’s black associates. Gerald is “a clean colored with straight hair and light skin,” (35) a fact that he takes as a point of pride. Azure’s slip-up – which happens while he is high – begins a series of punishments from Gerald and his gang, the last of which involves kidnapping Azure and gang-raping him over the course of several days. Eventually, Azure flees to Table Mountain to escape being *moered*¹² by Gerald or his gang. “The sleeping mountain is above. I look at it for a long time and then the answer comes to me. On the mountain. I can hide [...] on the mountain,” Once on Table Mountain – situated in the very center of Cape Town and ringed by whites-only areas that, in 1999, would have only recently been open to black and colored visitors – Azure begins to hallucinate (possibly from the drugs he has taken, possibly from the heat, possibly from lack of food and water) about fire. He tells himself:

¹² *Moer* is the Afrikaans word for murder. Much of Duiker's novel is in Afrikaans (with a spattering of iXhosa). The use of Afrikaans offers a glimpse into the world of South Africa, where there are thirteen official languages. Afrikaans is the language of the apartheid movement, but still exists as a widely-used second language by much of the white population. Cape Town is a mostly English-speaking area, but the legacy of the Afrikaners continues.

Duiker's use of the Afrikaans offers a complexity to the novel that makes it almost unintelligible to readers outside of South Africa. Afrikaans is a closed language loop – it is not spoken outside of South Africa (with the exception of Namibia, formerly known as South-West Africa and functioning as a colony of South Africa). Duiker's use of the language adds an important dimension to the political commentary: Gerald's self-identification as a “clean coloured” puts him in political alliance with the Afrikaners (who, somewhat confusingly allied themselves with the coloured minorities in opposition to the black majority), and his use of Afrikaans serves as a reminder that he sees himself as part of the white community. In addition, Duiker's heavy use of Afrikaans almost guarantees that the novel would not circulate widely with an audience outside of South Africa. This specific choice on the part of Duiker points to a larger question of how South African writers see themselves in light of the larger issue of circulation and how, in 1999, South Africa viewed its position within the global world.

You must climb higher. Higher. I finish drinking and look at the sun. I stare at it with open eyes and feel energy going through me. It mingles with the *zol*¹³ in my head and gives me fire. I get to the part where there is only shade. My body cools down but I don't slow down. Fire! Fire! I must give them fire, I tell myself. Higher. (127)

On the mountain (the symbol of Cape Town), Azure fashions himself a family out of the past, encountering Sarah Bartman (Saartjie Baartman or the Hottentot Venus), who is married to a T-Rex. The T-Rex attacks and consumes Gerald, then leads a group of rhinoceroses as they trample over the white visitors eating "Simba chips and drinking Coke" (149). Saartjie's inclusion is a reminder of the oppression and degradation of the Khoi people in South Africa, allowing the mountain to become a place of alternative history. In Azure's encounter with her, she is a strong woman, one who is in charge of her destiny and married to T-Rex.

'That's my husband,' she says and squints to get a better look at him.

I watch him destroying the city and feel scared. We go back inside.

'So he's the last T-Rex, then.'

'No, you are, he's getting old.'

'Me? But I'm still growing.'

'I know,' she says and looks at my scales, 'you are going to be big just like him.'

'Really?' I say and my eyes grow big.

¹³ Marijuana.

‘That is your father.’

‘Why didn’t you tell me before? I’ve been searching for him.’ (146)

This desire to have a family that exists only of people (and animals) that are extinct or almost extinct speaks to the idea of how a family (and, by association, a group of protectors) is an idea from the past. If Azure is to avail himself of such protectors, he must regress back to a childlike state.

Azure’s trip to Table Mountain happens in the final third of the novel and serves as a narrative break between his “real” life living under the unfinished bridge in Sea Point and the hallucinatory life he leads on the mountain. Unlike the bomb blast in *Eureka Street* which touches many anonymous lives, Azure’s desire to cleanse his world with fire is a singular moment that only he experiences. However, the bomb blast and Azure’s trip appear to serve a similar purpose of dismantling the narrative in order to recuperate it. As argued earlier, Wilson’s blast doesn’t so much disrupt the narrative in order to put it back together, but rather disrupts the narrative to suggest an alternate space for the narrative to occupy – a space that is less bound by linear movement of time and less bound by expectations of “growing up” into a set expectation.

Thirteen Cents offers a similar opportunity for the narrative to ‘break’ and then restore itself, as well as offering the same opportunity to Azure himself – if he chooses to set Table Mountain afire, then he might be able to change the course of the “evil” he sees in the world (and in the Geralds of the world). For Azure, fire doesn’t necessarily offer a new opportunity, but it does clear out the old, allowing for a space of renewal.

When Azure returns to normal life, he finds that Gerald has committed suicide (it is rumored that he slashed his own throat with a lion’s claw). But instead of clearing the

world of evil, Gerald's death allows another gang to take over in Sea Point. Vincent, the leader of the Twenty-Eights gang, outlines his plans to fix the city:

[Vincent] 'We have to destroy Cape Town. We have to rape their women and children. We have to kill them.'

[Azure] 'You're crazy. That's evil.'

'That's how you fight evil. With evil.'

'You're mad.'

'We're the dogs of war.'

[....]

'We raped all their women after Gerald died. All the coloured bitches,' he says to the others and they laugh.

'Why?'

'They wanted destruction.' (166-168)

Azure is stuck in between the past, which offers a space for alternative history, but requires that he become a child again, and the future, which allows him to fully participate in the adult world – a world of evil and destruction. Duiker resolves this issue by allowing Azure to choose neither. He goes on the mountain one last time and, instead of choosing the past or the future, Azure chooses to destroy everything in one last destructive act. He sets the mountain on fire and lets it burn down to the city, engulfing it in flames and destroying any sense of the past or the future. Azure ends the painful decision between past and future for himself and his country as well: "I breathe in deep and hold it for a while. When I let go, I open my eyes. I have seen the centre of darkness. I have seen the slave-driver of darkness and he is a mad bastard. I know his

secrets. I know what he does when we sleep. My mother is dead. My father is dead” (194).

Most literature on orphans trods the same ground – orphans are a way to contextualize and identify with unease and social concerns. The figure of the orphan is used heavily to connote the vulnerable state of children, and supposedly the vulnerable state of adults/the nation – the vulnerable state that, unless it is rectified by family or the law, can lead to all sorts of problems. Emerging nations literature offers an alternative way of reading and understanding a world where as a whole, and by extension, reading and understanding the orphan. Rather than using the orphan as a vulnerable subject, world literature seems to suggest that the orphan is the center of opportunity instead. Unencumbered by the past – without family or other traditional structures – the orphan offers up a way to bypass the linear growth pattern that suggests the past must necessarily inform the future. As orphans, the family and the law no longer seem to inflexibly inform the future, but rather point towards a possible route forward – but not the only route. It is in these moments that the world novel offers up a possibility for an imagined time and space that transcends the past and the future and allows these nations (and their citizens) to explore what might be new and challenging, different and loaded with potential instead of trudging drearily forward in pursuit of an “adulthood” that may or may not fit the nation’s idea of self.

Chapter Two

The Mutilated Adolescent

The teenaged body is a site of a great deal of both internal and external anxiety.

Functioning as a site for inscription of gender, desire, sexuality, family relationships, and more, the inevitable physical changes coded in DNA hold a great deal of imaginary power. External pressures are often brought to bear on the teenaged body, through rituals such as genital mutilation, scarification rituals, tattooing, and other rites of passage that mark the teenaged body in ways that simultaneously familiarize these bodies as part of larger society, and also mark the changing body as separate and distinct. In the emerging nation, formalized rites of passage that transition from childhood to adulthood are often seen as “backwards,” “barbaric,” and “ancient”. Defining these rituals as part of the past can lead to a loss of formalized rituals in the emerging nation. The absence of such formalized rituals can lead to internalized rituals. Two emerging nation novels, *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* by Edwidge Danticat, consider the ramifications when internalized rituals manifest as self-harm or self-mutilation. In these novels, these rituals of self-harm are mainly read by others as feminine and code the female body (and consequently, the feminine nation) as sites of destruction and regression, reinforcing the view of the emerging nation as feminine and therefore incapable of progress.

I argue that, although self-harm is usually seen as destructive, these novels ultimately show anorexia and self-mutilation as generative acts that reinforce adolescence

as a discrete place of possibility. Dangarembga and Danticat circumvent expectations of reconciliation and linear growth and allow the female adolescent to recuperate adolescence as a permanent site of imagination and growth. This perspective shines a light on gender as an additional dimension to current criticisms of what cultural critic David Scott calls the “steady rhythm of progressive (sometimes righteously exultant) redemption” (799) embedded in de- and postcolonial narratives. My goal in looking at gender and rites of passage as a way to expose the fissures in monolithic and intractable notions of forward progress is not an attempt to impose a similarly intractable notion of what the emerging nation should look like. Instead, this is an opening into a larger conversation about the many limitations of the current rhetoric surrounding emerging nations, the postcolonial space, and progressive, linear progress.

In “Marxism and the Modern Janus,” Tom Nairn argues that the nation is the “modern Janus,” looking simultaneously to the past and the future in a bid to unify the present. Why is the emerging nation so concerned with the idea of unity and linear progression, especially when the past is littered with the detritus of colonial oppression, bondage, and fealty to states and ideologies directly in contradiction with their own best interests? This question has a long genealogy in movements surrounding decolonization, including the New Negro Movement, Negritude, and the Pan African movement. Speaking to the Caribbean experience in *Black Skins, White Masks*, Franz Fanon argues that the strain of reconciling the past and the future is so great as to cause a split psyche. Amilcar Cabral, in “Return to the Source,” repeats this argument in service of Portuguese colonies in Africa, but concedes that – for some – the split psyche can affect great change in fomenting a new national identity. In his rebuttal to Es’kia Mphahlele’s assertion that

Negritude was an “inferiority complex,” Leopold Senghor notes that, though Negritude derives from the (buried, covered up) past, “we reinforce ourselves at the same time, both as interdependent forces and as beings whose being consists in revitalizing ourselves in the re-creation of art” (Senghor 35). The seemingly unshakable desire to mine the past for totems and signposts to the future is an illusion, says Homi Bhabha, in *Nation and Narration*

[N]ations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation – or narration – might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. An idea whose cultural compulsion lies in *the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force* [emphasis added]. (1)

In Bhabha's formation, the desire to form a continuous line from the past to the future is a misguided attempt to create unity, built upon the romantic myth of history. National identity is dependent on an imagined history that is – at best – a delusional refusal to acknowledge long histories of oppression, dominance of foreign powers, and subjugation. Yet no useful alternative has been offered; this tempting narrative is tempting precisely because it elides the ugliness of the past while also ignoring the ongoing oppression of globalization and late-stage capitalism. It is not simply that the past and the future are at odds with one another, but reconciling the past and the future is impossible. The hopelessness of the task is the actual place of unity – the continuous attempt to integrate past and future, despite the impossibility, creates national unity.

While the mass delusion of national unity is a fertile place of inquiry, I am not interested in a broad survey of the myriad ways unity is sold to the emerging nation. Rather, this analysis is most interested in what Nairn calls “irrational” holdovers from the past and how they juxtapose with the future to force open spaces of possibility and imagination. More specifically, I am interested in how “irrational” gender expectations and correlated rites of passage fuel the rhetoric of linear growth and progress and, in turn, gender the nation. First, I will examine how gendered expectations are part and parcel of the progressive narrative, and how these expectations naturally extend to unequal metaphors about the hierarchy of nations. Then, I will look at two accounts of formalized rites of passage – one from Nelson Mandela’s autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* and one from Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* – and situate them within the conversation about the gendered nation. Finally, I will consider how the loss of formalized rituals can lead to internalized rites of passage. Reading self-harm in Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and Dangarembga against the narrative of progress and gender, I hope to show how these authors invest ritual self-harm with generative properties and challenge the notion of linear progress.

The rhetoric of growth, as applied to the nation, relies heavily on the trope of the new nation. In “Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and Difference,” scholar Anne McClintock declares: “the mapping of ‘Progress’ depends on systematically inventing images of ‘archaic’ time to identify what is historically ‘new’ about enlightened, national progress” (McClintock 65). In other words, the instability of the past/future pull of the temporal is often discussed as being “stabilized” or “resolved” by embodying the contradictions of gender, race, or ethnicity. McClintock notes “by figuring the

contradiction as a ‘natural’ division of *gender*, [the] anomalous relation to time is thus managed as a natural relation to gender” (66). In other words, it is easier to understand the complexities of time by breaking it down to two categories: past and present. This is accomplished by grafting time on to other (seemingly) dichotomous categories – in this case, female and male. Assigning women and other groups as anchors to the past, while men and other prioritized groups look ahead to the future, constructs a continuous line from past to future. In addition to gendering nationalisms in a troubling way, this conflation of gender and time reinforces the notion of a linear movement from past to future, reinforcing the progressive narrative of national reinvention. Figuring national identity as a linear movement elides the possibility that the nation may be invented in the spaces in between the past and the future.

Another division that aids in the mythos of linear development is the notion of public and private spheres. Seen most strikingly in the wake of industrialization, the move from a private economy to a cash-driven economy created gendered roles for families that included children as part of the gender dichotomy. In the Industrial Revolution, children were sent out to be a part of the cash economy, thus moving the child from the private sphere into the public sphere. Although women did not move into the public sphere, children occupied a very central place in early industrialization. In the late nineteenth century, Europe suffered an economic depression, necessitating the need for their newly acquired colonies to be self-sufficient. In order to achieve this, many colonial rulers chose to extract revenue from the colonies through taxation. In order to pay taxes to the foreign governments, colonies moved from cashless economies to cash-driven economies – a move that not only shattered centuries of successful mono-

economies, but also split families into gendered roles that mirrored the gendered roles of “civilized” Europe.

Once child labor laws were codified into law, the child returned to the sphere of domesticity. However, the adolescent did not return to this place. In England, children between the ages of 9-16 were permitted to work 16 hours a day per the Cotton Mills Act of the eighteenth century. By 1901, the permissible age for labor was raised to 12. The discrepancy between the children who were allowed to participate in the cash economy and were then removed from such labors was never clear with adolescents. As a part of the cash economy, the teenager is perceived as part of the public sphere. However, as a member of a family that he is reliant upon, he is figured in the private sphere. In developing economies, the teenager occupies a similar space as the teenager of 19th century England. Neither part of nor apart from the domestic scene, the teenager fits no role and exists in a netherworld of social hierarchies.

One enduring trope that relies heavily on the idea of gendered nationalisms is the prefiguring of the nation as a family. The family of man. The First Family in the United States. The Motherland and the The Fatherland. South African singer Miriam Makeba is known as Ma Africa, while Winnie Mandela was called the Mother of South Africa (until her own scandals suggested that she wasn't much of the nurturing type). Big Brother watches us in the nanny state – and perhaps nanny isn't related by blood, he acts as an ersatz mother to all of the children he cares for. To this end, McClintock notes two ways in which these domestic tropes of nationhood are important: “First, the family offers a natural figure for sanctioning social hierarchy within a putative organic unity of interests. Second, it offers a natural trope for figuring historical time” (63). By figuring the family

as historical, social theories such as Darwinism are able to play a role in creating the family as a hierarchical institution shaped by a historical genesis narrative.

This logic creates a double-bind. First, making the family an origin point of national history suggests that the family is an institution, bound by organizing principles. On the other hand, by figuring the family as a natural order, outside of history, nationalism and economy, the family is no longer bound by these organizing principles. This idea takes two interrelated paths. First, the family offers a natural unity of historical time: rebellion from the unruly teenaged members of the family unit is a natural process of maturation, while the suppression of such rebellions (or the seamless absorption and reframing of such rebellions) under the aegis of the paternal figure is part of the natural order of unity. Second, the nation as a family unit trope, when mapped against the prevailing notions of social Darwinism in the Victorian time frame (when colonialism flourished), suggests that time, when ordered as familial, can also be mapped on to Social Darwinism. Utilizing the family tree as a mechanism through which to understand historical change, Darwin defines ‘The Family Tree of Progress’ in *Notebook B*: *Transmutation of Species* (1837-1838). He describes evolution as a many-branched tree, which he then amends to “the coral of life, base of branches dead; so that passages cannot be seen” (B25). In *The Descent of Man*, he sets forth the notion that civilization branches out in a similar way: “The ‘grade of civilization’ seems a most important element in the success of nations” (230). The top grade of civilization was the “European ur-narrative,” a place of progress and forward (future) thinking. All nations under the European ur-narrative on this tree, then, are naturally striving upward towards the goal of European progress. Those nations that did not fit into the narrative of Euro-centric desire were

relegated to the lesser branches of the family tree and codified as deviant or ‘immature’ in relation to the members of the ‘family’ that were following the natural order of maturity and growth (that is, becoming most like the patriarch Europe). As anthropologist Thomas Patterson notes, this idea gained currency during the sixteenth-century when LeRoy, advisor to the French king, began using the term

civiliser to describe the process by which a change from a primitive, natural condition to a more advanced one was effected by means of a moral, intellectual, and social progress. For LeRoy and other members of the court intelligentsia, life in the present was obviously superior to life in the past [and likewise, life in the uncivilized parts of the world]; change was assumed to cumulative, directional, and desirable. (32)

This Family Tree of Progress reinforced racist and gendered notions of Imperial Progress with what was deemed “scientific” rationale, and relegated colonized peoples, children, and women to the offshoots of the Family Tree that were categorized as stuck in the past, resistant to change, and archaic.

As adolescents begin to navigate the process of growing “into” Eurocentric models, they often participate in rituals or rites of passage to help make the transition from the past to the future, the private to the public. This forced reconciliation of the past and the future exerts itself on the adolescent body in different forms: male and female genital mutilation (the removal of the clitoris, male circumcision); separation from society (tied to the onset on menses, often associated with avoiding demons or other evil forces); scarification and pain rituals (such as the Sateré-Mawé bullet ant rite, which involves wearing gloves made of angry bullet ants); and hunting or other dangerous

activity rituals (such as the Maasai tradition of hunting lions, or the Vanuatu tradition of land diving). Similarly, the gendered nation is also asked to participate in rites of passage to mark movement into late-stage global capitalism. These rituals exert themselves on the body of the nation in the form of economic rites (loans from the IMF and World Bank, reparations), legal rites (inclusion in the United Nations, formal trade agreements), and social rites (cessation of human rights abuses, acknowledgment of the unsavory past), with participation indebting the (coded-as) feminine emerging nation to strict rules for participation in the arena of the larger “adult nation.”

Mapping the female adolescent body on to the nation creates some interesting points of overlap. For the female adolescent, declining to participate in traditional rites of passage breaks the connection to historical time – the physical adolescent body is inscribed with external markers for adulthood that cannot be ignored. By failing to participate in cultural and social rituals that figuratively mark the body as adult, the adolescent body is left in a state of flux. The adolescent female is not a child, not a woman, not anything really. If the body cannot physically be tied to the past by virtue of its unruly maturation, but also cannot be considered adult because of the lack of ritual moving it to the future, then the only place to exist is in the present. Likewise, the emerging nation that refuses to participate in the rites/expectations of late-stage global capitalism is similarly coded as physically removed from the past (because they are independent nations), but not part of the future (since they refuse the ritual that guarantees them a spot at the global citizenship banquet). Lack of participation in rites circumvents linear expectations of historical time, leaving open a space of imagination and potentiality.

The female subject uses writing as a way to interrogate her circumstances, rather than place herself in a tradition of linear growth. This is itself an act of imagination and potentiality. It's a nod to the past and the future, but stays firmly seated in the present as a place of invention. Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith note that

[f]or the colonial subject, the process of coming to writing is an articulation through interrogation, a charting of the conditions that have historically placed her identity under erasure. Consequently, her narratives do not necessarily fall into a privatized itinerary, the journey towards something, the personal struggle towards God, the entry into society of the Bildungsroman, the confessional mode, and the like. (Watson and Smith xx)

Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* offer two views of what gendered rites of passage can look like in the emerging nation. Far from simply offering examples of rites of passage, these two narratives address what postcolonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her essay "Three Women's Texts and Circumfession," calls the "distinction between autobiography and testimony." Testimony, she writes, is "the genre of the subaltern giving witness to oppression, to a less oppressed other. Editorial control varies in degree, but is never absent." *Long Walk to Freedom* not only showcases the male rite of passage as a way to consolidate the self and emerge into society fully centered and adult, but also suggests that autobiography reinforces the privilege of the male experience as one which produces a centered subject. By presenting his narrative of subalternity as representative of a certain South African citizen – and specific to the male experience – Mandela highlights

the interplay of “individual and representativity [that] is the impossible signature of the ghostly witness in all autobiography” (7). On the other hand, *Nervous Conditions* underscores the impossibility of the novel to function as a uniting force for the female, nor for the female rite of passage to act as a recuperative force for the female body. Spivak, again: “The academic feminist must learn to learn from [the othered female], to speak to them, to suspect that their access to the political and sexual scene is not merely to be corrected by our superior theory and enlightened compassion” (*In Other Worlds* 186). In other words, the female body cannot be held together by the force of testimony or narrative, but continues to demand an interrogation of the structures that created it. Reconciling the past and the future on the female body – and through the female narrative – is not a simple matter, and is perhaps an impossible position.

Mandela’s autobiography, written in 1995, is a look backwards at South Africa during a multiplicity of emergence. Mandela was born in 1918, as the nation was recovering from the Second Boer War and limping towards nominal self-rule as the Union of South Africa (to be clear: self-rule by Afrikaners, not the native population). After years of war, South Africa seemed on the cusp of emerging from long-term violence and taking a place at the global table. As history tells us, this did not happen, but rather the nation fell into the deep well of apartheid rule that ultimately led to complete ostracization. After Mandela’s release from prison in 1990 and the abolition of apartheid, South Africa took another stab at self-governance. Mandela served as president from 1994 to 1997.

Long Walk to Freedom was published in 1995, and offers a retrospective of life in the tumultuous century preceding Mandela’s rise to power. Mandela describes his

childhood in the village of Qunu as an idyll, punctuated only by his father's passing and his adoption by the regent in Mkhekezweni. Mandela begins the section on his circumcision by stating the basic principle of what was to happen: "When I was sixteen, the regent decided that it was time that I became a man" (24). This simple statement opens up a full chapter on Mandela's transition into manhood –much the same as his other chapters, his opening statement is a fact, underplayed by his simple and straightforward phrasing. Subsequent chapters begin in similar ways: "Africans could not vote, but that did not mean we did not care about who won the election" (104); "It was dawn when we reached the offices of Crown Mines" (59); "The state case continued during the Christmas season of 1963, ending on 29 February 1964" (346). This style indicates Mandela's equation of becoming a man with other events in his life – that is to say, he sees it as an inevitable and not particularly unusual moment. The ritual that makes a boy into a man is a particular trait of the familial trope of nationhood, suggesting maturity and growth into the upper branches of the Family Tree of Progress. Although South Africa would have been granted independence just three years prior to Mandela's sixteenth birthday, Africans in South Africa were still effectively under colonial control of the United Party at the time of this event and Mandela's position would have been as a colonized subject. By using his ritual circumcision as a defining moment in his life, Mandela is reinforcing his upward mobility.

While Mandela's upward movement into the branches of the Family Tree of Progress does not necessarily exclude women, it is still a gendered move that reminds readers of Mandela's *ability* for upward mobility. *Long Walk to Freedom* was published in 1995, after the first free elections in South Africa. Inclusion of a chapter in which the

newly minted president of a democratic state is allowed to “grow up” serves as a reminder that the nation itself is capable of growing up – or rather growing into a Eurocentric model of a nation. Watson and Smith note that “the very taking up of the autobiographical transports the colonial subject into the territory of the ‘universal subject’ and thus promises culturally empowered subjectivity. Participation in, through re/presentation of, privileged narratives can secure cultural recognition for the subject” (xix).

In addition to functioning as a strong reinforcement of maturation, Mandela's description of his circumcision is a joyous one, shared by the entire community: “The night before the circumcision, there was a ceremony near our huts with singing and dancing. Women came from the nearby villages and we danced to their singing and clapping” (Mandela 25). Though the ceremony is shared by the community at large, it is still only the males who are allowed to participate in the actual circumcision as participants or spectators. These women function as vehicles for the past – they do not change or move forward into any kind of adulthood (although there is the vexing question of natural maturity vs. national maturity which, due to the interest of time, I do not address here), but the males do move forward and through a specific ritual designed to help them do so.

Mandela's initiation into manhood follows a strict set of rules, contributing to the idea of gendered nationality as each rule is tied directly to building the nation. First, he is sent to “two grass huts in a secluded valley on the banks of the Mbashe River” (24). At this camp, the boys are told tales of the mines by one of the popular boys. Mandela recalls: “In those days, working in the mines was almost as much of a rite of passage as

circumcision school” (25). The camp, supposedly meant to be a place to become a man, becomes a place where economy and work define masculinity. Next, the boys are arranged in front of a crowd of spectators and circumcised according to tradition. Mandela writes: “flinching or crying out was a sign of weakness and stigmatized one's manhood. I was determined not to disgrace myself, my group, or my guardian” (25). In this passage we see that the ritual of manhood is one that hinges upon a boy's ability to join a larger group comprised of members of his nation and to show stoicism in the face of great pain and difficulty. The move to adulthood is predicated on the idea of joining a group and becoming part of the nation. Chief Meliqqili speaks to the group of boys after their sequestration and says “There sit our sons, young healthy and handsome, the flower of the Xhosa tribe, the pride of our nation” (27). Implicit within the ritual, then, is the inclusion of the boys in the nation – noted here as both the Xhosa tribe and the “nation,” a vague term that is later clarified as Meliqqili announces that the boys are “all black South Africans” (28). In the case of Mandela's circumcision, we can see that the gendered notion of nationality is coded into the practices of ritual initiation into manhood. Though Mandela's position is that of the colonial subject, he is still participating in a ritual meant to codify and reinforce the idea of gendered nationalisms. Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* both challenges and reinforces the traditional narrative of gendered nationalism and in doing so, “exposes [its] gaps and incongruities, wrenches [its] meanings, calls [its] authority into question” (Watson and Smith xx). *Nervous Conditions* tells the story of Tambu as she navigates the world of a newly independent Rhodesia. The novel follows her as she struggles to earn money to attend school, her subsequent attendance at her uncle's mission school, and her admission to the Catholic boarding

school Sacred Heart.

Dangarembga follows Tambu through a specific portion of her life in a very linear narrative, although it is written looking backwards in time, beginning with her childhood. Tambu begins by telling readers that her childhood was irrevocably shaped by her brother's death. This beginning serves as a referent to the past and creates expectations from her readers that she will tell the story up to her adulthood (from which she is ostensibly writing). However, the story of *Nervous Conditions* slows down and becomes almost completely focused on Tambu's adolescence. Tambu is writing to tell her own story, but also becomes the interlocutor of her cousin Nyasha's story, which Nyasha (suffering from a mental breakdown) cannot tell herself. Within the novel, Tambu attempts to put together two things: her own narrative of growing up in what she hopes is a linear fashion, and Nyasha's "broken" story that cannot be pieced into a linear growth narrative. During the novel, Tambu has many moments of "growing up" but the one that most closely resembles a ritual or traditional entry into adulthood is when Tambu begins menstruating.

Tambu's menarche – marking the entrance to womanhood – is buried in the middle of a chapter that focuses on her transition to living in the mission house. Unlike Mandela's ritual, Tambu's arrival into womanhood does not receive a separate chapter, nor is it presented as part of the larger narrative of growing up. Tambu attempts to make the situation simple by saying "As my mind and body relaxed [...] I grew quite plump. I began to menstruate. I was very calm about it in the beginning" (95). By making the occasion a straightforward one, Tambu attempts to mark it as a "normal" rite of passage, one that would allow her to easily slip into her adult life; however, she finds that the act

of menstruation and the attendant messiness prevent her from that smooth transition. “The onset of my menses, then,” she writes, “should have been placid, but when it came to washing those rags in Maiguru’s white bathroom, to making a mess in the toilet bowl before I flushed it away, the business became nasty and nauseating. I became morose and moody about it” (96). When Nyasha sees Tambu’s discomfort, she offers her a box of tampons and a booklet of line drawings of the female body.

Tambu’s designation of her menses as “nasty and nauseating” directly contrasts with Mandela’s description of his circumcision as a joyous occasion. Instead of crowds of onlookers, Tambu’s menstruation is a cause for secrecy. She privately inspects the drawings on the booklet Nyasha gives to her, as well as tentatively examining a tampon through the wrapper. Her desire to stay secretive about the process is contrasted with Nyasha’s flippant attitude about using a tampon: “She said I was better off losing my virginity to a tampon, which wouldn’t gloat over its achievement, than to man, who would add mine to his board of hymens” (97). Tambu, the country girl, stuck in a past of tribal customs, mud huts, and washing in the river, compares herself to Nyasha. represents the new Zimbabwean citizen: educated in Britain, modern, and capable of adapting to a Euro-centric (and therefore best) way of life. The novel addresses many of the issues with that concept, though, with regards to length, I focus only on the contrast between the two girls in the moment of Tambu’s menarche. We see in this moment that there are, in Tambu’s mind, ways to reconcile the past and the future on the female body, to puncture the traditional gendered national understanding of women as stuck in the past and men looking to the future. By writing Nyasha as an independent and outspoken woman capable of moving into adulthood without Tambu’s timidity, Dangarembga

explores the possibility of moving past gendered nationalisms and into a space of clear-cut independence for a nation. Although we see later in the book that moving out of a position where women are considered inferior is not an easy process and continues to be problematic for both Tambu and Nyasha, at the moment of menarche, Dangarembga offers a potential way to “ent[er] into the territory of traditional autobiography [and] implicate the speaker in a potentially recuperative performance” (Smith and Watson xix).

Both Mandela and Dangarembga show how the move from childhood to adulthood is figured differently depending on gender – that same move is intrinsically tied to the notion of becoming a citizen. As seen in these novels, the traditional narrative places the male protagonist into the public sphere through his ritual coming-of-age. Once he is in the public sphere, he is in the nation itself. In Dangarembga's narrative, coming-of-age places women even more firmly into the domestic sphere of privacy, guilt, and shame, thus disallowing a formal movement into the public sphere and into citizenship. Dangarembga challenges this dichotomy through the use of doubles – Tambu and Nyasha – but continues to show how these ideals of gendered nationalism still exist and are still powerfully recreated and reinforced through literature.

Ethnologist Gerald F. Murray writes:

In describing the lifeways of any group, ethnographers generally dedicate one section of their monograph to that subset of rituals which mark the transition of an individual from one locally recognized stage of the life cycle to the next. Cultures differ not only on the details of the ceremonies, but also on the stage of the human career which are selected for ritual attention. But most cultures, be they simple or complex, do institute some

sort of ceremonialization of entry into new stages of life. Though the rites may be secular in nature, they are probably linked to the theological concepts and ritual traditions prevailing in the particular group. (Murray 209)

One of the larger unanswered questions of becoming-nation is how new ways of coming into adulthood are created and, in turn, how the nation responds. In the readings of Mandela and Dangarembga, we see that the passages into adulthood are codified rituals – whether the result is a move into the private sphere, as with Tambu and her menstruation, or a move in the public sphere, as with Mandela and his circumcision rituals – they are rituals that are recognized and respected by the community. The nation that is building itself and creating a new identity often loses those cultural practices and rituals. Most of the rituals practiced at the onset of adulthood are now religious rituals instead of cultural ones.

Outside factors such as disapproval and pressure from outside countries, colonial influence, disparities in land ownership and acquisition, loss of traditional value systems, and lack of access to resources have radically changed the landscape of rites of passage. Female circumcision, a practice derided by the West, was practiced widely in sub-Saharan Africa as a coming of age ritual. Outside pressures by human rights groups and Western governments has largely changed the practice – in some cases it has driven the practice underground. In other cases, such as in Western Gambia, the ritual is still performed, but has removed the element of actually cutting the young women (Hernlund 235).

This is not to say that rituals do not exist at all – in the United States, the move

from grammar school to secondary school is often marked by the adoption of a school uniform, and turning sixteen entitles young people to get a driver's license and often places young drivers in the position of purchasing and maintaining their first car. In the religious realm, the Jewish traditions of the bar and bat mitzvahs mark the coming of age of young people, and Korean culture still practices the rite of giving flowers to young people on their eighteenth birthdays to mark the end of childhood. These smaller rituals continue to mark transitional moments for young people in these cultures, but the larger rituals often mark not only the transition from childhood to adulthood, but act as formal moments that lead to what anthropologist Paul Erickson calls "optimal identity formation" (1968). Erickson notes four benefits of these rituals: "(a) becoming and feeling most like oneself and experiencing a subjective sense of comfort with the self; (b) having a sense of direction in life; (c) perceiving sameness and continuity of the self from the past, at the present, and to the anticipated future; and (d) expressing an identity that is affirmed by a community of important others" (Erickson, qtd in Markstrom and Iborra 400).

These formal moments can be grafted onto the nation as well. In the process of "growing up," the nation experiences similar benefits from going through formal rituals to "adult" nation status. Like the disappearing adolescent rituals, the movement from childish status of the nation to the adult status has become a wide gray area. One might argue that admission to the United Nations constitutes a formalized ritual of inclusion, but that ritual often does not take into account the changing nature of a country and a country's status. For example, South Africa was admitted on November 7, 1945, rather immediately after the formation of the UN itself. Somalia was inducted in 1960, while

Palestine has been denied admittance since 1949 and the creation of the state of Israel. Rwanda was admitted in 1962 and Afghanistan was admitted in 1946 as an early member. The changes undergone by these countries since admittance suggest that the ritual of becoming a member of the UN is not quite the announcement to the world that a country has become a fully recognized and accepted member of the global political economy, a fully-formed and grown-up member of the larger world. The weight of a vote from Somalia or the Sudan is insubstantial at best, nor are they considered serious political players. They are, as noted earlier, still considered developing nations, nations that need some time to grow into the expected notion of what it means to participate in the world.

Formal rituals recognizing and ordering adolescence as the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood are often severed in the emergence of the new nation, from external pressures, internal pressures, religion, and other reasons. While some cheer for this newly “enlightened” situation, I argue that new, internalized rituals spring up in their place. And while these rituals carry the possibility of invention and creation, they often simply reinterpret and reinscribe gendered nationalisms onto the body, especially the female body. I argue that rituals of self-harm and self-mutilation are often the internalized versions of external (and recently dismissed) rites of passage.

In *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry begins from the argument that pain is inexpressible and therefore is unable to be communicated in any real way. As Scarry puts it: “[w]hatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability, and it ensures this unsharability through its resistance to language [...] Physical pain does not simply resist language, but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is

learned” (4). Though Scarry speaks directly to the idea of torture as the mode of pain that renders its victims voiceless, the same argument may be made for other types of trauma.

Michael Rothberg, in *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*, notes that trauma inflicted on oneself – through self-torture or self-harm – achieves the same result: inexpressability and unshareability. Other theorists, such as Cathy Caruth, Dominic LaCapra and Ruth Leys also note this response to pain, trauma, and injury. For Scarry, this inexpressibility fosters a condition she defines as an “unmaking” of the world. This “unmaking” is a systematic deconstruction of voice, which Scarry explains:

[t]orture inflicts pain that is itself language destroying, but torture also mimes (objectifies in the external environment) this language destroying capacity in its interrogation, the purpose of which is not to elicit needed information but visibly deconstruct the prisoner's voice. The word “deconstruct” rather than “destroy” is used in the previous sentence because to say interrogation “visibly destroys” the prisoner's voice only implies the outcome of the event is the shattering of the person's voice (and if this alone were the goal, there would be no need for verbal interrogation since the inflicted pain alone accomplishes this outcome). The prolonged interrogation, however, also graphically objectifies the step-by-step backward movement along the path by which language comes into being and which here is being reversed or uncreated or deconstructed [...] what we are looking at is the structure of unmaking. (19-20)

Here, Scarry's rendering suggests that violence not only results in a loss of voice, but the

very process of violence deconstructs the way language is created. This unmaking is a catastrophic loss; an “appropriation, aping and reversing of the act of creation” (Scarry 21).

Indeed, most trauma theorists suggest that the very act of trauma, violence or injury is a negative act that results in a loss of creation, a loss of voice, a loss of self, and most importantly, a loss of testimony (or at least, the inability to accurately and openly testify to the lived experience of trauma). Rothberg, speaking to the trauma of the Holocaust, notes “If the Nazis and their collaborators demonstrate here at the threshold of the concentrationary world the power to forbid, suspend, and even cut language, what hope can there be for the narrator's own testimony?” (148). For Caruth, testimony is thwarted by “the necessity of witness to historical events that are constituted by the impossibility of their straightforward integration into consciousness or knowledge” (1) while Scarry suggests that war and torture are a “suspension of civilization (and are somehow the opposite of that civilization)” (21).

All of these destructive acts point to an inability to communicate; however, the lack of communication that creates this lacuna is often coded as temporary and the deconstruction itself is coded as a conduit through which invention percolates. Despite Caruth's claims that trauma is best defined as a “collapse of witness,” she offers a nod to the future where “this inherent displacement of the trauma from its own context also suggests that its witness will always lie in a future beyond its immediate occurrence,” (1) and Rothberg argues that “testimony gathers the remains [...] in order to bear witness to a story that leads at once to death and to communication with others” (156). Scarry's conflation of trauma with an “unmaking” of language is redeemed through her idea “that

the story of physical pain becomes as well as story of the expansive nature of human sentience, the felt-fact of aliveness that is often sheerly happy, just as the story of expressing physical pain eventually opens into the wider frame of invention” (22).

I argue that the adolescent body as a site of self-inscribed trauma does not, in fact, appear to help recuperate trauma. Instead of the adolescent body as a site of creation (as previously discussed), self-harm and self-mutilation serve as a way to use the body as a site of re-inscription of trauma – to continue the perpetuation of the trauma and its attendant loss of communication. The representation of the traumatized adolescent who engages in behaviors that reinforce traumatic events serves also as a rhetorical device that suggests that the body cannot be used to create and invent, but rather as a space that cannot move past trauma to “grow up.” In this framework, it is possible to read this violence as to read violence to oneself as an adolescent or juvenile act.

Unlike the victims of the types of violence Scarry defines (war, torture) or the types of violence Rothberg, Caruth, Leys, et. al. investigate (the Holocaust, war, systemic state violence), those who engage in self-harm and self-mutilation¹⁴ are seen outside of the prescribed definition of “victim.” Instead, they are often coded as mentally ill, a designation underscored by the inclusion of self-harm in the DSM-IV as a symptom of borderline personality disorder. Additionally, self-harm is listed as an almost exclusively adolescent disorder that presents from ages 12-24, with very few cases initially presenting in children.¹⁵ Together these aspects of self-harm tend to conflate the idea that self-harm is an adolescent behavior that connotes a mental illness, rather than a trauma or

¹⁵ Though self-harm may continue into adulthood, cases of first presentation in adults over 24 are rare to the point of being nonexistent.

response to trauma that bestows victimhood upon those who suffer.

It follows then, that if self-harm is tagged as outside of trauma, it is therefore unavailable for the recuperative powers of creation and testimony. This outside status marks the self-harmer out as one who is unable to fit back into society, although for others, perhaps that fit is a bit more tenuous and the testimony is not quite perfect. But for the current theorists of trauma, the reintegration of the victimized subject back into the world itself is a key component of understanding trauma. Rothberg, for example, suggests that the representations of the Holocaust are “pornographic,” yet discourse is necessary for understanding. Scarry sees the moment of unmaking through trauma as a precursor to making and creation. These adolescents, in self-harming, are unable, as it were, to grow up into these powers of discourse and creation. In other words, they cannot become functioning adults who can recuperate and reimagine trauma and integrate it into discourse. The self-harming adolescent is hit with a double whammy – firstly forced into self-harm as a result of the loss of traditional rites of passage, and then forced into the role of perpetual child by those who do not see self-harm as a trauma.

If self-harm can be coded as a moment wherein the feminine rite of passage has been internalized, then this might be read as a yet another way in which women's bodies are placed firmly in the domestic sphere and are erased from the nation as participating members. In this way, both the women in these nations and the nations coded as feminine are constituted as Other. In the moment of moving into adulthood, they (the nation and the women) are relegated to the lower branches of the Family Tree of Progress. It is possible, however, to read this moment of internalized and ritualized harm as a place that is at once destructive and constructive. In this reading, self-harm is an initially destructive

act – but a destructive act that is necessary to break the binding expectations of women and (coded-as) feminine nations brought on by colonial legacies of oppression, structural failures, and outside interventions. That act of breakage then acts as an opening for self-harm to become a space for invention and creativity.

In this vein, Edwidge Danticat's 1994 novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* engages with the legacy of violence in Haiti following the Duvalier regime, yet does not specifically look to Sophie's self-mutilation (breaking her hymen with a pestle) and self-harm (in the form of her eating disorder) as responses to the historical trauma and state violence that Haiti has endured over the past two centuries. This novel helps illuminate the symbiotic nature of Caribbean literature in relation to the recently sexualized bodies of young Caribbean women. Donette Francis, in “Silences Too Horrific to Disturb” makes clear that “empires, the postcolonial state and the patriarchal family” (Francis 75) are implicated in how female bodies are silenced or erased in the moment of coming-of-age, and despite – or perhaps in addition to – this erasure, the state continues to co-constitute this same female body within the category of citizenship.

The concept of trauma as a pretext for writing the Caribbean as female is not new. Indeed, with multiple legacies of slavery, colonialism, dictatorship and genocide, the notion of violence is etched deeply into the psyche of the Caribbean. Ben Heller, in “Landscape, Femininity and Caribbean Discourse” notes that “[a] signal characteristic of Caribbean discourse has been the tendency to figure the shaping environment as female, or with qualities such as fluidity, and relationality that have often been associated with women, femininity, and the female body in both patriarchal and feminist discourses” (392). However, Danticat's novel looks primarily to how violence is rendered in the

Caribbean literary space by focusing on issues of upheaval and subsequent violence within the nation-state rather than on the sexualized body of the narrator, Sophie Caco or her mother, Martine.

In his seminal work, *The Repeating Island*, Antonio Benítez-Rojo defines the “political, economic, social and anthropological dynamics” of the Caribbean, specifically “its fragmentation; its instability; its reciprocal isolation; its uprootedness; its cultural heterogeneity; its lack of historiography and historical continuity; its contingency and impermanence; its syncretism, etc.” (1). These characteristics follow along other definitions and ideas of postmodernity, as do the concepts of bricolage, multiplicity of identity, and turbulence that Benítez-Rojo brings to the discussion. The impossibility of establishing one single Caribbean identity is based on the “polyrhythms” of the Caribbean space.

Benítez-Rojo complicates his analysis of the region by suggesting that “no perspective of human thought – whether premodern, modern or postmodern – can by itself define the Caribbean’s complex social interplay” (295). These complexities are seen in the intertwining of the past with the present; the interleaving of the Afro-Caribbean identity with the Indo-Caribbean identity and the mestizo identity and the emigrant identity and the immigrant identity; the intermingling of “the most varied system of signs: music, song, dance, myth, language, food, dress, body expression” (29).

This polyrhythmic interpretation of the Caribbean space as neither premodern, modern nor postmodern presents a more complicated view in looking at how the Caribbean space functions in terms of violence. In “Towards a Concept of Postmodernism,” Ihab Hassan discusses the notion of history as a continuously moving

line that incorporates the ideas of the past within the present (citation). Although the Caribbean is not a strictly postmodern space, it is, according to Benítez-Rojo, a place in which revisions continually take place. Perhaps it might even be fitting to say that the fissures opened up in the hybrid identity of the Caribbean subject are filled in with the historical past to create a bricolage. This incorporation of the premodern, the modern and the postmodern – instead of creating a tripartite split – allows for an assemblage of differing ideologies (what Hassan calls “containing the enemy within”).

Benítez-Rojo writes that the fractured Caribbean identity hinges on one constant: “Violence, sheer violence, historic violence. It does not matter whether the theme is ‘War and Rebellion’ or any other: in the end its ultimate meaning will be violence, whether it is called discovery, conquest, slavery, or colonialism” (300). This dismal view of the Caribbean as a space of perpetual violence that cannot, by virtue of its instability, leads organically to the outside expectation that Haiti, as a nation, cannot (will not) grow up.

If rites of passage serve to further enforce gendered nationalisms and place young women even more firmly into the private sphere, then ersatz rites of passage that involve self harm (and the attendant erasure that accompanies them) appear to move those same young women even further into the domestic sphere. However, in Danticat's work, writing sexual and personal violence onto political history re-opens the fissures in Caribbean identity, allowing for the possibility of counternarratives that rewrite female subjectivity back onto the national imagination.

Breath, Eyes, Memory tells the story of Sophie Caco and her mother Martine. Martine is raped at the hands of Haiti's *tonton macoutes* when she is eighteen, falls pregnant, and gives birth to Sophie. After Sophie's birth, Martine runs away to the United

States to escape her trauma. Sophie is left to be raised by her grandmother and her aunt Atie in Haiti until she is twelve and her mother brings her to the United States.

When Sophie is eighteen, Martine sexually abuses her by “testing.” This Haitian tradition serves double duty as a rite designed to ensure the virginity of young Haitian women while also marking the moment of movement from childhood to sexual maturity and (physical) adulthood. In order to escape these nightly violations, Sophie mutilates herself by rupturing her own hymen with a pestle, to suggest that she has been sexually active. The violence visited upon and by both women returns to haunt them and, in various ways, allow them to “recreate the same unspeakable acts that they themselves lived through” (234).

The rite of passage denoted by testing has been interrupted by Martine's and Sophie's move to New York. Outside of the influence of Haitian traditions, Martine delays testing Sophie until she has evidence that Sophie has been out with a boy (she comes in late from a date with Joseph, her older boyfriend whom she eventually marries). “When I was girl,” Martine tells Sophie, “my mother used to test us to see if we were virgins. She would put her finger in our very private parts and see if it would go inside [...] the way my mother was raised, a mother is supposed to do that to her daughter until the daughter is married. It is her responsibility to keep her pure” (60-1).

This delay in testing suggests Martine's ambivalence about recreating her own sexual trauma with Sophie and her desire to completely circumvent the entire rite of passage. The rite itself is intensely private – it is referred to as a “secret” by Martine and this terminology is co-opted by Sophie who repeats “there are secrets you cannot keep” as she dissociates from the violence being perpetrated upon her body. Danticat reinforces

this idea after Martine is finished with the testing; Martine “pull[s] a sheet up” and leaves the room with “her face buried in her hands.” Sophie “close[s]” her legs (85). All of these images suggest the closed, domestic nature of the violence at hand. Like Tambu in *Nervous Conditions*, Sophie finds the rite of passage into adulthood to be messy, nauseating, and closed within the domestic world.

Sophie's choice to stop the testing by mutilating herself with the pestle seems to initially reinforce the messy, nauseating, and domestic nature of the rite of passage. She describes the moment:

My flesh ripped apart as I pressed the pestle into it. I could see the blood slowly dripping onto the bed sheet. I took the pestle and the bloody sheet and stuffed them into a bag. It was gone, the veil that always held my mother's finger back every time she tested me.

My body was quivering when my mother walked into my room to test me. My legs were limp when she drew them aside. I ached so hard I could hardly move. Finally I failed the test. (88)

Again, like Tambu, Sophie is embarrassed by the blood and flesh that constitute her changing body. Like Tambu, she attempts to hide the blood-stains that mark her out as an adult. This might suggest that Sophie is willingly trading one type of ritual that plunges her further into the domestic world for another that does a similar job.

This degenerative act is dimmed a bit when, immediately before tearing her hymen with the pestle, Sophie recalls the story of the woman who bleeds through her unbroken skin. The woman goes to Erzulie, the voudou goddess of love and female energy, who offers to stop the bleeding, but in exchange, the woman can no longer be a

woman. She chooses to be a butterfly and “was transformed and never bled again” (88). Transformation, it seems, is at the heart of Sophie's self-mutilation. In “Personality Disorder and Self-Wounding,” Digby Tantam and Jane Whittaker write: “[t]he stated intention of self-mutilation is often to rid oneself of an offending organ or body part, typically one to which one's culture attributes some moral and agentive qualities” (452) For Martine (and generations of Haitian women before her), the female sex organs contain the propensity for moral laxity. The sex organs are in need of protection because they are easily defiled and young women are incapable of guarding themselves against incursions. The tradition of testing, in Danticat's work, allows for the young women to be protected against being sullied until they can be shepherded into the safety of a male embrace.

In much the same way, our understanding of the discourse surrounding Caribbean issues of nationalism and autonomy are coded into the discussions surrounding the feminine. The weak country cannot be trusted to metaphorically grow up on [her] own. She must need the attentive hand-holding offered by older, more established nations, under the aegis of the United Nations or other entities. Do we see Haiti as a nation that has matured in the geopolitical landscape? No, we still see it as a place that continues to be susceptible to violence and destruction of its own making (and this phenomenon is not limited Haiti). Even natural disasters such as the 2010 earthquake are quickly revised to be read as failures of the Haitian infrastructure rather than as failures on the part of the “shepherd.” As an example, the cholera outbreaks in Haiti following the earthquake are widely acknowledged to have come from Nepalese UN peacekeepers. However, *The New York Times* reports that “Haiti is even less equipped to tackle cholera than it was three

years ago.” Additionally, The United Nations (the guilty party in this scenario) reflects the blame back on Haiti, noting that the poor quality of care in the few treatment centers left in Haiti “reflects weaknesses in the capacity of health centers to provide timely and adequate health services to patients affected by cholera” (“U.N. Struggles to Stem Haiti Cholera Epidemic”). The shepherd denies his culpability in losing his sheep.

But perhaps this is the crux of the matter – these breaks, this destruction takes place over a long period of time, just as growing up doesn't happen overnight or even after a ritual meant to mark that passage. Haiti's self-destructive behaviors (if we want to code them as such) seek to break the long standing history of colonial oppression, outside intervention, and structural failures. Instead of looking to how those breaks will eventually function in terms of moving past Haiti's long-term standing as a “child,” these traumas tend to cement our outside notion of Haiti as incapable of moving up the branches of the Family Tree of Progress.

Sophie engages in a destructive act that ends in an anatomical change that not only removes the offending body part, but also requires corrective surgery. In “Uncovered Stories,” Francis suggests that the removal of her hymen is a “short term victory.” By willfully harming herself, Sophie creates a psychic disjuncture within her relationship with Joseph. She is unable to have sex without fear and pain, and she is forced into a caesarian section because of the pain involved in natural childbirth. Francis warns that “the far-reaching after-effects of her self-mutilation demonstrate the limits of such ‘embodied protests’” (“Silences” 84).

But such narrow readings miss the fact that the initial act of violence gives Sophie the first opportunity to break away from her mother. Rather than declare her

independence, however, she shuffles immediately into Joseph's protective embrace:

I waited until I heard her moaning in her sleep. I gathered my things and stuffed them in a suitcase. I had to dress quickly. I tiptoed downstairs and opened the front door.

I knocked on Joseph's door and waited for him to answer.

"Are you in trouble?" he asked.

He took me aside and sat me down.

I was limping a little. My body ached from the wound the pestle had made. I handed him my suitcase and the pinky ring he had given me.

"I am ready for a real ring," I said.

"You want to get married?"

I nodded. (88-89)

This first move away from her mother's too-tight embrace and into Joseph's perhaps-not-tight-enough embrace puts Sophie into the position of beginning to change and grow. The difficulty with looking to rites of passage as the singular moment of movement from childhood to adulthood is that these rites do not do much beyond connote that the change has taken place on a cultural level; they do not actually engender change.

The tripartite structure of the novel appears to nicely illustrate this misstep. Part One covers Sophie's childhood and move to New York. In these sections, she is still a child of twelve. Upon her arrival to New York, Martine presents her with a doll. Part Two, the smallest of the three, begins as Sophie turns eighteen and ends with her breaking her hymen and running away. Part Three, the longest of the three sections, sees Sophie as she journeys back to Haiti to escape her sexless marriage and continues

through as she comes to terms with her eating disorder and her mother's mental illness and eventual death.

By relegating Sophie's move to adulthood to the smallest part of the novel and reducing it to one action – mutilating herself – Danticat seemingly reinforces the notion that rites of passage usher our protagonists through to adulthood and adolescence is a brief interlude on the linear path to maturity. Each section corresponds to a “locally recognized stage of the life cycle.”

However, as J. Brooks Bouson notes in *Embodied Shame*, this fragmentation requires the reader to engage in “narrative reconstruction” (73). While Sophie’s attack on herself creates allows her to leave home and get married, it does not move her into a focused, adult relationship. When we encounter her the next time, she has already left Joseph without telling him and returned to Haiti for an indeterminate amount of time. The rite of passage Sophie inflicts upon herself does not stop her childhood and start her adulthood. We learn later that

I had spent two days in hospital in Providence and four weeks with stitches between my legs. Joseph could never understand why I had done something so horrible to myself. I could not explain to him that it was like breaking manacles, an act of freedom.

Even though it occurred weeks later, our wedding night was painful. It was like tearing all over again; the ache and soreness had not disappeared.
(130)

This revelation allows the reader to recuperate the narrative – although the narrative is, on the surface, linear (Sophie is a child, she goes through adolescence and then we visit

her as an adult). In this disclosure, Danticat reveals that Sophie's trauma does not end with self-mutilation, but continues to haunt her through her marriage. We also learn that she continues her self-harm by engaging in binge-eating and bulimia, saying "I hate my body. I am ashamed to show it to anybody, including my husband. Sometimes I feel like I should be off somewhere by myself" (123).

In Danticat's work, self-harm is a way for Sophie to wrest control of her own narrative, but it does not act as a singular passage to adulthood. Martine's rite of passage was her rape, which resulted in her pregnancy. Sophie resists both the historical rite of rape and the cultural rite of testing to try and take control of her own transformation. While Martine's rape was, as Eleanor Wachtel notes, "a violent act, which was true for a lot of women under the dictatorship," (Wachtel qtd in Bouson 114) Sophie's self-harm is also a violent act, only perpetrated by herself. This modicum of control begins the process of moving to adulthood, but it does not act as a singular moment.

If we read Martine as the living embodiment of the colonial legacy, her desire to destroy herself is an attempt to destroy the ties binding her to the colonial experience. Martine's rape and subsequent pregnancy places her firmly in the domestic sphere. This trauma is transmitted intergenerationally to Sophie, who has to endure the ordeal of testing as a legacy of Martine's anxiety about virginity and sexuality. Late in her narrative, Sophie says "I have heard it compared to a virginity cult, our mother's obsession with keeping us pure and chaste" (154). When Sophie resists the push to continue with those rites that internalized and domesticated Martine, she appears to reinscribe this trauma on her body – the most internal and domestic of places. However, instead of acting as a clear linear movement to adulthood, Sophie's self-imposed rites of

passage allow her to engage in a space that does not look to have a clear start point and a clear end point. In this kind of de-centralized and fragmented narrative, Sophie is a figure that represents the potential for opening up a space that questions and challenges the traditional notion that adolescents must immediately grow up through a linear progression, as well as how gendered nationalisms can ultimately be subverted through the appropriation of rituals and rites that have been stripped away.

Chapter Three

The Queered Adolescent

The chorus of Don Partridge's 1969 hit song "Breakfast on Pluto" gently reminds readers that they can "Go anywhere without leaving your chair/ And let your thoughts run free/ Living within all the dreams you can spin/ There is so much to see." Deeply sentimental, the song imagines a world in which there "are no cares to care/ no races to run" and our problems can be solved if we "look at the sky and up there you'll go/ peacefully floating along." The message of "Breakfast on Pluto" suggests a multiplicity of lived experiences – if you aren't happy on earth, then you can simply "journey to Mars/and visit the stars." It's no wonder, then, that Pat McCabe took the title for his 1998 novel *Breakfast on Pluto*, about the complicated life of teenage transsexual Patrick "Pussy" Braden, who spends the novel trying on a wide range of identities and experiences against the backdrop of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland and London. Critics have spilled a great deal of ink analyzing Pussy's queerness (both his homosexuality and his transsexuality), but few – if any – have made the leap to consider the links between adolescence and queerness.

Starting from Judith Halberstrom's notion that "queer time, even as it emerges from the AIDS crisis, is not only about compression and annihilation; it is also about the potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance and child-rearing" (2), I argue that queer theory that challenges temporal and spatial categories can also be applied to the idea of adolescence. The joyous declaration that queer lives are not beholden to traditional expectations of family and inheritance is fraught with the

realization that in the emerging nation, nonconforming voices are often erased from telling the story of a nation. The adolescent fits similarly into this category as a liminal figure that is often barred from participating in the national story – and the queered adolescent constitutes a double erasure from the national narrative. This chapter investigates the desire and ultimate failure to recuperate family and inheritance in two novels: McCabe’s *Breakfast on Pluto* and Shani Mootoo’s 1996 novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*. These novels offer alternative temporalities that reinscribe the queered adolescent and show the possibilities of what a nation that reincorporates these alternative temporalities might look like.

In contemporary world literature, alternative temporalities offer new ways to consider the nation. In “Failed-State Fiction,” critic John Marx contends that fiction, when viewed alongside sociological research and statistics, offers an additional view of how nations work (or could work). Marx writes of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half a Yellow Sun*: “When a fiction [...] portrays life during wartime as both intensely violent and remarkably ordinary, it suggests that what goes on in the most unstable of states is never so extreme that it cannot be normed. Here as elsewhere, the most conventional novelistic content of household intrigue and personal growth thrives amid coups and mass killings that would otherwise define a “state of exception” (597). Marx’s notion of “household intrigue” is as a space wherein “normed” life can exist next to biopolitical horrors of war, but ignores the essential fact that this configuration flattens out those practices that exist outside the traditional idea of “household.” Marx’s setup erases the agency of queered groups (which includes a multiplicity of identities) to participate in telling the story of the nation. This is reinforced by David Halperin’s notion of queerness

as “at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant [.... Queerness] is an identity without an essence. ‘Queer’ then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative” (62). Because of this double erasure from both the household and the state, it is necessary for readers to reimagine queer time and space in conflict and not simply reinsert it into the “household intrigue” Marx touts, but rather as a separate, but equally valid, way in which the experience of conflict is grounded in the lived experience.

Reading adolescence as a tertiary queerness not only complicates the notion of participation in what Halberstrom calls “conventions” of family, but also asks that we reimagine the linear trajectory of growth for both the adolescent and the nation in conflict as a place of “great imagination.” I argue that the queered/adolescent body acts as a site of resistance and imagination by refiguring time and space. One example of how queer temporality is imagined in literature is in Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night*, set in the fictional island of Lantancamara, reimagines the Caribbean space as a hybrid of converging and diverging cultures and geographies. The slipperiness of naming and identifying the island as part of a known understanding of Caribbean geography emphasizes and reinforces the queering of space in the novel, as does the novel’s insistence on the natural world as a space that simultaneously conceals and reveals the trauma of colonialism. The story of Mala Ramchandin, the sexually and physically abused daughter of Chandin Ramchandin, is told in a similarly shifting way. It is first told by Mala’s caretaker Nurse Tyler, then by Tyler’s Cigarette-Smoking Grandma, then by different versions of Mala at different points in her life. This contracting and expanding of time emphasizes the non-linear form of Mala’s story and, coupled with the lack of any

grounding details that would set the story in a specific time, rewrites conventional expectations. The act of reframing and reconstituting time and space allows Mootoo to queer Mala's age by destabilizing the reader. Mala is clearly an elderly woman when she is brought to the Paradise Alms House at the start of the novel. Tyler describes her:

For such a tiny spectre of a human being, the new resident breathed loudly and deeply in her drugged sleep. I squatted by the side of the canvas stretcher, peering at her. I expected her facial skin to be grey but it was ochre, like richly fired clay. Her skeletal structure was clearly visible, her thin skin draped over protruding bones and sagged into crevices that musculature once filled [...] her hair, though oily from lack of care, was soft and silken. This one touch turned her [...] into a living human being, an elderly person such as those I had dedicated my life to serving. (11)

Mala's age does not preclude her from being thought of as a liminal subject – Mootoo's choice to bend time and space allows for some slippage, leaving Mala in between adulthood and childhood. After her mother abandons the family, Mala takes on the adult role left open. Not only does she act as mother to her younger sister Asha, but “in a fitful, nightmarish sleep, [Chandin] mistook Pohpoh for Sarah” (65). In this in-between place, Mala is not really a child, despite her age. Nor is she really an adult, despite her (undesired) sexual maturity and role as adult. Conversely, when Mala is brought to Paradise Alms House, she is identified by Tyler as an elderly person – an adult, but Sister tells Tyler “at their age, they are all like children. And when children misbehave, you have to discipline them” (14).

Mootoo emphasizes this queerness of time by switching between calling Mala one

of three names. She is referred to as “Miss Ramchandin,” a nod to her status as an adult, but an unmarried adult who spent her life as the de facto wife of her father. She is also called “Mala,” her given adult name. Finally, she is referred to as “Pohpoh,” her childhood nickname, associated by Mala to her childhood (as it were). As a young adult, she tells store owner Mr. Pillai “please don’t call me Pohpoh. I am no longer a child” (191). The fluidity with which Mootoo switches among names suggests that Mala is not firmly fixed in one phase of her life. Moving among Mala’s names and histories is where, as Judith Halberstrom notes, “different histories *touch* or brush up against each other, creating temporal havoc” (3).

Within this context, I will examine the temporal havoc caused by different traumas – personal, public, political – and how it manifests in the ever-shifting space of the “different histories” of the queered/adolescent is less-well defined. My main focus is what I call *the queered/adolescent*. This term is meant to connote the idea that the adolescent body experiences the temporal shift in a multitude of ways, most of which are conceived of as spaces that can be “grown out of;” however, the queered body resists such formulas and experiences, which hinge on “the hopeful reinvention of conventional understandings of time” (Halberstrom 3). The queered/adolescent in the queered time and geography of constant conflict adds another layer of complication. In this paradox, the queered/adolescent body contains both the broken, politically expendable body of the differently gendered or differently sexualized young person, as well as the recuperative body of the adolescent.

If the historical and political discourse surrounding the queered/adolescent is scant, there is a rich literary tradition that explores this subtext. Here, I examine two

works which mine this idea: Patrick McCabe's *Breakfast on Pluto* (1998) and the aforementioned *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996). McCabe's novel, set in Belfast and London during the late 1960s and early 1970s, follows Patrick "Pussy" Braden, a cross-dressing teenager from the fictional village of Tyreelin, on "the southern side of the Irish border" (xi). As Pussy's Trans Identity evolves, she becomes unwittingly involved in the political machinations and changes taking place in Ireland, culminating in her arrest as a member of an IRA gang charged with bombing a London nightclub full of British soldiers. The non-linear structure of each novel challenges the conception of both adolescents and queered sexuality as predicated on normative and linear time and geography, while offering the suggestion that queered time and space challenge traditional notions of post-colonial expectation and may create a space of reinvention and re articulation within the context of national identity. When Marx notes that conflict "novels [...] identify a problem for political science, as well as conventional wisdom, when they consider child soldiers and refugees as participants in state organizations rather than mere symptoms of state failure" (597), the same logic can be applied to novels wherein the main state participants are queered/adolescents.

Both *Breakfast on Pluto* and *Cereus Blooms at Night* offer perspectives on failed states, written during and after supposed state failure and published in moments of relative stability, looking backwards at moments of rocky transition. In 1983, Irish critic (and beloved crank) Desmond Fennell felt Ireland was best represented by adolescence: "Just as a teenager emerging from a condition of tutelage and dependence finds himself confronted with the problem of identity, so, too, with nations when, in similar circumstances, they try to establish themselves as independent nations" (192). Though

Fennell notes that a period of time may be given over to sorting an identity, nonetheless, an identity is eventually sorted and crystallizes:

The nation's identity problem is solved when it has chosen and started realising a serviceable image; relegated it to its subconscious; acquired, as a consequence, a satisfactory sense of identity – and dismissed the question of identity from its mind. Then – but only then, and not till then, – is the nation free simply to live, and to do those things, such as recreating and transforming the world, which go with being simply and self-confidently alive. (193)

Those rocky moments of adolescence smooth themselves out when the nation adopts an identity and settles down. McCabe seemingly repeats this platitude in his introduction to *Breakfast*: “BELFAST GOOD FRIDAY, 1998. The war over, now perhaps we too can take – however tentatively—those first few steps which may end unease and see us there; homes, belonging and at peace” (xiii). In many ways, this banality seems to serve the larger purpose of reminding readers (and Ireland itself) that the troubles (little t) and the Troubles (big T) are over and now the real work of growing up and into an identity can be done.

Read more closely, however, we can see that McCabe’s sentimental plea is immediately undercut by the queering of time, space, and identity in the very first section: “*I Was a High-Class Escort Girl.*” Anchored in an unknowable and undefined present, the narrative jolts out of the linear timeline McCabe offers in the introduction (July 1690, March 1955, Good Friday 1998) and places Pussy at home “[s]itting here in my silly old coat and headscarf” (1). The present of McCabe’s and Pussy’s imagining is

not the safe, happy home as expected by temporal logic – there is no family, inheritance, or child-rearing. Instead, Pussy lives in a place of instability in terms of her own identity (“Old Mother Riley they call me around here”) and her understanding of her current circumstances:

What benefit them, now that so many years have passed, to know the sordid, squelchy details of the life that was once lived by darling Patrick Braden—*sigh!*--sweetness pussy kit-kit, perfumed creature of the night who once the catwalks of the world did storm as flashbulbs popped [....]

As off on the arm of Mr Dark and Broody then she trooped! Rock Solid handsome man, mysterious kind she liked. Who would bass-voiced coo: ‘I love you!’ and make her stomach gurgle till she’d swoon. (2)

For McCabe, these yawning gaps between expectation and reality serve to remind readers of the potentiality inherent in having Pussy’s – and Ireland’s – different histories “brush up against each other.” This opening, bookended by the last pages of the novel, reinforces the idea that peace, home, and belonging aren’t specifically defined ideas. Coming home, Pussy describes her encounter with one of the laborers from the first pages: “[I] ran into a few of them on the stairs. ‘Ah, there you are, Mrs Riley’ one of them shouts as another whispered ‘Wired to the fucking moon!’ It was all I could do not to answer: ‘Sorry to disappoint you boys! Wrong planet, I’m afraid!’ but then I thought – what’s the point?” (198-99). Pussy’s (and the title’s) insistence that she doesn’t exist on the same planet as everyone else reinvigorates David Lloyd’s assertion in *Irish Times: Temporalities of Modernity* that “the past is a country [...] and the country is the past” (1). The effective collapse of time with geography challenges the universalizing notion of

a Western narrative.

Breakfast on Pluto is the story of young Patrick “Pussy” Braden, a “hero(ine)” born “[i]nto the small village of Tyreelin (pop. 1500) on the southern side of the Irish border” (xi). The novel follows Patrick as he navigates Belfast and London in the 1960s and 70s as a transvestite prostitute, “ultimately deciding to devote his life to a cause and one alone. That of ending, once and for all, this ugly state of permanent limbo” (xii). Beginning with a note from McCabe, dated 1998, about the “double-bind of border-fever,” the novel stutters to a start. Following McCabe’s note is a fragment of Pussy’s own story “I Was a High-Class Escort Girl” and another explanatory note from Pussy “A Word of Advice From Dr. Terence.” Each of these abbreviated beginnings sets up the main narrative: “The Life and Times of Patrick Braden,” a collection of consecutively numbered chapters interspersed with set pieces like “Thinking Far Too Much” and “Some Information About Charlie and Irwin, Gleaned From Charlie’s Letters.”

This web of fractured time serves two purposes. First, by starting from the (presumably) civilized and peaceable present and venturing backwards into the murky, violent past, McCabe seemingly reminds readers of how Ireland has made the choice to come into an identity that Fennell suggests is the ultimate destiny of any country coming out “of tutelage.” David Lloyd argues that

[I]ike many another former colony or periphery, and exceptional only in the specifics inflections that particular geographies and histories give to any place, Ireland has seemed to play this iconic role throughout modernity. Not only strangers, but often enough even its own inhabitants, well schooled as we are in the attitudes of an assumed modernity, have

viewed it as ‘another country’, caught in the webs of another time and struggling to emerge from them. Ireland has accordingly been subject to the whole gamut of responses such an iconicity calls forth. From the sentimentalization of its picturesque survivals to the violent repression of its bloodyminded and irrational violence, these responses have sought over and again to fix, with all the ambiguity of that term, the remnants of other times that appear as the signs of Ireland’s incivility. (2)

In one reading, then, it appears we are reminded by McCabe that Ireland has moved out of the murky past and into the bright and exciting present by reanimating the bloody past in service of showing how far Ireland has come. However, I argue that McCabe does not simply show Ireland’s bloody history in an attempt to provide contrast to the relatively calm present. In that case, McCabe would have been better served to chose a protagonist capable of linear growth into adulthood capable of “fixing” the incivility of the past. Instead, he choose Patrick Braden, a transexual teenager who tells a narrative that does not follow a clear path of time or geography.

Pussy’s story begins at age thirteen (“Patrick Braden, Aged 13 – The Trouble Begins in Earnest!”) and ends in 1975, shortly after she turns twenty, standing with her best friend Charlie in a graveyard in the rain, mourning Charlie’s fiancee and Pussy’s friend Irwin, who was killed as an IRA informer. The final chapter begins “Which was a long time ago now, of course” (197), a narrative thread that ties Pussy’s story back to the present. The structure skips back and forth between Pussy’s self-proclaimed “long time ago, of course” and what appears to be the present, where Pussy interjects her own observations addressed to a mysterious Dr. Terence. Despite the more linear narrative of

Pussy's growing up, these short asides queer time in the novel – each aside breaks the chain of the story-told-in-hindsight and interrupts readers to ask them to reorient themselves in the timeline. Not only are readers asked to reorient themselves, the very nature of Pussy's hold on reality is questioned in these spaces. Upon introducing Dr. Terence to the narrative, it is unclear whether he is real or a figment of Pussy's imagination:

Write it all down, Terence told me. ‘Everything?’ I said. ‘Yes, just as it comes to you.’ It was great, him saying that. Especially when he listened so attentively to what you read, making you feel you were his one special patient and that no matter where he was or what he was doing, all you had to do was call his name and there he'd be: ‘Well? And how's the scribe?’

[....]Which made his vanishing act all the harder to bear. You wake up one morning, call out his name as usual and what do you find? There he is – gone! As they say in Tyreelin. (3)

This shifting notion of reality (is Dr. Terence a real person? Is Pussy writing his history, or is that, too, a figment of his imagination?) lends credence to the idea that Pussy's grasp of both reality and the present is tentative at best and, at worst, completely fabricated. In turn, McCabe uses this shifting expectation of the present to question the reality – or at least the singular reality – of the peace and belonging he brings to the introduction. Dipesh Chakraborty brings this notion of singular time into question in his critique of developmental historicism:

To critique historicism in all its varieties is to unlearn to think of history as a developmental process in which that which is possible becomes actual by

tending to a future that is singular. Or, to put it differently, it is to learn to think the present – the ‘now’ that we inhabit as we speak – as irreducibly not-one. To take that step is to rethink the problem of historical time and to review the relationship between the possible and the actual. (qtd in Lloyd 76)

By imagining Pussy outside of Halberstrom’s “expected notions of family, inheritance and child-rearing,” there is a perceived sense that McCabe then removes her from “history as a developmental process.” In other words, Halberstrom argues that existing outside of these expected notions is necessarily an exclusion from normalized or heteronormative time, focusing instead on Charles-Pierre Baudelaire’s notion of “the transient, the fleeting, the contingent” (qtd in Halberstrom 2). However, I argue that this is not really the case for Pussy, nor for the queered/adolescent in conflict fiction. Pussy’s queerness, rather than resisting and refusing the aforementioned conventions (or having those conventions resist and refuse her), allows for a space of imagination to present itself and allows Pussy to both escape and also exist within those conventions. Pussy’s double-bind of queered/adolescence becomes a double-opportunity for her to exist across borders of time, space, and body.

This opportunity first presents itself in Pussy’s relationship with her best friend Charlie. It’s no accident that Charlie, Pussy’s closest friend, is a young woman with a masculine name. Just as Pussy diverts expectations and challenges readers to consider her gender and sexuality by changing her name to a more explicitly (in both senses of the word) female one, Charlie’s name requires readers to shift their expectations about gender and sexuality each time she is encountered. This ever-shifting notion of gender

and sexuality is reinforced by the differences between the two friends. While Pussy is obsessed with buying beautiful things – “my arms I filled with Max Factor, Johnson’s Baby Oil, Blinkers eye-shadow, Oil of Ulay, Silvikrin Alpine Herb shampoo, Eau de toilette, body moisturizers, body washes, cleansing milks, St Laurent Eye and Lip makeup, Noxene Skin Cream and Cover Girl Professional Mascara” (36) – Charlie is unimpressed with such feminine things, preferring instead to spend her money on what Pussy deems “ugly, horrible things!” like “a cloth Indian belt and nature shoes,” so much so that Pussy “simply gave up in despair” (35). Charlie’s disdain for feminine clothes and make-up does not make her less female to Pussy. But within this apparent contradiction, she offers an alternate temporality for Pussy: that a multiplicity of gender might exist within one person. Pussy’s response to Charlie is to see her not as a binary opposite to his own sexuality and gender queerness, but as another potentiality: “‘Please kiss it,’ I begged her, oh so many times. ‘My one-eyed, one-horned, purple people-poking Peter,’ but she just laughed and said ‘No! Why should I! When all you want is the impossible – a vagina all your own!’ And to that – what could I possibly say when it was true?” (36).

Pussy’s sexual attraction to Charlie is consummated later in their friendship as Pussy prepares to leave Tyreelin for London:

“I love you Charlie. I’ll write every day, I promise.”

“Kiss me! Even if I’m Irwin’s and always will be forever, I still want you to kiss me!”

Yummy breasts of all time as little tongue goes traveling down to belly-town! And other secret places!

Such squelch and sweat the world had never seen! God! – why couldst not invent a sweeter way to melt and merge? Dickies which might squirt Chanel, or weenies which secrete rosewater? O who can ever tell you your plan! But Charlie – with her it was so close to exultation, one almost didn't want to go. (54)

Pussy's ambivalence about his sexuality manifests in his desire for Charlie and for the beauty (as he sees it) of heterosexual sex. By having sex with Charlie, Pussy is able to straddle both worlds available to him – sexuality becomes less of a limiting factor and a defining factor than one that lends itself to an infinite variety of experiences. Pussy's liminality allows him to pass among worlds.

One world that he passes into is the world of Louise. After moving to London and working as a call girl and supporting herself with various sugar daddies, Pussy begins living with “Bertie Wooster” as his husband. Louise, the landlady, insinuates herself into Pussy’s life by telling him sob stories about her dead child, Shaunie. Soon Pussy is dressing as the deceased Shaunie in a “little grey jacket and short trousers” (92) and suckling Louise. By engaging in the dual behaviors of a fully sexualized adult and that of an innocent (and dead) child, Pussy works both sides of his liminal teenaged state – he is simultaneously capable of and responsible for his sexualized body, yet his very desirability is determined by his ability to be perceived as a child. This distinction is clear when she is caught in *flagrante delicto* with Louise by Bertie. When this happens, Pussy makes the mercenary choice to stay with Louise instead of Bertie: “It was a hard decision for me to have to make but I’m afraid that Louise as part of the bargain had been doing my hair so beautifully [...] that in the end I had no choice but to say to [Bertie]: ‘Sorry,

Bertie. I really am so sorry”” (93). Once the (adult) decision is made, Pussy reverts to acting childishly, clinging to Louise and sucking furiously on her breast.

Pussy’s ability to live betwixt and between two worlds is mirrored in McCabe’s narrative choices. Just as Pussy’s identity seems to bifurcate at the moment he announces his relationship with Louise, so does the narrative. Unlike her relationship with Charlie, where the queerness hinges upon Pussy’s dual sexuality, her relationship with Louise is predicated upon a different sort of duality in which her queerness opens up and she is confronted with her queeredness in a different way. In having sex with Charlie, Pussy is engaging in a heteronormative act and despite her wish that “dickies [could] squirt Chanel,” this is an act of reproduction, one which can lead to family, inheritance, and child-rearing, those “paradigmatic markers of life experience.” However, in having sex with Louise, Pussy is engaging in an ostensibly reproductive act, but instead of potentially reproducing offspring, he eventually births himself.

In these two acts of heterosexual sex, each offers a potentiality of reproduction. In the first, sex with Charlie offers the possibility of traditional reproduction. Sex with Louise queers that notion entirely. Louise is post-menopausal (Shaunie died 12 years prior) and the exact nature of her sexual relationship with Pussy is unclear (they appear to only engage in non-penetrative sex). Yet the very notion that Pussy is having heterosexual sex with Louise opens up the possibility of reproduction. By appropriating childlike (babylke) behaviors, Pussy herself is the output/outcome of the union with Louise. Pussy recreates her birth story and is reborn at the hands (or rather the breast) of Louise, although she reminds herself that “[Louise is] not your mammy. If she wants you to be her son, that’s fine. But she’s not your mammy”” (93).

While Halberstrom codes queer time as a “potentiality,” the queered/adolescent is denied the kind of agency the adult possesses in such situations. In rebirthing herself and rejecting Bertie, Pussy takes control of the narrative in a way that speaks to the bifurcated nature of the adolescent. She is resetting her potentiality back to zero – a move that gives her back the ability to write her own story without the difficulties of history. But yet the choice to reclaim agency, is an adult choice and one that firmly plants her in the realm of adult.

This moment in Pussy’s history takes as its reference a particular moment in Irish history. As Pussy is engaging with Louise, Ireland is undergoing a similar rebirth as both a child and adult. 1975 saw the death of Eammon de Valera, the first President of the Republic. De Valera’s position in the Republic spanned nearly 60 years, beginning before the establishment of the Republic in 1920. By shepherding Ireland through the bloody civil war and partition, de Valera literally helped to birth the nation. Michael Parker, in his two-volume history of Northern Irish literature, notes that the death of de Valera in 1975 marked a symbolic death of unionism and rebirth of nationalism. Combined with the decline of the pro-family, pro-Catholic sensibilities of de Valera’s regime (which gave rise to criminalization of homosexuality in the 1937 constitution), Irish writers like McCabe, seeking to make a connection between the political, cultural and religious turmoil of the era, looked to characters that embodied the destabilized and difficult period.

Situating the queered/adolescent Pussy Braden within the representation of Ireland in the midst of an existential crisis poses some difficulties – more so than situating the queered body. As Eibhear Walshe writes:

Considering lesbian and gay writing in Irish literature, I am not merely

highlighting a forgotten and marginal formation. Rather I would argue, as does Jonathan Dollimore in his books *Sexual Dissidence*, that the real threat of homoerotic desire is not difference but sameness. At the core of masculinist panic at the spectre of homosexual desire is the sense of reciprocity, the fear that, as Dollimore puts it, ‘civilisation actually depends upon that which it is usually thought to be incompatible with’. Thus, to locate the presence of a homosexual sensibility in Irish writing is also to locate crucial areas of concern and anxiety within so-called mainstream writing. (7)

However, the idea of self and counter-self is mired in some expectation of stability and representation, that is, a self with limits and borders. As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari note in *A Thousand Plateaus* (although they themselves do not suggest this is the optimal way of being): in order to be considered a thinking subject within modernity, one must have a self-identity and presume to share some resemblance with other subjects in order to maintain that identity. The adolescent Pussy troubles this formation by being neither child nor adult, male nor female, queer nor straight.

Immediately after Pussy’s rebirth, her life and narrative change dramatically. The narrative itself reflects this change, moving into small vignettes with asides to the audience and a lack of linear focus. Pussy contemplates her own imagined conception and birth and attempts to form an identity; however, Pussy does not know her parents and can only guess at her conception (which she alternately renders as tender and violent). As in the post-colonial experience, Pussy is unable to untangle her own identity from the identity thrust upon her from the outside – by the Church (as the progeny of her assumed

father, Father Bernard), the orphanage (as Whiskers Braden's adopted son), the entertainment industry (as a mirror of her own longing), and the nation (which excludes her from its narrative).

Pussy's reincarnation evinces a peculiar unease, one that is damaging to the modern subject and the modern nation. According to Lloyd,

Both the past and the present are ‘not-one’, in the sense that the past is also composed of events, formations, and narrative expectations that have variously suffered historical defeat or swerved onto different tracks into the present, fissuring the unity of the modern with numerous non-modern but coeval presents [....] the insistence of other times in the space of the present unsettles the certainty of the modern subject, dividing both his time and space, troubling his identity and his identifications. (76)

The duality of time and space is echoed in the title of this new section of her autobiography. At the beginning of the book, the chapter heading “The Life and Times of Patrick Braden” heralded a narrative turn to the work of telling a life story. After choosing Louise over Bertie, the newly reincarnated Pussy begins her next chapter (literally and figuratively) with the title “The Life and Times of Pat Puss, Hooker.” This title not only announces a career change for Puss, but a slippage wherein the past and the present slide into one another. “The Life and Times of Pat Puss, Hooker” is merely a subheading of Chapter Thirty-Four and suggests McCabe’s intent to show Pat Puss as another facet of Patrick, of Pussy, of any and all previous incarnations – a self divided. This new Pat is “sky-high giddy,” that is to say, taking copious amounts of drugs, indicating that she is an altered version of herself, but yet still herself. McCabe makes

clear that Patrick and Puss and Puss and Mandy and Old Mother Riley aren't separate people, but rather fragmented versions of one person. Pussy's adolescence doesn't necessarily allow for this post-modern idea of fragmented and multiplicitous identity, but rather invokes a type of temporality that queers time. Where her queerness allows for a different type of reproduction – a splitting of selves and a rebirth of a new self that exists at the same time as the old self – this multiplicity populates a time that flows vertically instead of horizontally. Pussy doesn't hinge his rebirth on the “hopeful reinvention of time” but rather allows himself to be reborn *in spite of* the constraints of time.

Cereus Blooms at Night also offers a world in which “anything is possible,” through the adolescent character of Mala. Like Patrick Braden, the sexual relationship that allows Mala to queer time and space most effectively is not the decades-long abusive sexual relationship with her father, but rather her most heteronormative sexual encounter first as a very young teenager, then as a slightly older adolescent, with her childhood friend Boyie.

After several altercations with schoolyard bullies, Mala and Asha find themselves with only one friend: Walter Bissey, known as Boyie. One afternoon, Mala and Boyie are collecting snails from the schoolyard, avoiding the pack of bullies roaming the area. Asha wanders off and Boyie and Mala are left alone:

Nudging Pohpoh away from the wall, Boyie looked expectantly at her.
‘Pohpoh Ramchandin,’ he began to chant as if it were a mantra, ‘Pohpoh Ramchandin Pohpoh Ramchandin Pohpoh Ramchandin.’ He guided her to the back wall of the small school building, which seemed to quiver with the shadows of a tamarind tree. Shrieks and screams of after school

wildness floating through half-open wooden jalousies stoked his pubescent desire. Joking and teasing, he leaned his pudgy body into hers, pining her like a butterfly to the cool jagged wall up which daddy longlegs crawled. He rubbed his hand up and down the front of her white school blouse. A small club was growing in his pant leg, she noticed, and was starting to press into her thigh. (92)

The scene begins with Boyie instigating the sexual encounter – and Mala, the poor abused Mala, seems to be in a position where her agency is completely overridden, yet again. Mootoo describes her as a butterfly pinned to a wall, a delicate creature taken advantage of by the collector – in this case, Boyie is the privileged male adding to his collection of beauty by entrapping and violating the helpless creature. This follows Antonio Benítez-Rojo’s seminal argument in *The Repeating Island* that positions the modern Caribbean as feminine – the product of violent rape by the patriarchal and penetrative colonial empires. Curdella Forbes, in her review of the second edition of *The Repeating Island* notes that “this trope first appears in a wrenching description of the region’s birth out of rape, rapine and cartographical fervour (cartography being the equivalent of the pen/is in the creation of Empire), a birth that linked seas, oceans, and the fortunes of Empires and worlds” (76). In other words, the “modern” Caribbean is the product of violence mapped against the feminine body, resulting in undesired reproduction that links together the oppressed and the oppressor in an unbreakable bond.

When we see Mala pinned by Boyie, it appears as if she is simply a pawn in this larger historical cycle. However:

Pohpoh caught Boyie before he rounded the corner. She trapped him

against the wall, grabbed his wrist and pushed his now reluctant fist inside her opened white school blouse. The fist disintegrated, weakened by its brush against a small upright nipple under the cotton petticoat. Fingers extended, explored and moulded themselves around the little hump. His other hand groped behind her, discovering with pleasure other mounds. Aroused beyond control, he shoved his open mouth, tongue first like a can opener, toward her mouth Pohpoh Ramchandin thumped a firm palm against his chest. ‘Not here,’ she said. ‘Leh we go to your house, ah tell yuh – I really want to do it with you.’ (93)

Donette Francis notes in “Silences Too Horrific to Disturb,” that “empires, the postcolonial state and the patriarchal family” (75) are implicated in how women’s bodies are silenced or erased but also co-constitute the female body within the category of citizenship. By writing sexual and personal violence onto political history, possibilities for counternarratives that rewrite female subjectivity back onto the national imagination are opened. In this moment, Pohpoh has regained agency, not only over her own body, but also over the narrative. The act of turning the tables on Boyie, so that he is now the one “pinned” and “trapped” against a wall, awaiting Pohpoh’s command for the moment to begin, allows Mala to re-write the traditional narrative. She takes him back to his mother’s house and seduces him in his bedroom. The act remains unpenetrative:

When [Boyie’s] fear succumbed to the urgent lowering of his pelvis, she grabbed his wrist and pushed him back up in the air he understood this is where he was to stay” (95). When he finally does lower himself onto her: “she pressed up against the hard shaft that seemed to have found its

niche, even through his smelly khaki shorts and her wet panty that she knew very well would not come off. She used this hardness to arrive at her intended destination before he could even unbuckle his belt" (96).

The act of sex is ultimately unproductive, unlike her sexual relationship with her father. The very language of her relationship with Chandin is reproductive: "he mistook Pohpoh for Sarah" – by mistaking her for his wife, with whom he has had two children, Chandin is explicitly engaging in reproductive sex. Mootoo doesn't indicate that Mala ever carries a child of Chandin's, borne of their incest, but Mala does become the de facto mother of Asha – a kind of foster mother of Chandin's child. In this, she becomes part of an ersatz reproductive moment with Chandin, albeit in a slant-wise manner.

As she finishes her orgasm with Boyie, Mala's "body dissolved into an entirely different mode." Much like Pussy, Mala is reborn in the moment of nonreproductive, heterosexual sex and the act disrupts the narrative. While never linear, the first half of Mala's narrative, told by Nurse Tyler, at least tells Mala's backstory in historical order in between the punctuated and fractured story of Nurse Tyler and the Paradise Alms House. Part I ends immediately after this encounter and Part II begins with Nurse Tyler's statement that he is going to focus more closely on Mala's story: "You will hear little more of me as I apply myself to the story of Mala Ramchandin, fashioning a single garment out of myriad parts" (105). Such a statement suggests the multiplicity of Mala's character – "myriad parts" foreshadows the bifurcation of Mala into both Pohpoh (the child in need of protection) and Mala (the adult who should be protecting the child). Part II offers, for a time, the fairly linear narrative of Otoh Mohanty (Boyie's son) and his visits to take provisions to Mala after his father is injured. Before long, however, the

story veers out of the basic storytelling promised by Tyler and into Mala's mind. As with Pussy Braden, Mala's rebirth has allowed for a slippage of the past with the present. This happens in a much more dramatic way than Pussy, signifying the double bind Mala experiences as a woman in the Caribbean space.

Roughly halfway through Part II, Mala appears to dissociate from herself. In this dissociation, she imagines herself as both the adult Mala capable of protecting the child Pohpoh, and as Pohpoh, intent on escaping her father and protecting Asha. In the background, the cereus plant is beginning its once-yearly blooming. Mootoo writes “fortified by the night’s display she wove memories. She remembered a little and imagined a great deal” (142). That this fragmentation happens in her garden is no coincidence. Critic Sarah Casteel codes the garden in *Cereus Blooms at Night* as a “recovery of a prelapsarian identity,” (16) as well as a space that uses the Caribbean diasporic identity to “reframe” the understanding of exile. In her split psyche, Mala the adult with agency is cast out of the garden¹⁶ while Mala the child is being reborn. This use of the garden space functions as what Benítez-Rojo calls an “atemporal, permutational, and self-referential” form of traditional knowledge – in other words, the idea of the garden as a multidimensional space of recovery and rejection exists across cultures and histories, and thus “exists in the present, will always be in the present, thus escaping the erosion of time” (300). In this formulation, Mala is not engaging in “a hopeful reinvention of time,” but rather her multiplicity of selves settles into the idea of atemporality.

16. This happens in two ways: first, Mala self-selects ostracism – after her father's death, she chooses to stay in her yard and not interact with society. Second, she is excluded from “polite” society because of the incest perpetrated in the house – a major plot point in the end of the novel revolves around how “the righteous postman, deeming the Ramchandin's house to be a place of sin and moral corruption, refused to go up there” (243).

Once Boyie abandons Mala in the midst of her murderous fight with Chandin, he retreats into marriage with Elsie, but sends care packages of food to Mala every month, explaining to his wife: “Mala is mad. She’s as mad as a brainless bird. Crazy. Do you understand what I am saying? From whence would she obtain the essentials of life, dearest? We are entrusted with her care” (107). But after a fall, Ambrose is incapable of delivering Mala’s food packages each month. His son, Otoh, is entrusted with their care, with the edict “If fortune sees fit to grant you the pleasure of an audience with her [...] may I impose upon you, my treasured son, the honor of conveying to her wishes for an incomparably good day from one Mr. Ambrose Mohanty, otherwise known to her as Boyie” (111). After the death of her father, Mala has retreated back to her house, living in the yard, cultivating the plants and animals that become her stand-in for societal interactions, including the heteronormative sexual relationships that should ultimately allow her to re-integrate into society. Timothy Chin notes that in the traditional binaries of sexuality and otherness: “a notion of blackness that re-inscribed a racial binary in which blacks were associated [...] with the realm of instincts, emotions and passions, with sensuality, sexuality and all that was considered natural” (Chin 82). Though Mala is not black, she is Indian, the granddaughter of “an indentured field laborer from India” (26) and deemed a second-class citizen by Northern Shivering Wetlandish authorities such as Reverend Thoroughly.

The consequence of Mala’s sexual encounter with Boyie is a return to nature – a fullness of life and abundance of prelapsarian ideals. In this situation, Mala’s ‘natural’ world is contrasted with her ‘unnatural’ sex life. M. Jacqui Alexander notes that “the ‘naturalization’ of heterosexuality as state law has traditionally depended on the

designation of gay and lesbian sex as ‘unnatural’” (qtd in Chin 82). Mala’s sexuality is deeply rooted in the idea of ‘unnatural’ sex – incest and rape. This is a change from the idea of the triumph of the natural over the unnatural – Timothy Chin notes that the juxtaposition of natural and unnatural often follows a pattern of looking at unnatural acts as the consequence of straying too far from “indigenous culture.” In this formulation, Chin notes that “the sexuality [a heterosexual] union affirms is consequently linked to the reproductive laws that supposedly govern nature as well as humankind” (83). Mootoo’s novel allows for a counterpoint to this narrative – that while Mala is engaged in ‘unnatural sexuality’ while she is being raped by her father, and this is linked explicitly to the Western culture and education Chandin receives from the Reverend Thoroughly – there is a space that opens for the notion that ‘natural’ sex for Mala is non-reproductive in the traditional sense and thus does not conform to the “laws that govern nature”. Mala is unable to recuperate her identity as a woman and as a citizen of Lantancamara because her timeframe for participating in a normative heterosexual relationship passes while she is busy barricading herself in her garden and restricting her reproductive ideals to plants.

Mala’s main offense is not that she has possibly killed her rapist father, but rather that she chooses to live in an interstitial place that does not allow for her to fully recuperate her identity. Instead, she chooses to live, as Chin writes, “designated by the conjunction ‘both/and’ rather than ‘either/or’” (91) – a space that neither allows for a recuperation of her family and inheritance, nor for a complete erasure of her queered/adolescence. Her attempts at queered temporality fail in the execution, aborting the potentiality of such time.

Mala’s sexual moment with Boyie and Pussy’s sexual relationship with Louise

seem, on the surface, to be the most normalized sexual relationships for each character. Pussy, who encounters sadism, non-consensual auto-erotic asphyxiation, role-playing, and homosexual sex – all while he’s not yet sixteen, finds himself in normative heterosexual relationships with Louise and Charlie. Though his relationship with Louise is based on some role-playing, it is, at the very least, a consenting relationship between an adult man and woman. Mala, who is raped continuously for decades by her own father, has what appears to be a mostly typical heteronormative sexual moment with Boyie. So how is it that these “normal” relationships form the basis for queered temporalities and why do such attempts seem to be doomed to failure?

As seen above, the moment of bifurcation and rebirth in each character comes directly after the “normalized” sexual acts. I contend that by engaging in heteronormative sex acts, both Pussy and Mala seem to be taking control over their bodies by choosing partners and sex acts to engage in, unlike their previous relationships with sex, where each is either forced into sex by circumstance or by physical and emotional abuse. The act of choosing partners and sex acts is an empowering one, but in turning to heteronormative sex as a redemptive act, each is countering the claim that acknowledgment of difference tends to, as Elizabeth Grosz argues, remove the “specificity” of the body (*Grosz Space*). Similarly to Halberstrom, Grosz acknowledges that “queerness” is not a monolithic category, but rather one with infinite vagaries; unfortunately, queerness “sees itself in opposition to a straight norm and thus defines itself in terms of this norm” (Grosz “Experimental” 145). By denying their own queered/adolescence on multiple levels and turning to heterosexual sex as a redemptive act, Pussy and Mala strip themselves of the identifying features of their queerness in an

effort to scrub themselves of their offending natures (in conflict with the norm). But in the same way that adulthood, a grown-up nation, a fully-functioning body signify the norm, that norm also comes with strictures and expectations as to what is acceptable and thus denies those working within those parameters any space of real transformation. By stripping their bodies of queered corporeality, each character attempts to distance themselves from the abject reality of the queered body and the queered (abnormal) space they inhabit. To this end, each character makes the effort to strip the offending queer corporeality – Pussy loses his queerness in favor of a more “useful” norm that he believes allows for a recuperation of his lost family and inheritance, while Mala attempts to disappear completely.

Immediately after his relationship with Louise Pussy becomes – or perhaps doesn’t become – a nightclub bomber. The transformed self is seen when Pussy explains her appearance directly before entering the nightclub:

perhaps she might meet Sergeant Rock or Captain Yum Yum Be-My-Girl-For-Ever! And if the risk was not worth that, then life, she whispered to herself, it simply was not worth living. In any case, there was a strong chance he might not know the truth. An hour in the hotel loo had seen to that, with her long brown hair now so gleamy and her glossy lips a-shining. (140-41)

Pussy’s distance from her own corporeality is new. Prior to her rebirth, she flits in between different identities, never settling on just being male or female – sometimes wearing feminine clothes with distinct masculine attributes (such as facial hair) visible. It is only after being reborn as Pat Puss, Hooker, that she attempts to live exclusively as a

woman, divorced from her own (masculine) body in such a way as to pretend it does not exist.

Directly after entering the dance club and taking a young British soldier up on his offer of a dance, a bomb rips through the club, leaving Puss watching as “one part of [the soldier’s] head went to the left, the other part to the right and the brains which were inside to the floor pouring like scrambled egg” (141). Pussy’s lack of corporeality moves from the detached gaze she turns upon the soldier to the detached gaze she then turns on herself:

At least a minute passed before it dawned on her that she wasn’t dead, too
.... there was another explosion nearby and a dazzling flash of blue light
... Pussy continued to be oblivious to the proceedings. A strip of nylon
from Puss’s tights had become detached and looked for all the world like a
scorched piece of skin hanging from the cheek of one of the dead soldiers.
(141-42)

This loss of corporeality comes from Pussy’s loss of queerness. In transforming, she has chosen to become part of the heterosexual norm – her body is still queered (she’s still biologically male), but she’s choosing to live as a woman and present as a woman and in doing so enters the world reborn into the norm. But the rebirth connotes a loss of her identity with her body, and when the bomb blast happens, she detaches from her body as a site of trauma.

Prior to the bombing, Puss’s desire to become female is based, in some part, by her desire to be a mother (she references her relationship with Vernon as “broody” and often discusses her wish to be the mother her own mother wasn’t). As an “ordinary

transvestite prostitute," she has no entry into motherhood. In choosing to live as a female, Pussy is attempting to rebirth herself into a new and imaginative world where she gets to be both heteronormative and reproductive; however, the space of heteronormativity only appears to offer transformation. Pussy notes this almost immediately by "marrying" and then leaving Vernon, whom she meets while role-playing as Mandy, the bad pupil to his professor: "One day soon I will write him a letter and say, dear Vernon, darling, I am sorry I have not come home. You are a very sweet man and I love you dearly, but not in the way a wife should love her husband" (135). She still yearns for a "normal" relationship (as a woman), while acknowledging the futility of wanting such a thing.

Just wants to settle down, safe and snug beneath an arm so big and bearlike. Silly Puss-Puss, Max Factor Miss with lots of men who want yum yum! But not the way she does! The way they do in *Loving* magazine! O!, she sighs, if it could only be! PUSSY – MY LIFELONG PARTNER/AL PACINO REVEALS ALL! Sweet he is, but for Puss it cannot be [...] 'Sigh!' thinks Puss Puss, wondering aloud: – What can the future hold? What, what, what can the future hold, now my tootling days are at an end? (136-37)

This meditation underscores Pussy's removal of the body from her equation of self. While earlier episodes of Pussy's life include graphic details of his sexual encounters, after his rebirth, sex becomes distanced from the body and becomes more focused on the romantic aspect of relationships. But while the trauma seems like a moment of rebirth and a search for that Pussy has lost in her queerness, McCabe deftly undercuts these illusions as not only unobtainable, but undesirable.

It would be easy to equate the decriminalization of homosexuality and the passage of fairness laws in Ireland in 1993 as “self-evident indicators of Ireland’s growing maturity, independence and liberalism,” according to Lance Pettitt (252). Divorcing the corporeal focus from the national agenda appears, on the surface, to move Ireland forward – that is, by attempting to tamp down any offending parts of its nature (deep religiosity, for one), Ireland adopts an image necessary for acceptance among the norm as an emerging nation falling in line with the dominant paradigm. However, like Pussy’s switch to being female, this “rebirth” is ultimately an unproductive gesture.

This is not to say that Pussy’s rebirth is generally unproductive – in fact, quite the opposite. When Pussy is reborn in the moment of trauma, both Pussy and the narrative take several different directions. In one direction is Pussy’s transformation into an unproductive female. In another, Pussy is charged with being an IRA operative by the RUC:

[....] ‘We know you planted that bomb!’

To which Puss, chuckle-heaving did reply: ‘But of course I did, my darling! Of course I did – and have planted hundreds!’

As Wallis to his full height now rose up, puffed out with pride to say: ‘I told you so!’

Whereupon Puss from the chair she fell and foetus-crouched and squealed! (144)

In this moment, we see Pussy reborn (“foetus-crouched”) in a double trauma – first the experience of being in the midst of the explosion and then being accused of being the perpetrator. In jail, Paddy Pussy’s narrative catches in the closed loop of a fever-dream.

She imagines herself as a terrorist operative, one of the most notorious bombers in all of Londontown, admired and coddled by her mates: “We beg you to do it, Puss! After all, you are the most feared terrorist in London!” (146). Detective Inspector Peter Routledge of Scotland Yard entertains the suspicion that he has made a mistake in booking Pussy, after seeing his “teenage bombing suspect bouncing himself off the walls and about to do some serious damage, not to mention repeatedly screaming: ‘I’ll kill him! I’ll kill him! I’ll burn his church and him along with it! They’ll pay, you’ll see! All of them!’” (153).

Through this madness, Pussy places herself into a narrative wherein she recuperates her lost family and inheritance while attempting to engage in child-rearing. In her cell, Pussy believes she is reunited with Eily Bergen, his mother, who finally gives the acceptance she has been searching for since her adoption. In her fractured mind, they travel to the beach together and she accepts her with open arms, bemoaning the fact of giving her up in the first place. Next, she reunites with Father Bernard – swearing vengeance against him and his church, culminating in a gruesome spectacle:

[...] she scratched his face and scratched it again and he cried no no no.
‘Oh no!’ she hissed, ‘I’m not your son, correct, my father, because what I am’s your daughter or hadn’t you noticed your gorgeous man in lace and serge, you’ve passed me on your journeys,’ raising her hand to gouge his eye as back across the candle flames he fell and begged for mercy just as
‘Ah!’, poor Saviour on the cross, did now too plead for some, but none it came I fear, not one scrap was to be found, as out in the night a bad bitch burned and burnt it, his poor church to the ground, with petrol splashing about its doors and into its heart a bluelit taper thrown across the valley all

her madness – for what else could you call it now – like a crackling
nightbird of the blackest hue took wing, as the flames they licked the sky
and in her wild and daring eyes, flesh melted on an old man’s bones. (177)

In these sections of the novel, Pussy is at once conforming to and pushing against Halberstrom’s definition of queer time: “a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance” (6). Although Pussy seems to be outside of temporal logic and thus conforms to Halberstrom’s notion of externality as a precondition of queer time, her exclusion becomes the only point of entry that allows Pussy to re-engage with the traditional notion of family.

Pussy’s attempt at reclamation of family and inheritance speaks to a larger concern of the nationalist enterprise of the late twentieth-century. As Éibhear Walsh notes, “[o]ne of the consequences of resistance to the imperial was an increased unease with the shifting and ‘unstable’ nature of sexual difference [...] therefore the postcolonial culture could not permit any public, ideological acknowledgment of the actuality of the sexually ‘other’” (5).

Standing the notion of queerness on its head, Pussy (and Mala, as will be discussed further) attempts to recapture his family through heteronormative actions. His choice to have a relationship with Louise speaks to a twofold need: first, to reinsert himself into a family (being reborn with Louise) and to also take control of the narrative of his own birth and abandonment (by searching for and confronting Eily Bergen and Father Bernard), and second, to reinsert herself into the national narrative as a re/productive member of society. Pussy’s status as a queered/adolescent destabilizes the

notion of conventional time through her inability to conform to Halberstrom's "middle-class logic of reproductive temporality" wherein "we chart the emergence of the adult from the dangerous and unruly period of adolescence as a desired process of maturation" (4). Fittingly, McCabe brackets the book with two types of time. The beginning of the book looks backwards to 1690 and slowly pulls focus to Good Friday 1998. By starting with an infinite possibility of past time, McCabe highlights the desire to look to the past for explanations of the present. The end of the book, however, stops with Pussy's present – though the date is not clearly defined, it is about 1975 and Pussy is roughly 19 years old, having sold off her wardrobe and living as Mrs. Riley, a washed-up, washed-out version of Pat Puss. Pussy is still in adolescence (or at least adolescent-adjacent), yet she is living as a sexless, post-menopausal woman: "I sat there thinking of me swanning down to their flat, reeking of Chanel, and giving them a Dusty or Lulu performance their innocent Sligo/Leitrim souls would not be likely to forget in a long time! But in the end I declined, for that's all over now" (199).

Time exists in a twofold configuration: the infinite possibilities of the past as a space to reclaim family and inheritance butt up against the finite ending of the novel in Pussy's adolescence. She cannot grow up, she cannot grow into her adulthood, she cannot grow into family and reproduction. Though traditionally this might suggest a defeat or failure, McCabe's narrative suggests this "double-bind of border-fever" is not a condition from which Ireland is interested in recovering, but rather a desirable state of being that allows for a richer possibilities. Cultural critic Edna Longley suggests that this type of hybridity allows for Ireland (and especially Northern Ireland) to be thought of as a frontier region, a cultural corridor, a zone where Ireland and Britain

permeate one another. The Republic should cease to talk about accommodating diversity and face up to duality. This would actually help the North relax into a less dualistic sense of its own identity: to function, under whatever administrative format, as a shared region of these islands.

(24)

Pussy's queered/adolescence offers the possibility of existing within the fluid boundaries of duality and hybridity, where Irish literature scholar Kathleen Kirkpatrick suggests that “substituting the fluid boundaries of region for the hard lines of national borders [...] opens up the possibility that [Ireland’s] anomalous status might be a form of society to cultivate instead of erase” (3). Yet instead of choosing fluidity, Pussy chooses the hard line of becoming completely female and “grown-up” as she attempts to be a wife and mother. Through these choices, she acknowledges both her failure of imagination, wherein she might be able to recuperate her family and inheritance in a way other than the limited options available through traditional temporalities, and also her failure to accept the difficult truth that, no matter how much she sinks into an identity as Pat Puss or Mrs. Riley or Mandy, she is still incapable of growing up and into an identity that will give her the family and inheritance she desires.

In contrast to Ireland’s rigidity, the Caribbean offers a geographical space that, on the surface, values fluidity and hybridity, seemingly offering the potential for a recuperation of family and inheritance that is less likely in the “hard lines of national borders”. Speaking of the prevalent notion of the Caribbean as possessing a “highly charged and sometimes peculiar relationship with temporality,” Rudyard J. Alcocer argues that “Caribbean time seems to flout the linear ‘clock time’ associated with

modernity, thereby allowing the past and present to commingle” (68). Alcocer notes the commingling of past and present is generally coded as a positive postmodern space, one associated with the “getting away from it all” aspect of vacations on warm sandy beaches. Scholar Barbara Webb argues that this notion points to two very specific ways in which this more fluid temporality functions in the Caribbean space:

among Caribbean writers, the quest for origins – the central problem inscribed in myth – arises precisely when their societies are faced with the transition from colonial past to independence. This transition is complicated by a multiple heritage that is often interpreted as a lack of tradition since it does not fit the mold of Old World patterns. (qtd in Alcocer 68)

In this configuration, temporality in the Caribbean hinges on the dual idea of a search for origins tempered by a lack of tradition. Additionally, Benítez-Rojo’s argument that “the culture of the Caribbean, at least in its most distinctive aspect, is not terrestrial but aquatic, a sinuous culture where time unfolds irregularly and resists being captured by the cycles of clock and calendar” (11) adds to the notion that time and geography in the Caribbean is queered in a multiplicity of ways.

Such fragmented notions of self stand in stark contrast to Longley’s and Kirkpatrick’s ideas in relation to the “the fluid boundaries of region” versus “the hard lines of national borders.” In this space, Mootoo looks to offer a counterpoint to Mala’s erasure of her queered/adolescence as an attempt to reclaim her family and inheritance. The character of Otoh – a transman¹⁷ – seemingly calls into question the dichotomy

17 It's unlikely that gender reassignment surgery would be possible in Lantanacamara at the time the novel

between stability and fluidity and attempts to address queer time and geography as potentialities that do not necessarily have to deal in erasure and exclusion. As I will argue, this potentiality is not expressed solely through Otoh's queered sexuality, but instead his queered/adolescence breaks the static temporality in order to open up a space of resistance and imagination.

Caribbean scholar Edouard Glissant, in his seminal work *Caribbean Discourse*, writes extensively about the “creolization” process in the Caribbean, bringing critical focus to the difference between creolization and hybridity. Creolization connotes a composite or imbrication rather than the historically troubling term hybridization, which recalls colonial imperatives of attempted categorization of the curious and unmanageable native under colonial rule. Glissant argues that creolization differs from hybridity in its insistence on shifting away from filiation, looking to affiliation instead as a precondition for *becoming*. Critic Lorna Burns, in “Édouard Glissant’s Poetics of the Chaosmos,” looks to Deleuze and Guattari’s argument that

becoming is not an evolution, at least not an evolution by descent and filiation. Becoming produces nothing by filiation; all filiation is imaginary. Becoming is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliance. If evolution includes any veritable becomings, it is in the domain symbioses that bring into play beings of totally different scales and kingdoms, with no possible filiation. (Deleuze and Guattari, qtd in Burns

is set. Regardless, Otoh doesn't seem to express a desire to surgically change genders, but rather appears to conform to the accepted definitions of transgender, that is, disagreeing with the assigned birth gender and wishing to live and be accepted as a different gender. Here I use the term “transman” to connote a female-to-male transition without surgery. Although there some fluidity in Otoh's concept of self (which I will discuss further), I feel it would be incorrect to call him genderqueer in this context. Critics quoted here (notably Erin Calhoun Davis) mention transsexed individuals, which is used in the context of both operative and non-operative transgendered persons.

Becoming, for Deleuze and Guattari, is less an upward movement within one species, but rather a progressive movement towards varied relations among different groups – affiliation without filiation. Where filiation carries with it the import of an unbroken lineage from a singular father, Burns explains

[filiation] also determines a future that is necessarily an uninterrupted continuation of that lineage. In other words, filiation fixes identities and is closed to the possibilities of cross-cultural mixing and creolization: it is [according to Glissant] ‘the insistence on fixing the object of scrutiny in static time, thereby removing the tangled nature of lived experience and promoting the idea of uncontaminated survival’. (101)

Thus, for Glissant, “the constantly shifting and variable process of creolization” that takes place in the Caribbean reveals “not only distress and loss but also the opportunity to assert a considerable set of possibilities. . . no longer in absolute terms but as active agents of synthesis” (16). Employing creolization as a framework from which to think about the construction of Caribbean identity counteracts claims from scholars such as Helen Scott that “independence” in the Caribbean is a fiction. Scott argues that “[Caribbean] fiction [...] mostly written during and about the 1980s and 1990s, bespeaks a reality where new mechanisms of foreign control have replaced formal colonialism, making a mockery of the notion of ‘independence’ in any genuine sense” (2). However, Scott’s characterization of the Caribbean as ruled in a static line from colonialism to retro-fitted colonialism to globalization ignores the “multiple heritages” that permeate and help to define the region.

The slippage in static time, defined by Glissant and inherent to the idea of creolization, opens up the idea of independence. For Scott, there is no way out of the Gordian knot of history – this forms the basis of her argument: colonial history must be acknowledged as part of the tie that binds and from which there is no escape. However, for Glissant, the Gordian knot of history is only binding in the case of normalized temporalities. In other words, the colonial line of history removes all possibility of independence *if that line is acknowledged as a continuous, filial relationship set in historical time*. Glissant's theories suggest that a space of imagination and potentiality is available once we slip the bonds of static time and – in the case of this argument – filiation that mark traditional paths of development.

The character of Otoh destabilizes notions of filiation through his queered/adolescence, which, in turn, destabilizes notions of temporality. First, Otoh's corporeality calls into question his ability to engage in filial relationships. Queer theorist Erin Calhoun Davis argues that queered corporeality is often tasked with defining one or more dualities; she defines “stable/fluid, hegemonic/subversive, and oppression/empowerment” (99) as the structural dichotomies that queered bodies are most often asked to reproduce. In these dichotomies, Davis notes that, in addition to other problems, the “structural limitations on intelligible gender identifications” (99) call into sharp relief the question of how gender is performed, or more accurately, how gender is perceived to be performed. Otoh is born in the body of a female, but transitions to male (non-operative) as a child:

By the time Ambrosia was five, her parents ... hardly noticed that their daughter was transforming herself into a son Elsie fully expected that

he (she) would outgrow the foolishness soon enough. But the child walked and ran and dressed and talked and tumbled and all but relieved himself so much like an authentic boy that Elsie soon apparently forgot that she had given birth to a girl The transformation was flawless. (109-10)

Otoh transitions from female to male in his youth. The transition happens organically, with little attention paid by his family or the town of Paradise. Even “the nurse and doctor who attended the birth, on seeing him later, marveled at their carelessness in having declared him a girl” (110).

While this explanation of Otoh’s movement from female to male suggests a complete change in biologically designated gender, with Otoh performing masculinity and being perceived as male by casual acquaintances and close family, this choice to perform masculinity does not give Otoh the same filial privileges as a “real” son. Instead of re-creating a static line of inheritance, Otoh’s status as a (non-operative) transman queers traditional lines of inheritance in static time. By the virtue of his in-betweenness, the line from father to son is already broken and filiation is already queered, and while this removes the possibilities of filiation, it also allows for – or rather, magnifies the already existing – slippages and creolizations.

Otoh’s entry into queered time consists of a twofold movement. First, his gender queerness magnifies existing slippages in time. But this alone is not enough to create the “space of imagination” that I argue is necessary in order for real change or synthesis. In addition to the gender queerness, Otoh also reads as an adolescent, although his age is indeterminate. Otoh enters the narrative thirty years after his father’s affair with Mala. Rough math indicates Otoh is, at most, 25 years old, but perhaps even younger – after all,

Ambrose went abroad for his education and then married Elsie only after what appears to be a long period of attempting to woo Mala. Regardless of his given (or rather, not given) age, Otoh is described as “tall and slim. At one glance he had the angularity and sprightliness of a girl reluctantly on the verge of becoming a woman, and at the next the innocent feyness of a young boy who would never quite grow into the glove of manhood” (101). Otoh’s actual age is the least important indicator of his adolescence. He appears to live in a state of suspended or extended dependence – he lives at home, has no apparent means of employment, and follows orders from his parents. Otoh’s entry into and exit from adolescence are undefined. This, along with his gender queerness, suggest a precariousness in his ability to recuperate his place in the family/inheritance/child-rearing matrix.

Like Mala and Pussy, Otoh has a heteronormative (heteronormative since he identifies as male), but ultimately unreproductive sexual experience – a moment with a woman named Mavis; however, unlike Mala and Pussy, this experience does not lead to a flattening out of his queered identity. Instead, the act is interrupted, giving rise to Otoh’s inheritance and reimagining time and space in relation to his corporeal form. In the scene, Otoh lies shirtless with his girlfriend, who seems unaware that he is trans:

The woman was attempting to arouse him by drawing circles and figure eights with the tips of her fingers on his delightfully hairless chest In spite of himself Otoh was suddenly overcome with yearning that he turned to face her and began a sensuous caress along the bare leg strewn provocatively across his half-naked body he was suddenly beside himself with desire. He was just about to extend his caress higher up,

toward the back of her thigh, just about to start unzipping his trousers, readier than ever to risk the wrath of Paradise, when he was launched out of bed by a dreadful commotion. Ambrose Mohanty ... carelessly hurried past his wife's grumbling and went thumping on his backside down the flight of slippery back stairs. (110-11)

Otoh's contemplation of sex is interrupted by his father, who awakens from his monthly slumber and falls down the stairs. This accident leaves him wheelchair-bound, unable to put together the monthly care package he gathers to send to Mala (now a prisoner in her own home, by her own accord). Unlike Mala and Pussy before him, Otoh does not dissolve into a new person devoid of identifying queered features, but instead his queered/adolescence allows him to **recuperate** his inheritance.

Because Otoh does not undergo a corporeal transformation and moment of rebirth, he is not forced, as Mala and Pussy were, to embrace singular, hegemonic identity (whether that is a single gender or a similarly restrictive fluidity) as a form of identity management. Instead, Otoh embraces the fluidity offered to him by his state as a queered/adolescent. His nickname reflects this acceptance and ease with which he inhabits his duality:

Ambrosia's obviously vivid imagination gave him both the ability to imagine many sides of a dilemma (and if it weren't already a dilemma, of turning it into one) and the vexing inability to make up his mind. Ever since the days of early high school, where he excelled in thinking but not in doing, this trait of weighing "on the one hand with "but on the other" earned him a name change. He began, through no choice of his own, to be

called Otoh-boto, shortened in time to Otoh, a nickname to which he still answered. (110)

Despite his ease at inhabiting a female body that is perceived as male, Otoh does not attempt to live exclusively as in one gender. In both positive and negative ways, slippage occurs in Otoh's gendered presentation. For example, on a sunny day, Otoh chooses not to take off his shirt despite the heat because "there were some risks he preferred to avoid" (118). This worry suggests some anxiety with Judith Butler's notion of gender categories as "instruments of regulatory regimes" (308), as well as an awareness of the (chosen) precariousness of his own performativity. On the other hand, Otoh actively chooses to wear one of his mother's dresses the first time he takes provisions to Mala, which suggests some comfort with his interstitiality. At first glance, this dance between ease and unease undercuts the false dichotomies of transsexual and transgender representation. As Davis explains in more detail,

research often presents transsexed individuals' 'concealment' of their discreditable history as a constant, unwavering component of identity management [...] As a result, some researchers conclude that these processes not only reveal but also reproduce traditional cultural conceptions of gender. In contrast to the notion that transgendered individuals embody hegemonic gender ideals, queer humanistic perspectives tend to posit transgender performances as sites of active, agentic disruption. Framed as a debate, *these contrasting disciplinary theoretical frames situate transgendered individuals dichotomously as either constructing stable identities or destabilizing identities altogether.*

Stable, coherent identification is conflated with the hegemonic reproduction of gender ideologies, leading to the further situating of transgender individuals as *either upholding or subverting the gender order* [emphasis added]. (98)

This research suggests that transsexed and transgendered individuals face a choice between upholding a hegemonic gender identity or actively disrupting these selfsame gender identities. In the case of Otoh, his in-betweenness seems to refute this suggestion – he is stable in presenting as male, but concurrently disrupts such stability by acknowledging his biological gender and engaging as female.

In this space of two-fold queerness, Otoh inherits from his father. Otoh's transgender interstitiality, as it manifests thus far, suggests that inheritance will not occur through filiation. Otoh does not engage in sex, nor does he engage in reproductive sex and cannot, therefore, create a lineage through which filiation might occur. Instead of inheriting in traditional patrilineal succession and inheriting traditional property, titles, debts, and rights, Otoh instead inherits Ambrose's obligation to Mala. Immediately following his fall

[a]s Ambrose was locked into the emergency vehicle he made Otoh swear on his disassembled pelvis to immediately prepare and deliver a new package. This was the first time Otoh was dispatched with his father's package to Mala Ramchandin [...] And Otoh, intrigued by his fathers devotion to a woman whom he had not seen in more than thirty years, accepted his inherited task. (111)

Through his inheritance of Mala, Otoh's obligation grants him access to the “tangled

nature” of becoming through affiliation, as well as access to queered temporalities.

Taken together, these ideas suggest the possibility of a break in static time that ultimately leads to a place of imagination.

Although Otoh seems to already exist in queer time, as described above with reference to his age, once he enters into a relationship with Mala, time becomes doubly queered. Mala’s sense of time is a continuum, one where she takes no notice of the time of day, or the passing of years, with the exception of the ten o’clock hour each day. Mootoo tells us that Mala knows the ten o’clock hour because of the angle of the sun, the color of the sky, and the saturating humidity – all of which conspire to remind her of the moment when her mother and Lavinia left, leaving Mala and Asha to be raped and abused by Chandin. At ten o’clock each day, Mala notes: “time would collapse,” leaving her “[e]xhausted and dizzy from breathing so rapidly she collapsed” (132). As a hedge against these overwhelming feelings, Mala self-mutilates by burning her mouth and sinuses with hot pepper sauce. On the night the cereus blooms, Mala loses all sense of time as she sits and watches the plant blossom. As she watches, she drowses and finds herself flitting in and out of time, conflating the present with the past, seeing herself as the adult Mala intent on avenging the children Pohpoh and Asha, whom she believes to co-exist with her adult self.

Similarly, Otoh experiences a shift in time once he begins to take supplies to Mala. Curious about the woman that “controlled the lives of both of his parents,” (141) Otoh dresses up as Ambrose to try and gain access to Mala. His costume creates a wrinkle in time, noticed by Ambrose: “You are indeed a reincarnation but not of a person per se, merely of a forgotten memory.” By not just impersonating Ambrose in his dress,

but also in his mannerisms, expectations, and affection, Otoh also flits in and out of time, conflating the present with the past. “Wheeling his father out to the porch he had a sensation of bring both mother and father to his own pappy” (144).

Mootoo creates a narrative line that switches back and forth among Mala’s interior monologue in the present, Otoh’s journey to her house, and Mala’s imaginary narrative as she attempts to save Pohpoh in the past. These multiple narrative strands serve to imbricate not only time, but also geography in the Caribbean space. Otoh, by virtue of his queered/adolescence and his inheritance of Mala and Mala’s queerness, brings questions of identity and creation to the forefront. When he begins his visits to Mala, Otoh embodies both Ambrose and himself, while Mala embodies both Pohpoh and herself. For Stuart Hall, “[t]his oneness, underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence, of ‘Caribbeanness’....We should not, for a moment, underestimate or neglect the importance of the act of *imaginative rediscovery* which this conception of a rediscovered, essential identity entails” (222-3). In other words, Hall is clear that oneness and unified identity, while being essential to the project of Caribbean identity are, at heart, a fiction – one that is necessary, but still an invention.

The queered nature of Ambrose/Otoh and Pohpoh/Mala culminates when Otoh comes to her house dressed as Ambrose, carrying the gramophone Ambrose gave Mala when they were courting:

Otoh managed to get the gramophone out of its box, inserted a disk and wound it up without disturbing her. When he lifted the needle’s arm the turntable began to spin with a fine whir. Mala opened her eyes. When she saw the young man in front of her she gasped.

[....]

Holding the arms of her rocking chair she pushed herself up, then reached a hand out to the young man before her. As the music came to an end she breathed, “Ambrose.”

[....]

It was then that Otoh realized she had mistaken him for his father. He was about to say “I am Otoh. Ambrose is my father,” but stopped. (159)

Because of his resemblance to Ambrose, Mala mistakes Otoh for Ambrose and leads him to the basement where the decayed corpse of Chandin rests among a living carpet of beetles, spiders, and other insects. This revelation frightens Otoh so much that he passes out in Mala’s arms:

Opening his eyes, Otoh realized he was collapsed over Mala’s shoulder, watching

the back of her legs as she mounted the steps to the drawing room she then carried him, still on her shoulder, through the open space in the wall of furniture, out through the kitchen, and set him down to rest on the verandah floor. Kneeling over him, fretting, she chanted, ‘Shhh, don’t worry Ambrose, shhh, shhh, shhh.’ (164)

When Mala turns away to get him water, Otoh runs out of the house into the road, where he collapses.

Although Hall argues for oneness as part of the “essential nature” of Caribbeanness, he continues: “[w]e cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about ‘one experience, one identity,’ without acknowledging its other side – the ruptures and

discontinuities which constitute, precisely, the Caribbean's 'uniqueness'" (223). Otoh is confronted by the "ruptures and discontinuities" of his identity as he lies in the road where a crowd gathers and questions his identity:

"But ent he Ambrose son?"

"He name Otoh."

"I thought he name Ambrosia."

"Doh be stupid. This is a girl's name."

"But that is Ambrose son self. Look how he looking. He looking

like Ambrose self. You can't see a trace of he mother in he." (164)

In this moment, the tangled threads of Otoh's previously unified identity are revealed for what they are: a bumpy, non-contiguous map. He is neither exclusively male nor female; he is neither exclusively Otoh nor Ambrosia nor Ambrose. He is neither male nor female; he is neither child nor adult. He is, as Hall suggests in reference to the Caribbean, "framed" by two axes or vectors, simultaneously operative: the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture The one gives us some grounding in, some continuity with, the past. The second reminds us that what we share is precisely the experience of a profound discontinuity" (226-7).

Hall's understanding of the Caribbean may also apply to the queered/adolescent. A connection to the past through the interstitial nature of the child/adult confluence is mediated by a physical reminder of the ruptures and breaks that prevent the queered/adolescent from recuperating family and inheritance in the 'normal' manner. In this space, then, the queered/adolescent not only breaks up the static temporality of hard defined borders, but also becomes a site of resistance and imagination that leads to a type

of inheritance and family that is unavailable to other bodies. For Otoh, his inheritance of Mala leads him to understand himself as “profoundly discontinuous,” yet rooted to the past through his family and geography. In this space, Otoh is able to reimagine himself in ways that were previously hidden in Lantanacamara.

These reimaginings come in the short section Part IV. This section is the shortest of the novel, but anchors the past to Otoh, while opening up the possibilities of his discontinuity. The chapter itself functions in much the same way – it comes immediately after the novel plunges back to the past and explains Chandin’s murder and Ambrose’s hand in it. This short chapter moves forward to the present while acknowledging the past. The bumpy, nonlinear structure of the novel mimics the ruptures and differences Otoh experiences as he learns about his father’s past and his own present. After he burns down Mala’s house to hide Chandin’s body (and thus absolve Mala of a murder charge), Otoh comes home to speak to his mother, who suggests he marry Mavis. Mootoo writes “Although she had never contradicted him, this talk about marriage showed that his mother had more fully accepted him as a man than he had ever realized. Otoh was both thrilled and too shocked for words” (237). When Elsie makes clear she knows that Otoh is not a man, she chides him, saying “Now the fact of the matter is that you are not the first or the only one of your kind in this place. You grow up here and you don’t realize almost everybody in this place wish they could be somebody or something else” (237-8). These words of benediction from his mother (who leaves Ambrose shortly thereafter), give Otoh the freedom to continue to live as a man while pursuing a relationship with Nurse Tyler, the transvestite nurse who cares for Mala. Their relationship exists and blooms at the Paradise Alms House, where Otoh accompanies his father to visit Mala,

thus tying together the threads of his inheritance with the family of his own making – all possible through the space of queered/adolescence and radical imagination.

If the queered/adolescent subject is able to recuperate and recreate inheritance and family outside the constraints of traditional time, then what might this say about the adolescent nation? It wouldn't be unfair to think of these nations as queered, bastard offspring of colonial powers, born of incestuous, violent couplings. In the case of Mala, adolescent independence is a farce; her teenage status seems to suggest an ability towards openness and imagination, as does Pussy. But in the end, both are circumscribed by their adulthood, which has to grow in a prescribed way, despite the potentiality of adolescence. Growth is inevitable and the structures that are available for growth must conform to the neoliberal globalisms set forth by the ruling classes. The period in which “anything is possible” is a fleeting phantom for both. While the moment of adolescence allows for alternate temporalities, it does not, unfortunately, allow for permanent alternatives. Perhaps looking at alternative temporalities as a way in which to rewrite subjectivity onto the emerging nation.

Chapter Four

The Schooled Adolescent

In 2007, the reigning queen of American TV, Oprah Winfrey, opened the doors to The Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in Henly-on-Klip, South Africa. The school, with every detail supervised by Winfrey, drew criticism for the lavishness heaped upon the architecture (fireplaces in every oversized room), the uniforms (designed by Winfrey), and the extremely low acceptance rate (four percent). Such luxuries, critics contend, were wasted on schoolgirls who would normally attend village schools until age 16 and then drop out of the education game altogether. The overly extravagant surroundings, which cost almost \$40 million USD, were considered poor form in a country still struggling with extreme poverty. The extravagance was defended by Winfrey as a crucial part of propelling South Africa towards a brighter future: “These girls deserve to be surrounded by beauty, and beauty does inspire. I wanted this to be a place of honor for them because these girls have never been treated with kindness” (44). Winfrey went on to tell the Associated Press: “I think the reason not just Africa but the world is in the state that it is is because of a lack of leadership on all levels of government ... and particularly in regard to schools and schooling for poor children. ... The best way to effect change long term is to ... give children exposure and opportunity and nurture them to understand their own power and possibility” (“Oprah Wants to Change View”). In a country still rife with corruption, high AIDS rates, and the highest recorded rate of

violence against women, Winfrey's extravagance suggests possibility and hope for a select few (who, in turn, will hopefully raise up the masses).

On the other hand, a quick glance at Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls website provides a more mundane picture. Academics and coursework are full display on the front page, which states: "Twenty-one state-of-the-art classrooms and six labs - including art, science, computer and design technology - are located along the Street of Learning. Each classroom has an outdoor study area as well as SMART Board™ technology" ("Overview"). Promotional videos show girls wearing matching uniforms, sitting in classrooms listening to lectures, and working quietly on group projects or writing in clean, neatly-lined notebooks. The monotony of five years of classes and note-taking, interspersed with once-a-month visits home and limited cell-phone usage, becomes apparent in the flattened-out photos showing girls all looking alike, heads bent identically over matching desks, the only noticeable differences physical ones as the girls age.

Winfrey's school encapsulates the contradictory nature of the boarding school: on one hand, public relations materials would suggest they are places of infinite possibility; on the other hand, they are places of tedium and monotony as students cycle through several years of classes, course schedules, and structured free time. This chapter explores novels set in boarding schools – specifically the series novel – and the conflict between these limitless possibilities and mind-numbing monotony as an opportunity to parse adolescence and the emerging nation.

The push-and-pull of possibility and boredom in adolescence certainly exists in many types of novels (and many of those have been discussed in previous chapters).

However, the structure of the boarding school series novel offers a unique opportunity to investigate three main relationships in relation to adolescence, emerging nations, and conflict: temporal relationships, spatial relationships, and transitional relationships. Through these relationships, I argue that series novels about boarding school seem to reflect the monotony and repetition of life at school. However, I contend that they are about the possibilities of being in a state of limitlessness and uniquely broadcast the need to consider adolescence as a separate category in time and space with permeable borders.

I investigate this idea using two boarding school series novel set in emerging nations: John van de Ruit's 2005 *Spud* series, set in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and Tsitsi Dangarembga's 1988 Tambudzai trilogy, set in Zimbabwe. Van de Ruit's *Spud* series follows the eponymous narrator John "Spud" Milton as he begins boarding school in Kwa-Zulu Natal in 1990. The book jacket makes explicit the connection between Spud's beginning as a boarder and the concurrent political turmoil in South Africa: "It's South Africa 1990. Two major events are about to happen: The release of Nelson Mandela and, more importantly, it's Spud Milton's first year at an elite boys only private school" (back cover). Reviews of the book mention Spud's impending long walk to manhood (Amazon notes: "John Van de Ruit brings to a close his savagely funny blow by blow account of the agonies of growing up"), but the series ends as he returns to school for his matric year. Spud explains: "the school consists of years one to three, matrics and post-matrics, who only do university subjects and play sport" (10). By ending the series before Spud's actual release into the wider world of university or employment – those most adult of endeavors, van de Ruit reminds readers that the series is not actually following Spud into manhood. Instead, it opens and ends within Spud's

adolescence, suggesting that Spud is moving ever closer to the limit of adulthood, never quite reaching it.

Likewise, Dangarembga's Tambudzai series of novels also offers ways to interrogate time, space, and transition. *Nervous Conditions*, *The Book of Not*, and a final, unpublished novel make up the series. Unlike van de Ruit, who published the one volume of the five-volume *Spud* series each year between 2007 and 2012, Dangarembga has famously left large gaps between the publication dates of her novels. *Nervous Conditions*, the first novel of the series, was published in 1988 and follows Tambudzai as she fights her way into the village school, then the parish school, and finally wins a scholarship to a prestigious private school. *The Book of Not*, the sequel to *Nervous Conditions*, wasn't published until 2006 and follows Tambu as she attends the Sisters of the Sacred Heart parochial school in the 1970s, while the war for Zimbabwean independence rages outside. Dangarembga's final novel in the series has yet to be published. "Through the Looking Glass" was published in the Spring 2008 issue of *Per Contra* as part of "Bira: A novel by Tsitsi Dangarembga." In July 2013, Dangarembga tweeted: "Submitted CHRONICLE OF AN INDOMITABLE DAUGHTER to publisher. Am waiting with great hope and excitement" (@efie412095951 19 July 2013) and an excerpt was published in *TriQuarterly* in 2014 under the same name. In 2015, Dangarembga told the *Daily News* (Zimbabwe) that she had been denied funding by the Culture Fund for "[...] the last novel in the Tambudzai Trilogy, which has been called *Chronicle of an Indomitable Daughter* and is now called *A Mournable Body*. In my opinion it is the best of the three and very timely for Zimbabwe today" ("Dangarembga, Culture Fund Tiff"). Dangarembga's large gaps between novels parallel the continually thwarted reach

towards adulthood and “completion” while simultaneously showing the constantly shifting ground surrounding identity.

These two novel series may be said to fit within the tradition of the *roman-fleuve*. The term, coined by novelist Romain Rolland in reference to his series *Jean-Cristophe* (1904-1912), translates as “river-novel.” In the seventh novel of his series, *Dans la Maison* [In the House], Rolland notes: “m'est apparu comme un fleuve; ... il est, dans la cours des fleuves, des zones où ils s'étendant, semblant dormer, ... Ils n'en continuent pas moins de couler et changer [(It) seemed to me like a river; ... there are, in the course of rivers, zones where they stretch out, seem to sleep, ... they continue no less to flow and change]” (Rolland qtd in Felber 8). While Rolland may have coined the term, the tradition extends back to the early nineteenth-century; novel series from James Fennimore Cooper, Honore de Blazac’s *La Comedie Humaine*, and Anthony Trollope’s Barchester novels all fit within the definition of the river novel set forth by Rolland. The *roman-fleuve* is a bit of a chimera in the literary world. Defining and discussing the series novel poses some problems because the term “novel” is a somewhat elastic term already. Like its predecessor, the *roman-feuilleton* (the installment novel), the *roman-fleuve* asks readers to do more than think about the form as a novel with more pages. Lynette Felber, in *Gender and Genre in Novels Without End*, argues that the “quantitative difference makes a qualitative difference” (1). She notes that the *roman-fleuve* has several distinct characteristics that set it apart from the novel form: a longer list of characters, temporal and spatial gaps between publications, and a multitude of narrative plot lines, not all of which converge. “While the *roman-fleuve* in many ways differs from the novel in degree

more than kind, it is nevertheless a subgenre in its own right, distinguished from related genres such as the Victorian serial or the long novel" (2).

As a subgenre, the *roman-fleuve* still acts within the limits of the novel, but each installment also extends and complicates those borders by continuing the narrative line through time and space, eliminating any one ending as the final understanding of the narrative. In addition to Felber's list of differences between the novel and the *roman-fleuve*, it is imperative to remember that novels and ideas do not exist "independently of each other," as Ian Watt writes in *The Rise of the Novel*. Watt speaks directly to the crucible of social and political forces that shaped the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century, namely relating Defoe's and Richardson's novels and "the distinctive literary qualities [...] to those of the society in which it began and flourished" (7); however, these ideas can also be used to think about the forces that shape novels generally. As the novel expands out to a series, the temporal and spatial gaps between novels begin to offer spaces where changing ideas can transmute. In other words, the series novel is a changing, living entity, in contrast to the novel, which is shaped only by the forces at hand during its birth. These shifting forces lead to a lack of closure, perhaps one of the most notable aspects dividing the novel and the *roman-fleuve*. Felber writes:

The traditional novel, for example, privileges closure. Frank Kermode expresses this value when he argues that we look to the end of a narrative 'to bestow upon the whole duration and meaning.' However, because of the proliferation of endings between the first and last volumes -- each novel having its own ending, which is subsequently undermined by the next volume -- the *roman-fleuve* inherently deprives closure. (3)

Another space in which the *roman-fleuve* acts within the limits of the novel, yet extends and complicates the borders is the length. Watt writes that the novel is concerned with individual lives and the length of a novel should be commensurate with “the totality of a life.” While the exact length of a novel is a matter of some debate (see the Booker Prize debate over Ian McEwan’s 167-page *On Chesil Beach*, shortlisted in 2007), most critics agree that length is a defining factor. The series novel often encompasses more than one life; for example, Naguib Mahfouz’s Cairo Trilogy follows the interconnected lives of al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad’s family through two decades. What Sir Walter Scott calls “the ordinary train of human events” is widened in the series novel to encompass and examine the more complex web of relationships that span from one life. Certainly, single novels can encompass multiple lives and perspectives, as in *Anna Karenina* and others, but the exceptional length of the *roman-fleuve* allows the exploration of a multiplicity of lives in a way the novel cannot. Henry James, in discussing the series novel, dismissed the genre as a “baggy monster.” Inherent in this criticism is the idea that the series novel requires a protracted immersion from readers, both in time necessary to read the entire series and the time in between publication dates. Felber writes:

The *roman-fleuve* appeals to persevering serial readers who enjoy the thrill of recognition when they see the similarity between incidents that may be separated by an enormous gap of time or space [...] ideal readers of the *roman-fleuve* recall hundreds of similarly parallel incidents, which are interrelated more than interdependent; their recognition integrates the various narrative subunits into a kind of encyclopedic collation, just as the

individual volumes are collected, in the *roman-fleuve*, into one extensive novel. (23)

Finally, the series novel differs from the novel in that the entire series is meant to act as a commentary on society as a whole. The length of the series, as opposed to the shorter length of a single novel, offers an opportunity for the author to make judgments about larger changes in society, politics, or culture. Anthony Powell, best known for his 12-part series novel *A Dance to the Music of Time*, took his inspiration from Proust, but consciously changed his focus to speculate and comment on change over a period of time and in a larger context than Proust's tight focus on one aspect of (high) society.

All of these variations within the *roman-fleuve* can be overlaid on the boarding school series novel, offering a new way to view the contemporary school novel (often used interchangeably with the term school story). While both the *roman-fleuve* and the school novel have been studied and discussed in some detail, the boarding school series novel has largely, with the exception of the *Harry Potter* series, been ignored by critics as a literary form. And the Harry Potter novels are largely considered unworthy of serious study, and are instead relegated to the gray edges of YA criticism. This doubly marginalizes the contemporary boarding school series novel. Historically, the school novel occupied a place of intense interest, first as a and then as an instructional morality tale. The school novel is generally acknowledged to begin with Sarah Fielding's *The Governess; or The Little Female Academy* in 1759, but it wasn't until Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days* appeared in 1857 that the genre was popularized and authors began writing school stories with middle-class children as the primary target audience. By the early 20th century, the school story became more focused on morality

and acted as an instructional tale deeply entrenched in Victorian values of family, home, society. Finding a proper place in society, self-sacrifice, and cooperation all featured prominently, and students were shown to conform to a sense of collective responsibility and teamwork (Foster and Simons 196).

The democratization of education in the aftermath of World War II led to a decline in the boarding school novel, “when the social system that [boarding] school were founded on and celebrated ‘should have been, and from 1900 on rapidly became, out of date’” (Gathorne-Hardy qtd in Steege 142). The genre has experienced an uptick in popularity in contemporary literature, due in great part to the aforementioned Harry Potter series, as well as in other young adult novels like John Green’s *Looking for Alaska*, the Hex Hall series, and Lauren Kate’s *Fallen* series. The contemporary interest in boarding schools as a place of magic and fantasy suggests the declining relevance of the boarding school novel as an instructional moral narrative for young adults or adolescents, and underscores the idea that boarding schools are places of possibility. Removing reality and making these novels about fantasy allows for a blank space on which to project ideas about growth and potential. David K Steege notes that in the first Harry Potter book, “[w]e are presented with a school that is largely a world all to itself, isolated from outside influences” (140). This idea is echoed by Royston Lambert, who claims the isolationism of the boarding school creates a “hothouse society.” In this way, the school itself becomes a character, adapting and changing to meet (or not meet) the desires of students, since there are not outside forces to help shape those needs. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the Harry Potter novels, where the school has a “Room of Requirement” that appears only when needed. A student must walk past the door to the

room three times, thinking hard about their purpose (“I need a study room”) and then magically, the room will open up with the exact specifications for the student. Thus, a complete isolation occurs, placing all growth potential firmly within the parameters of the school, but also making the school, above all, a place of infinite possibility.

Embedded within this isolation is the fantasy of no parental control combined with precisely circumscribed rules. Together this gives children and adolescents a comfortable place to exercise fantasies of independence; however, as Philip Hensher writes, this formula also works to water down and obscure some of the more pedestrian aspects of the school novel.

The world of prefects and detentions, of masters in gowns, of school lacrosse matches, somehow filters down to children and they are reassured by the closed, certain world. They know, too, exactly what they want to see when it comes to magic and the supernatural, and the books run through the conventions of spells, broomsticks, witches, and wizards without a second thought. Children like, too, the romance structure, which carefully follows the analysis laid down by narratological theorists of the folk-tale. (Hensher 70)

That the school novel hasn’t completely faded from view is a testament to the strength of the idea of possibility. While more contemporary children’s school novels often add an element of the supernatural as a way to appeal to children who live in an era of democratized education, the school novel for adults continues to address potential in a more realistic way. Karen Manners Smith argues: “School fiction written for adults is problematized both personally and politically in ways that would be foreign to the

traditional school story, where conflicts tend to be about games and bounds breaking, peer pressure and difficulties with relationships" (Manners Smith 71). The adult novel gets at the one thing that's important here: the school novel only has contemporary relevance when it addresses the personal and political and moves past the idea of games and peer pressure. Those elements (peer pressure, games, whatever) take on a metaphorical aspect that transcends the lack of contemporaneous school situations that readers can identify with. And when we start to examine school novels from places of conflict, then we're looking at how the personal and political collide in a sphere of isolation and the potential that isolation offers.

On one hand, the contemporary school series novel set in the emerging nation can be seen as a colonial leftover. The boarding school owes a powerful structural debt to colonial influence. In *Spud* and the Tambudzai trilogy, the boarding schools are obvious colonial holdovers, exuding a lingering colonial influence as the nation changes outside. "The genre was conceived around the middle of the [nineteenth] century and was almost dead before the Second World War" (Musgrave 1). In this rendering, Musgrave suggests that the school story codifies the imperialist expectations of the nation. By the end of WWII, those imperialist claims were mostly gone, or so goes the prevailing wisdom. That said, the imperialist nature of the UK didn't stop in 1945. While new colonies weren't created (or at least not in the traditional sense), the majority of the decolonizing movements happened after WWII, spurred by the fragmentation of world power and increasing access to the mechanics of production. The continuation of school stories post-1945 and in a postcolonial world might suggest a utopian imagining of a world in which those imperialist notions are still viable.

In *the Book of Not*, Tambu attends the College of the Sacred Heart as one of five “African” students the school is forced to accept after Ian Smith’s provisional government in Rhodesia required schools to accept a quota of black students, as an effort to pander to the black population. Despite having tested into the school via a national exam, Tambu is treated as a second-class citizen, shuffled into a small corner room with the five other black students and publicly chastised by the headmistress for a variety of petty infractions. The black students are constantly reminded that they are less than the other students, a clarion cry that culminates in Tambu being passed over for first honors in favor of a white student with lower marks. The colonial regime of race separation, which mirrored apartheid in South Africa, continues to play out in Scared Heart despite the changes taking place outside.¹⁸ In the closed space of the boarding school, freedom movements and bush wars are quieted, tamped down to almost nothingness and the colonial structure continues to function as a clear organizing structure.

On the other hand, however, the idea of political change is not completely removed from the boarding school environment. In *Spud*, the eponymous main character is alerted to the changes happening outside the school by his parents and other adults. Upon his first day at the school, he notes with surprise: “Our head of house is a black boy named PJ Luthuli who looks incredibly serious and is neatly dressed. He gives us important tips about the school like ‘Don’t run on the quad’ and ‘Stay off the grass’. He then tells us to get ready for bed. I think this is the first time I’ve ever taken instructions from a black person” (8). Luthuli’s position as a novelty soon wears off and he becomes a

¹⁸ The Ian Smith government didn’t do much to abolish racial separation, and some argue he did much to further the racial tensions of the nation. I speak here more of the liberation movements and the Bush Wars, which, while not successful in ending racial separation in the immediate moment, led to the fall of the Smith government in 1979 and the establishment of an African nationalist government.

touchstone for Spud as the nation changes. The boys are called to the common room to watch FW deKlerk's famous speech unbanning the ANC and vowing the free Nelson Mandela. Spud notes that "Luthuli and the other black boys marched across the quad as a group, chattering excitedly to each other. A hot wind blew papers and leaves across the cloisters and everything seemed sticky and on edge" (45). A few days later, on February 9, 1990, Spud and his classmates watch as Mandela is released from Victor Vester prison in Cape Town: "I couldn't believe this smiling old man was really a communist terrorist. Around me the white boys stared blankly at the screen. Floods of tears were rolling down Luthuli's face [...] I felt wickedly guilty about being a white person. I'm only thirteen but I wish I'd known about apartheid and fought it like Eve" (54). Spud's reactions to the political change are more observational, perhaps even sympathetic, and based on the context of his schoolmates (and in the case of "Eve," one teacher). The school environment is hermetically sealed to keep the political change from affecting Spud in any real way. His closest connection to the outside response is from his father, who calls to tell Spud he's nailed down the windows, stocked up on food and has begun digging a trench in the backyard to keep the communists at bay; "He warned me that there are communists under every bush and anarchy is upon us. I told him my teacher was a freedom fighter. He screamed and slammed the phone down again" (55).

The ur-text of the school novel, *Tom Brown's School Days*, reminds readers of the ultimate goal of the British or American boarding school: "[t]he object of all schools is not to ram Latin and Greek into boys, but to make them good English boys, good future citizens; and by far the most important part of that work must be done, or not done, out of school hours" (71). If these emerging nation novels seem to both reinforce colonial

structures and explode them, I would argue that this is a reflection of the national project at the time – unsure what a “good citizen looks like. Growing up is not a self-directed act – the child will eventually reach adulthood and assume the rights and responsibilities of the adult citizen. In the boarding school series novel, however, this assumption is undermined by the structure of the work. The series novels, set in nations where citizenship is not an inevitability, leave the protagonist’s schooling unfinished, stopping just as the young narrator rides off into the distance to start a new life or ending as the narrator’s attempts at self-reliance are thwarted by some outside force¹⁹. Though the original structures of the school novel were (self-) aware of the convention that the protagonist would burst forth into a new life as a full citizen with mistakes forgotten and childhood firmly in the rear-view mirror, newer school novels challenge the assumption that this child will reach maturity and be accepted into society. Tambu, in *The Book of Not* shows her internalization of this idea: “We could end up with a nation of inspiring, useful, hardworking people, like the British or Americans, and all the other Europeans who were guiding us and helping us in our struggle” (BoN 103).

The longer (relative to the stand-alone novel) *roman-fleuve* acts as a framing device that punctuates the boarding school narrative both temporally and spatially, suggesting a monotony that is congruent with boarding school life. This occurs in four distinct ways:

1. Temporal gaps in publication between each installment
2. Spatial gaps between each book

¹⁹ Even *Harry Potter* seems to fit this description. Harry’s schooling is cut short by a conflict between forces of good and evil. Ostensibly a British series, the books figure as conflict novels where creating “good citizens” is circumvented by a seismic political shift that leaves the nation in flux and then, eventually, emergent.

3. Monotony of summary

4. Repetition of form

Wolfgang Iser argues: “if the text of a serialized novel makes a different impression from the text in book form this is principally because it introduces additional gaps, or alternately accentuates existing gaps by means of a break until the next installment” (qtd in Felber 12)

Slowing down the narrative dulls the idea of political intrusions, but also sexuality, independence, and intellectual growth. These difficulties get lost in routine descriptions of classes, sports, and exams. Though Manners-Smith suggests that the adult school novel is less concerned with “games [...and] peer pressure,” I argue that games, along with courses, friendships, sport and the like, are used in the adult school series novel as additional markers of tedium that should be read as “personal and political.” By the same token that the adolescent is stifled by the tedium of boarding school as an attempt to reign in and control behavior, Zimbabwe’s and South Africa’s emerging independence movements are presented through the novel structure as a tedious and uneven process that dulls any potential acting out by the adolescent country that might threaten the established “adult” nations.

The first way in which the series novel replicates the monotony of boarding school is through temporal gaps in both publication and in reading time. By overlaying those gaps in publication as roughly equivalent to the gaps between the end of one school year and the beginning of another, we begin to see a certain kind of monotony develop. Each novel becomes circumscribed by the precisely calibrated school year, rather than letting life tumble past indiscriminately. There is an expectation from the author that the

novel will pick back up in the new school year without any interruption. The first installment of *Spud* ends with: “[b]elow me an old green station wagon made its way up Pilgrim’s Walk [...] I stood up, stretched my back and took one last look around me. Then I stumbled down the hill to meet my father” (389). The next book, *Spud: the Madness Continues* begins by asking readers to pick up in almost the exact same place, despite the three years between publications. “Dad sat back in the driver’s seat, surveyed the road in front of him, then screamed so loudly the keys fell out of the ignition. Once the screaming died down, a long and disturbing silence descended on the infamous Milton station wagon” (1). Not only are we returning to Spud’s life, which has been in almost a freeze-frame since the end of the first book, we are plunged into the same world, with the same players, and, in this case, the same exact setting. This replication occurs for each book in the series, leading ultimately to a mind-numbing repetition. Van de Ruit, in an interview with the *Daily Mail* about the end of the *Spud* series, notes his ambivalence about the repeated structural motif:

For now though, it’s time to say goodbye. I always knew what the end would be; I always only wanted to do four books; two of him as a junior and two as a senior. When I started out, I was a huge fan of Harry Potter, but by the fifth or sixth book, my interest had fizzled out. With Spud I wrestled long and hard about setting the scene for a post matric year, like I did at Michaelhouse, or even going to university. (Van de Ruit qtd in Ritchie)

In a similar move, Dangarembga’s unfinished series leaves Tambu in the school environment, constantly being reintroduced to the same situations. In an interview with

British magazine *Wasafiri*, Dangarembga makes note of the supposedly closed nature of the first novel, *Nervous Conditions*:

I had not really thought about writing a sequel. When I finished that novel I felt the story had been told and I had dealt with the issues to my satisfaction. I didn't think I had any more to add. But my publisher, Ros de Lanerolle of the Women's Press who was originally from South Africa, came to me and said that she felt the novel was going to be a success and people would want to know more, and couldn't I write a sequel. I didn't commit until much later when I felt I ought to come up with something. I was at film school then and found that writing prose and learning how to write for film were not two activities that I could conduct at the same time, so I kept putting it off. And then Ros de Lanerolle passed away. I felt bound to that promise that I had made her. But it was difficult for me to engage with a sequel because it took place during the liberation struggles in Zimbabwe and racial issues were very ... well, there was a lot of conflict around racial issues (Dangarembga qtd in Rooney 57)

These callbacks function as infinitely regressing references to school as a marker of time and place. Derrida, in “The Purveyor of Truth,” his response to Lacan’s reading of a similar moment in “The Purloined Letter,” says “nothing beings. Simply a drifting or disorientation from which one never moves away” (101). In this way, the school becomes a threshold, offering a place of endless return. As van de Ruit notes above, *Spud* never allows the protagonist to leave or graduate, never puts him in the “real” world, never offers any option to escape the “drifting.” As a finished series, compiled into

Felber's "one, extensive novel," van de Ruit has closed off all possibility for resolving this disorientation. The adolescent is already a liminal figure, and the boarding school serves as a threshold – not only does it preserve the in-betweenness of the adolescent, it acts as a circumscribed space: an archive. In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault defines the archive as:

The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all those things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities [...] It is that which defines the mode of occurrence of the statement-thing; it is the system of its functioning. Far from being that which unifies everything that has been said in the great confused murmur of a discourse, far from being only that which ensures that we exist in the midst of preserved discourse, it is that which differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration. (145-146)

Reading the boarding school space in the series novel as an archive asks the reader to concern themselves with meaning-making in the face of, or perhaps in addition to, monotony and repetition. To read the boarding school as an archive is to ask readers to read the school – and therefore the literary text which reproduces the school experience –

as a circumscribed space that houses the adolescent.

In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida asserts “the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event” (17).

Put another way, the archive is both the container and the contained; together, they co-constitute (and produce) meaning. The structure of the archive determines the contents and the contents determine the structure. In the case of the *roman-fleuve*, monotony constitutes the adolescent in a continuously recurring space with no clearly demarcated beginning or end. Derrida defines “archive fever” as “a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement” (91). According to archivist Walker Sampson:

Entwined in this desire is a repetitive force, the retention of a specific origin **through repetition** (emphasis added). As Derrida states, the One (in this case the archive) cannot distinguish itself from the Other without a constant reiteration of itself. In the ceaseless work to maintain one memory at the expense of another the archive not only maintains and curates memory, **but buries it as well**. Derrida argues that the archive as a public, prosthetic extension of memory cannot avoid this contradiction, which he emphasizes is not a negative contradiction, but a necessarily modulating one. (“From My Archives”)

I argue that the boarding school – and by extension, the boarding school series novel –

buries childhood and adulthood as a precondition of creating a modulated adolescence and, in doing so, archives adolescence as a bounded space of its own.

In the archive produced by the *roman-fleuve*, the adolescent protagonist functions as a witness who provides testimony on the enclosed space of the boarding school. Likewise, the adolescent countries in these series novels are circumscribed within specific borders, created by various means,²⁰ and function as places of testimony and witness about the condition of the nation. Giorgio Agamben famously speaks to the idea of witnessing in *Remnants of Auschwitz*: “The remnants of Auschwitz – the witnesses— are neither the dead nor the survivors, neither the drowned nor the saved. They are what remains between them” (164). Such a configuration places the witness squarely in the position of being neither here nor there, a line of reasoning often attributed to adolescents as well. However, the liminal nature of adolescents and, by extension, adolescent nations, is always assumed to be transitory. Adolescents are considered liminal only until they inevitably grow up to be adults. While this may be true biologically speaking, the idea of adolescence in literature and rhetoric leaves that aspect in flux. By naming the teenager or the teenage nation as witness in Agambenian terms, I am also arguing that they possess the same qualities of the *Muselman* Agamben references. Most often, this idea is misinterpreted to mean that the in-betweenness of the witness suggests the impossibility of witnessing (in this case, the Holocaust). Indeed, Agamben’s *Muselman* is a mute, almost comatose, being who appears incapable of offering any kind of understandable testimony.

²⁰ For South Africa, the borders claimed by Cecil Rhodes with his famous declaration that he now owned whatever his eye could see; for Zimbabwe, the newly drawn borders created in 1922 after Rhodesia elected to become self-governing instead of acting as a fifth department of South Africa.

John Lechete and Saul Newman question this interpretation: “as Agamben presents it, the impossibility of bearing witness is part of the process of bearing witness. For just as potentiality includes impotentiality, just as, in other words, impotentiality is integral to potentiality, so the impossibility of bearing witness is part of the potential to bear witness” (Lechete and Newman 86). In other words, potentiality is always tempered by actuality. The ability to be a witness also includes the ability to not witness. To read the adolescent as witness is to acknowledge the inherent potential of the adolescent to not become – to not grow up, to not become an adult, to stay in the liminal state. To invert Agamben’s idea of impossible witness, wherein the loss of the witness equals an erasure of all contacts at Auschwitz, the adolescent witness opens up the possibility of witnessing within a liminal space by a figure most often erased as a consequence of its liminality.

The second novel of Dangarembga’s Tambudzai series, *The Book of Not*, begins with Tambu as witness to her sister’s being blown up by a landmine. The beginning of the novel is fragmented and is left off balance by the uncertainty of the narrative, as well as the uncertainty of Tambu’s response. The entire first chapter is unclear – does Netsai step on the landmine on purpose, or was it a tragic accident in a country where mined areas are common? Either way, Tambu is unsettled by the situation – she wants to be proud of her sister’s activities with ZANU²¹, but is haunted by the feeling that these rebel activities

²¹ The Zimbabwe National Union, led by Robert Mugabe, was one of two major militant parties to fight against Ian Smith’s white-minority government. ZANU was active from 1963-1980, when the party won the presidential election and put Mugabe in power. Tambu’s school, The College of the Sacred Heart, is portrayed as overwhelmingly white, as well as affiliated with the Protestant missionaries. Tambu’s involvement, no matter how tangential, with rebel activities would put her in a precarious social position, as the ZANU rebels were well known for using militant tactics intended to scare or kill white farmers and settlers, including mining the mountainous areas and actively taking over white-owned farms by threats or violence.

It becomes clear later in the novel that Netsai is the lover (at age thirteen or so) of “the Comrade,” a rebel commander. The Comrade sent for Tambu and Netsai’s uncle, Babamakuru, to

will condemn her to being shunned at school. Instead of being proud and outspoken about her sister's position, Tambu is scared and silent. This silence infects her studies:

School too seemed empty because now, after these holidays, it was impossible to relate to anything. Empty rooms, empty desks, empty books, empty air between us, the second from whose classroom was also on the second floor, and the mountain with the cross on top, down which plantations, dark, of wattle ad pine crept like dispirited armies. (*BoN* 20)

Tambu's inability to reconcile with her sister's attack leaves her outside of the boundaries of the defined school expectations: she loses concentration, she "spaces out," and is unable to compete with the other girls for academic honors. "So all changed after the meeting I went to, the one I was brought to, both to be exhibited at Babamakuru's trial for treason to the soul of the people and to be instructed. It was all different after this *morari* where fear paralyzed the heart" (27).

By reading the boarding school series novel as an archive with the protagonist as witness, we are able to read adolescence as a place of possibility. This happens structurally three ways:

1. The temporal and spatial gaps in the *roman-fleuve* open up a space for readers to imagine possibilities and create narratives to fill those gaps.

answer for allegations of spying for the white government. As the Comrade heads into the jungle after publicly beating Babamakuru, Netsai runs after him, inadvertently stepping on a landmine and losing her leg.

2. The open nature of the series novel allows for a change in form and experimentation with characters, points-of-view, and plot. This is similar to the adolescent process of self-discovery²² and invention.
3. Monotony and repetition combine to contribute to a larger, collective understanding of a time and place; the series novel's lack of closure keeps that cumulative understanding open past the end of the series.

Keeping within the scope of this chapter, I will focus on the first way in which structure can allow the boarding school, and the adolescent therein, to be read as a place of possibility.

To read the temporal and spatial gaps in the series novels as an elision is to read the boarding school as a closed geography; this allows the boarding school to function as a physical space without any outside interruption, closely parallel to the idea I advance of adolescence as a closed space. In the closed geography, time is synchronic and compares favorably to adolescence in its insistence on examining a singular moment in time. However, it is possible to read these gaps another way; temporal and spatial gaps in publication not only ask readers to stay situated in one moment, but to also imagine what happens in the spaces between books. In doing so, the series novel does not give up its closed geography or stop existing in synchronic time, but rather opens up possibility within what previously looked like empty space.

One version of imagining what happens in between gaps is seen in the *Spud* series. In this version of imagination, Van de Ruit allows Spud to spend some time

²² The adolescent both literally and figuratively changes over time. Neurologists now suggest that the adolescent brain isn't finished developing until the early twenties. The frontal lobe, the place of the brain in charge of decision-making and impulse regulation, is in a state of development for most of the period we call biological adolescence.

recounting what happens on his holiday break, but the space from December 1, 1990, when Spud leaves school for the holidays, and January 15, 1991, when Spud ignominiously returns, is mostly devoid of any conversation about political happenings. Between the first book in the series, *Spud*, and the second, *Spud: The Madness Continues*, less than two pages are devoted to what has happened in the intervening six weeks. Spud quickly recounts the following in his “HOLIDAY REPORT”: his dog, Blacky, ate a hose nozzle; he visits The Wild Coast with his girlfriend; his deranged grandmother got into a fight with a toddler at Christmas dinner; and he has to rescue his housekeeper from his grandmother on New Year’s Eve. This recounting ends by bringing the reader back into the closed world of the boarding school and Spud’s own adolescence (and anxiety surrounding it) by his declaration: “Guess it’s just another year of being a spud” (6).

In contrast, South Africa experiences a great deal of tumult and political change at the end of 1990 and beginning of 1991. In December, the ANC²³ holds first major party meeting – the Groote Schuur Minute – since de Klerk’s announcement that he will end the apartheid state. The Minute established the major structural arrangement for the ANC to participate in South African politics. On January 9, 1991, black children were formally integrated into all public and private schools. On January 12 and 13, back-to-back attacks left nearly 100 people dead: 45 mourners were killed in an attack at an ANC funeral, and

²³ The African National Congress. The party, in various forms and names, has existed since 1912. It is the party of Nelson Mandela and was one of two political parties unbanned by F.W. de Klerk in February 1990. The ANC meeting was a historic moment in South African history, as it was the first time the party was able to meet publicly, with the intent of electing candidates to represent the ANC in elections. The ANC held a primary role in moving South Africa from an apartheid state to a democratic state, beginning with the Groote Schuur Minute and the Pretoria Minute and finally, CODESA in January 1992. The ANC continues to hold power in South Africa, with President Jacob Zuma holding power as both President of South Africa and President of the ANC.

the next day 45 football fans were killed in the Orkney Stadium Disaster²⁴.

By starting *en media res* and ignoring the intervening gaps, van de Ruit highlights the way in which national political movements are flattened out to serve the broader structural requirements of the series novel. In this case, the reader is asked to do the work of taking the unmentioned larger political world and laying it atop the closely drawn world of the school. The effect of this is to open up space within the closed geography of the school (and, by extension, the adolescent) and understand how they can work in tandem. When readers are tasked with imagining the political world in conjunction with this closed space, synchronic and diachronic time become imbricated. In this imbrication, new narratives can be created within a closed geography.

Once we determine that the gaps in time and space have meaning, we can now see that reading potential or possibility into those gaps is not only possible, but necessary. These gaps now place historical (and diachronic) time on the same plane as synchronic time. The result of this is to allow the adolescent to exist in a closed space while still participating in history – in other words, the adolescent is no longer either stuck in the closed loop of adolescence, nor is he simply a pawn in the larger historical game that expects him to “grow up,” but he is instead a full participant in his own world while also participating in the larger arena of world affairs.

Dangarembga, on the other hand, gives some shape to the space between her first two novels by explicitly mentioning the political violence occurring to Tambu between

²⁴ The Orkney Stadium Disaster, while ostensibly not a political or racial incident, underscored the heightened tensions of the state at this time of transition. What began as a friendly pre-season football match between the Kaiser Chiefs and the Orlando Pirates ended in disaster. The Oppenheimer (Orkney) Stadium was oversold by about 7,000 seats and when tensions between the two fan bases erupted, 45 fans were trampled to death. The two teams are traditionally black (as association football [or soccer] is traditionally a black sport in South Africa), but the fans were mixed in color and were not seated separately by team allegiance.

Nervous Conditions (1988) and *The Book of Not* (2006). Through this “filling in” of the gaps, Dangarembga offers another way to use temporal and spatial gaps to suggest possibility. The second book in the series opens with an unambiguous scene of political violence while Tambu is home on break from The College of the Sacred Heart. Unlike the *Spud* series, Dangarembga at least partially fills in the gap between school and home, the personal and political. It quickly becomes clear that the personal and the political, school and home are inextricably intertwined. After stepping on a landmine, Netsai is passes out and is bleeding profusely. Babamakuru (who has also been badly beaten) and other family members discuss getting her medical care:

[...] the men around the tree where he had sat called him back, for they had recognized a problem: should the doctor be begged to come, or should Babamakuru take Netsai – and himself for that matter – to the white woman’s surgery? Now, in the dead of night, they began to debate: could anyone risk that with the curfew raging? (17-18)

It is finally decided that Babmakuru will drive Netsai to the surgery in the morning, and he will take Tambu along “so I could speak in my English accent if I was asked, proving allegiance and providing camouflage, also so that I would know” (18). As it turns out, taking Tambu on the drive has another purpose: her school is near the surgery and Babmakuru will drop her off there after he and Netsai get medical attention. Although Tambu’s mother objects to the plan (“Go, Tambudzai! To those people who are killing your sister!”), Babamakuru drives himself and Netsai to the surgery, and then drops Tambu off at school. Once she is in the dormitory, Tambu recognizes the lacuna she now faces in attempting to bridge her life outside the school with her life inside:

School too seemed empty now, after these holidays, it was impossible to relate to anything. Empty rooms, empty desks, empty books, empty air between us, the second form whose classroom was also on the second floor, and the mountain with the cross on top, down which plantations, dark, of wattle and pine crept like dispirited monsters. (20)

The explicit overlay of political violence on top of the narrative of the boarding school becomes too much for Tambu. After her return to Sacred Heart after the incident, Tambu describes her sense of discomfort:

But now, after a leg was blown off, she came walking backwards over those stones of learning and concentration, hopping, going hop-hop-hopla because she only had one leg. I could see her clearly as I sat in class, my mind opening to the teacher. It was a woman. It was my sister. Would the honor roll hold its promise? I could not concentrate. Whenever I focused, the woman stepped back, groaning at too many questions. (28)

So even if the gaps are filled by what happens in the story, the gaps between publication dates are not. Those, in this situation, are the key to creating that new narrative space.

As noted above, the publication time between *Nervous Conditions* and *The Book of Not* is much longer than between the books of the *Spud* series. In the nearly twenty years between the two books, Zimbabwe undergoes a major transformation. In the books, only three years have passed – we leave Tambu in 1968 as she prepares to go to the College of Sacred Heart. In the timeline of the book, quite a bit happens as well. In 1969, Ian Smith's government becomes the *de jure* (not just the *de facto*) governing body and severs all ties to the British Crown. In 1970, Rhodesia is declared an independent

republic under the leadership of Smith. Concurrently, ZANU and ZAPU form and begin guerilla warfare against Smith's government. The Bush Wars officially begin in 1972, the year after Tambu's story picks back up. While these moments are alluded to in the first chapter of *The Book of Not*, but the political turmoil of Zimbabwe from 1988-2006 is lurking silently in the gaps.

After general elections in 1980 that put Robert Mugabe²⁵ in power, Zimbabwe enjoyed a relatively stable period. From 1983-1987, this stability was brought into question as Mugabe began a systemic campaign to repress and exterminate members of the Ndebele tribe, in order to bring to prominence his own tribal affiliation with the Shona. Between 10,000 and 20,000 Ndebele dies in the conflict. Peace accords in 1987 brought the two tribes together and ended the conflict. Beginning in 1988, however, the Mugabe government began an aggressive campaign against any detractors. This, along with poorly planned fiscal policies moved Zimbabwe from a relatively stable state to one of the most economically depressed countries under a radical dictator. In the 1990s, opposition to the Mugabe government led to widespread civil unrest so that by 1999, Mugabe began exerting extrajuridical power in order to keep his position. The 2000 elections failed to meet the minimum requirements for fair elections set by international oversight agencies and Mugabe won over 80 percent of the vote. The parliamentary elections of 2002-2003 were similarly rigged to keep ZANU-PL (the new name of the old ZANU party) in majority power. In 2005, Mugabe amended the constitution to allow his party unfettered political power by securing the party a constitutional majority in Parliament. In the same year, the constitution was amended to make all land national,

²⁵ Mugabe was the former rebel leader of ZANU, the guerilla group that is most likely responsible for Netsai's accident.

which took away all property rights and legitimized violence against white landowners. By 2006, hyperinflation in Zimbabwe was at a record 29 percent, with unemployment up to 80 percent.

The specter of these changes in the nation haunt *The Book of Not*. In an interview with *Story Club*, Dangarembga notes that part of the difficulty in writing more books in the series lies in the political quagmire of Zimbabwe:

I was really wondering how to tell the story of what happened afterwards [...] in terms of Tambudzai's timeline [it] was the liberation struggle. So that meant getting into some really awkward things to analyse. And Tambudzai herself still had to discover these things, and this is what you find in *Nervous Conditions*, that Nyasha is always telling Tambudzai, "Life is not as rosy as you think it is, and even if you think you're moving out, maybe you're not moving out, maybe you're just moving into something else."

[....]

[T]hat whole idea of paralysis...In the third book, it can even be deemed to be something that characterises the whole society that she's living in.

Which is where we are now, actually.

[....]

Remember, Tambudzai keeps saying in *Nervous Conditions*, "I won't forget, I won't forget." She is forced to remember in *A Mournable Body* [...] she is forced to situate herself in the political here and now. ("An Interview")

And so, we see that the gaps in Dangarembga's work constitute a second way of opening up adolescence as a place of possibility. Van de Ruit literally makes readers fill in the gaps between books, ultimately creating a path to read the adolescent as an actor with some agency over his ability to stay in the adolescent space, but also his agency to participate in larger histories. Dangarembga intertwines the personal and political for Tambu, but in the present of the books. The gaps in publication serve to remind readers of other, more current, violences. In this case, there is a two-fold reading of historic time on top of the closed geography of the boarding school series novel. By weaving these two threads together, time can now be read as something that happens both across history, but also within a set moment. This reading releases the adolescent from the strictures of temporary temporality, while also allowing for the adolescent to exist in a closed space that engenders its own meaning. Thus, Dangarembga offers a way of engaging with an even longer term of history without asking the adolescent to "grow up" into that history.

These novel series employ characteristics of the *roman-fleuve* in two ways. First, the longer narrative is punctuated both temporally and spatially, reminding the reader of the monotony of boarding school life. This slowing down of the narrative dulls the idea of political intrusions, sexuality, independence, and intellectual growth. Likewise, Zimbabwe's and South Africa's independence movements are presented through the novel structure as a similarly tedious and uneven process that dulls any potential acting out by the adolescent country that might threaten the established "adult" nations. Although the structure of the *roman-fleuve* appears to slow down and fracture the established narrative of growth and change, the temporal and spatial punctuations and lack of definite ending invite readers to respond to adolescence as an imaginative period with infinite

potentiality. It is within this space of infinite possibility that we can then begin to reimagine how the adolescent nation itself is created and recreated as something both outside of and inside of the notion of transient adolescence and begin thinking about that same nation as transcendent.

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