

Picking the Deadlock of Legitimacy

Dionne Brand's "noise like the
world cracking"

Theories of legitimacy restrict much analysis of Dionne Brand's writing. These arguments depend on a self-other split. An authoritative "Black and Female" self arises in the colonizer's language (Sarbadhikary 118), and a resisting subject emerges in the silences of sexist and racist narrative (Gingell 50). Both arguments rely on Western notions of a split self: essential being struggles against its objectification in language. The belief that language, a social construct, misrepresents pre-linguistic or pre-colonial origins makes the subject's struggle legitimate. In *No Language Is Neutral*, Brand begins to trouble originary displacement through painful belonging in "exile" (Zackodnik 194), although exile still suggests longing for origin. Such resistance to Western neo-colonialism remains bound to the self-other binary intrinsic to European modernism, so Brand jettisons both the self and the other in *In Another Place, Not Here*. Breaking the Western deadlock for resistance, the characters reject the legitimacy of origin, community, and self-identity: "And belonging? They were past it. It was not wide enough, not gap enough, not distance enough. Not rip enough, belonging. Belonging was too small, too small for their magnificent rage" (42). In *In Another Place, Not Here*, Brand criticizes two things: the colonization of bodies and identity politics, which recolonizes resistance. In a fusion of Western deconstruction and postcolonial analysis, Brand uses absent originary subjects, an acknowledged illegitimacy of representation, and disunified social relations to criticize neo-colonial values of legitimacy and create alternative subjectivities.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's anti-Oedipal theory of the rhizome helps to elucidate part of Brand's non-essentialist methodology. In A

Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Deleuze and Guattari argue that multiple territorial and deterritorializing elements anarchically destabilize meaning in any signifying system (9). In Brand's novel, the territorial black, lesbian, Caribbean, and Canadian bodies/stories raise cultural specificity. However, as I argue later, the multiple, contradictory, and at times impoverished alignments of characters and discourse create "lines of flight" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 3) from a homogeneous black lesbian Caribbean-Canadian community or individual identity. Rhizomes evade the essentialism of speaking subjects and representational language because the original parts change as they interact (8). Refuting coherent subjects, objects, and points of location (8), Deleuze and Guattari emphasize mobile "becomings" related to irresolvable difference within "alliance" (237–38). Multiple fragments and surfaces of language counter the unconscious depth of a subject, its essence. Deleuze and Guattari argue that decentralized knowledge, social relations, and subjectivities proliferate in the "micropolitics of the social field" (7), rather than in the macropolitics of identity groups and Oedipal identification. In the absence of "homogeneous linguistic communi[ties]" (7), desire functions as "a revolutionary machine" (*Anti-Oedipus* 293) as it leaps between previously disconnected elements of territorial and deterritorialized language and unties normative connections. In *In Another Place, Not Here*, the fragmentary connection and derailment of discourses deconstruct identity politics and produce new heterogeneous subjectivity: lesbian dread (Rastafari insurgency) that defies categorical identity.

Like the theory of the rhizome, Brand's anti-colonial politics is premised on the absence of legitimate definitions, origins, and self-identity. However, the destructive context of slavery in the African diaspora contradicts the liberating loss of self that Deleuze and Guattari suggest. While Deleuze and Guattari use the Bedouin, wolves, and women quite metaphorically to promote freedom in masculinist and European thought, Brand develops a two-pronged attack on legitimacy that accounts for social inequity. She undercuts exclusionary logic through the absence of legitimate selves, while she witnesses the regulation of power through the violent destruction of the self in the non-Western other. Thus her attack on the intending subject, the object, and authority suggests theories of legitimacy restrain revolutionary thought and subjectivity, but Deleuze and Guattari's motifs of self-flagellating masochism (*A Thousand Plateaus* 150–51) and of a desire to move beyond all "molar" political alignments¹ reflect a privileged, socially legitimate

subject. The contradictory pain and hope in absent selves and origins are crucial in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* and *A Map to the Door of No Return* as well, suggesting the centrality of this concept in her recent work.

The absence of originary subjects creates affirmative resistance in *In Another Place, Not Here* but also has roots in earlier material. The archaeological find, Brand writes, “is not shell, is shackle!” (*No Language Is Neutral* 15). Caribbean origin becomes abduction into slavery rather than pre-Oedipal, pre-linguistic, and pre-social bliss. Such slavery also metaphorically relates to cultural imperialism. The West’s desire for the other demands the non-West be and desire the other, desire the West (Spivak, *Post-Colonial* 8). In colonial discourse, the proprietary European self (subject) names the black Caribbean through binary reflection: the other as object and chattel possession. As C.L.R. James writes, enslaved black family members would be distributed with the rest of the goods when an estate was divided (16). Through Verlia’s brief reference to James (*In Another* 209), Brand links Verlia’s and Adela’s suicides to the negation of self (and other) in the mass suicides of the San Domingo (Haiti) slaves. As James notes, the act depleted the invader’s potential goods (16). Verlia is “laughing . . . weightless and deadly” when she leaps from the cliff to the sea, avoiding the American assault on Grenada (246). She echoes the resistant suicide of the Kalinago (Caribs). Rather than submit to the 1651 French invasion, they jumped from the cliffs at Le Morne des Sauteurs, Grenada (Honychurch; LeSauteur). These cultural intertexts resonate throughout the novel, pushing the deconstruction of self and its others into postcolonial and anti-colonial resistance.

The black women dissolve the self/other and subject/object binaries: Mirelda Josefena loses her proper name and becomes known as “the woman Elizete was given to,” Elizete loses self as she becomes wood lice (32), and Verlia and Adela commit suicide. As Adela reveals, the loss of self destroys the subject’s power to name the object, the other: “she decide that this place was not nowhere and is so she call it. Nowhere. She say nothing here have no name. She never name none of her children, nor the man she had was to sleep with and she never answer to the name that they give she which was Adela” (18). Adela’s generation “abandoned distance, abandoned time and saw everything” (43), suggesting what Homi Bhabha calls the lethal gaze of the evil eye that “defers the object of the look” (55). The evil eye “extinguish[es] both presence and the present” (Bhabha 56), thus undercutting the speaking subject’s essential intent as well as the present cultural performance of inadequate, objectified language. Consequently, the

evil eye becomes a sign that is “anterior to any *site* of meaning . . . mak[ing] all cultural languages ‘foreign’ to themselves” (Bhabha 164). Brand twists what Bhabha calls the master’s “narcissistic” and “ambivalent identification of love and hate” (149) through Adela’s evil eye:

After all that they say she kill the man that buy she and keep she in that place, for she look him full in his face until he dead. . . . They say she could work good obeah but she say is not obeah what kill him, is his own wicked mind what make him die in his wicked name. She had spit all his evil into that circle and he could not resist himself. (18)

In this description of Adela’s agency, Brand criticizes the dominant subject’s gaze without inverting the subject/object binary. Adela mirrors the contradictory exclusion and assimilation of the other that form the ‘proper self.’ Her suicide fulfills the master’s (self’s) violent desire and, conversely, annihilates the spiritual, economic, and cultural elevation she provides him as the other. Such loss of self undercuts binary legitimacy while still criticizing its violent, dominant deployment.

Brand challenges the originary legitimacy of pre-Oedipal subjects and the social legitimacy of Oedipal subjects. The child is “not a gift” (28) that enables a pre-Oedipal flow of bodily sensations and resists the objectifying Oedipal symbolic. “The woman Elizete was given to” has “tied up her womb in brackish water” (31) to ensure she has no children. She protests, “‘God make all Adela’ children woman . . . and now they come and drop a girl child on me. You see how that woman curse we” (31). Rather than resisting linguistic objectification, mother-daughter bonds objectify. The labouring black female body produces offspring who contribute to imperial gain. Rather than orgasmic excess, the child drains the mother’s resources: she is “just a mouth to feed” (28). Brand’s postcolonial critique of psychoanalysis evokes Gayatri Spivak’s condemnation of the “ferocious Western Europeanism” and an “implicit sort of positivism” in Julia Kristeva’s “naturaliz[ation] of the *chora*, . . . of the pre-semiotic” (*Outside* 17).

Verlia and Elizete want to escape the body that ties them to animality through racist, sexist, and capitalist commodification. Verlia would “like to live, exist or be herself in some other place, less confining, less pinned down, less tortuous, less fleshy to tell the truth” (127). Elizete thinks, “Heavy as Hell. Her body. She doesn’t want a sense of it while she’s living on the street” (54). As Lynette Hunter argues, psychoanalysis naturalizes the regulation of capital, the commodification of desire, and the value coding of bodies. Displacement and objectification become inescapable conditions of

the human psyche. The conflation of psychoanalytic and neo-colonial *others* relegates the disempowered to “the unconscious, the body, the private. . . the ‘natural,’ the ‘intuitive,’ the ‘primitive,’ the ‘not-civilized,’ the not-articulated” (Hunter 133). With no green card to prove her symbolic legitimacy to the white law-of-the-father, Elizete lives in a city where language can kill, wound, rape, and impregnate black female bodies with impunity: “‘Immigration!’ What a word. That word could kill, oui. That word could make a woman lay down with she legs wide open and she mind shut” (80–81). By defining the ‘real’ as unspeakable corporeality, psychoanalysis subordinates the inscription of social value, regulation, and desire as necessarily inadequate. Brand, on the other hand, emphasizes the reality of language that makes bodies jump from windows and submit to abuse.

Postcolonial politics meets deconstruction as Brand exposes the plenitude of origin (pre-linguistic or pre-colonial) as a Western fiction that sublates discontent in the desire for a lost past. Susan Gingell notes that Brand encountered the “physical and psychological poverty that are the legacy of imperialism” when she returned to Trinidad (51). Verlia finds the same poverty when she returns to the Caribbean (not to Trinidad, the place of her birth, but to a strategically unnamed Grenada). She says, “All the names of places here are as old as slavery” (211). Without the plenitude of origin, Plato’s argument that language is a tool to remember God, the original speaking subject, falls apart (Derrida 76–77). Rather than remember origin, Adela cultivates forgetting in a Derridean “desire for orphanhood and patricidal subversion” (Derrida 77): “every different place they put her she take an opportunity to remember all the things that she was going to forget. For Adela was remembering that and long before that, back to the ship” (21). Adela undercuts original memory as legitimate pre-Oedipal intent. As one of the first Africans brought to the Caribbean, she becomes an origin that is not: a foremother of forgetting, a beginning in absence and negation.

Brand also defers the social coding of Oedipal identification that forms citizens. “The woman Elizete was given to” becomes another evil eye that annihilates subjects, objects, and discourse (Bhabha 164) when she loses her proper name. The name, Mirelda Josefena, appears only once—in a genealogy beginning with “Adela and then . . . plenty, with no name”—and follows “Baby” (35), another improper name. The genealogy ends with the words “Mal jo” (35), truncating the Spanish words for the evil eye, *mal de ojo*. The sound “Mal jo” suggests an abbreviation and mutation of her personal name, signing the absence of a social subject. This lack of social inte-

gration prohibits Oedipal identification. Brand writes, “Here, there was no belonging that was singular, no need to store up lineage or count it” (38). The three women—Adela, Elizete’s mother who cannot provide, or who perhaps simply “forgot her there” (38), and “the woman Elizete was given to” by no one because her mother forgot her under a samaan tree (38)—negate the Oedipal model of motherhood for social identification:

She spill and spill and so she mothered not a one. She only see their face as bad luck and grudge them the milk from her breast. She eat paw-paw seed until it make them sick in she womb. The charm she tried to use against each one was left half done in them so, till all of she generations have a way so that nothing is right with them neither. (19)

On one hand, the material conditions of children with “bad mind and goat mouth” (19) and afflictions such as Verlia’s insomnia criticize the imperialism that engenders such anti-maternal practice. On the other, Brand’s anti-Oedipal strategies derail the criticism into a productive maternal genealogy of negative theology, unnamings, desiring abortion, decoding, displacing, deforming, and mutating.

The absence of Oedipal subjects begins to change social construction. Elizete thinks, “there is names for things,” but she does not know them and “can not be sure of the truth of them” (19). She inherits an anti-Oedipal rejection of origins from Adela who “had to make her mind empty to conceive it” (20). Such negation changes Elizete: “How I reach here is one skill I learn hard. The skill of forgetfulness” (13). She begins to deform the master’s tongue: “Slippery throat peas, wet sea fern, idle whistle bird, have no time bird. Is a lot of bird to name—busy wing, better walking, come by chance, wait and see, only by cocoa, only by cane, scissor’s tail, fire throat, wait for death” (23–24). The absent grammatical subject reflects Elizete’s distance from both pre-Oedipal origins of meaning (the speaking subject) and Oedipal objectification in language (the social subject). Rather than identify objects, Elizete names the birds in their movement, connections, and “becomings.” Abandoning Oedipal desire (in which language inadequately substitutes for the original), Elizete begins to lose abjection: “Nothing barren here, Adela, in my eyes everything full of fullness, everything yielding. . . . Adela, the samaan was my mother. She spread and wave and grow thicker. Is you I must thank for that. Where you see nowhere I must see everything. Now I calculating” (24). Such calculation raises Derrida’s argument that mathematics, a sign system designed to supplement memory (100), actually displaces the origin (81) and the dominant cultural

values the fictional origin embodies. Absent original meaning changes the substitute into all there is, as Elizete says about desire: “I love that shudder between her legs, love the plain wash and sea of her, the swell and bloom of her softness. And is all. And if is all I could do on the earth, is all” (5). Anti-Oedipal desire negates identity, originary substitution, and unified concepts or objects. No longer a substitute for the original, the samaan tree that partially shelters Elizete *is* a mother. Without full containment by the subjects or objects of neo-colonial abjection, anti-Oedipal desire allows Elizete to grow.

In the loss of discursive containment, freedom and revolutionary strategy have no originary meaning or organizing ends. The American invasion of Grenada to ensure “democracy” (read: the military enforcement of capitalism against Grenada’s growing socialism) enacts the “*menace of mimicry*” that “disrupts its authority” (Bhabha 88) by suppressing the democratic will of the People’s Revolutionary Government. Liberty and democracy are also impossible to define within the smaller identity groups. Rastafari Isaiah beats Elizete, sundering common Caribbean struggle against racist capitalism. A white woman verbally assaults Verlia, tearing gender cohesion: Verlia “expects to find reassurance [but] . . . had not expected it [the letters KKK] engraved on her breast. She had not even expected it in a woman” (173). Concerning similarities of race, gender, sexual orientation, and Caribbean-Canadian nations, Verlia, Elizete, and Abena disagree about appropriate politics. Abena cautions Verlia to be careful and gives up hope for radical change. She says to Elizete, “No revolution is coming baby, no fine bright morning. . . . You cannot last, you cannot out-vigil this jumbie, honey” (110). Elizete initially resents the impracticality of Verlia’s Marxist analysis: “I walk past because I have no time for no woman talking. It don’t mean nothing. . . . Revolution, my ass. Let foolish old people believe she. Is only them have time to sit down and get wrap up in her mouth and think Oliviere and them will let go any land” (13–14). Rather than defining a liberating end or a beginning that has been corrupted, Brand deconstructs the legitimacy of identity politics and explodes the struggle into multiple, changeable, and even contradictory fronts.

The uneasy alliance of anti-foundational coalition politics also challenges personal identity at a microscopic level. Even though Brand, for the most part, characterizes Verlia as the theoretical embodiment of air and Elizete as the material embodiment of earth, territorial and deterritorial alignments continually derail identity. Brand generally associates Verlia with Marxist

analysis that is deterritorialized and abstract in its global scale. While Verlia occasionally engages in guerrilla warfare, she discusses, more than enacts, the “transla[tion] of theory” into the “crucible of practice” (207). Verlia refers to a wide range of nationalist, independentist, proletarian, race, gender, psychoanalytic, grassroots, and cultural struggles (157–61, 175, 206–09) that form a rhizome of Marxist and Marxist-influenced thought.

Territorial alignments, however, cut through abstraction and Marxist theory. Her leap off the cliff resonates not only with the historic act of the Kalinago (Caribs) and Adela’s suicide to resist enslavement but also with the “dialectic culture of the West Indies” (Chamberlin 56). An intense symbol of life in her death, Verlia leaps between the liminal borders of the real and the ideal. She echoes the “realistic attention to the conditions of poverty and suffering,” on the one hand, and “visionary idealism,” on the other, that characterize Rastafari and the “life and literary imagination of the West Indies” (Chamberlin 56–57). Caribbean spiritualism marks the abstract intensity when Verlia “run in the air without moving . . . all the time moving faster than the last thing she say,” and materializes by “transport” (bus) at the “junction” (7). People “flying’ [to heaven] or travelling quickly from place to place” are common in Jamaican Myalism and revivalist worship (Chamberlin 56). Religious and Marxist doctrine meet tensely and tentatively as Verlia’s “elsewhere” remains the material here: “She didn’t want to be anywhere but now, nowhere but the what to do about” (183). The religious allusions become part of territorial narrative rather than theological belief. By combining the religious and Marxist narratives that should not meet, Verlia changes the real: “Verl is sure of what she make in her own mind and what she make didn’t always exist” (7). The displacements of Marxist idealism into spiritualism and of spiritualism into narrative create intense deterritorializing *jouissance* that keeps Verlia’s abstract characterization culturally specific.

Verlia also signs a territory that is female, black, and educated more by Caribbean than by European culture:

She wanted to say something like Che. . . . *You are nothing but an instrument of the ruling class, a brutish automaton lacking humanity, used to repress the body and spirit of the people.* . . . She wanted to say something to read him back into his mother’s womb. . . . When it came out of her mouth it wasn’t only out of her mouth but first her finger marking his face, an old gesture marking an enemy, and then she spat on the floor in front of him. “Never have a day’s peace. Look for me everywhere.” Such an old curse creeping out of her. She did not remember learning the gesture. (184)

Her body and language displace the Marxist homogeneity in Guevara’s

“non-territorial” and “vehicular” language of “bureaucracy” (Söderlind 9). Bureaucratic language, while posing as “expedien[t] . . . pure information” based on the “division of labour” (Söderlind 9), deterritorializes linguistic bodies into an impossible universal neutral (“*the body and spirit of the people*”). Verlia’s translation into territorial language emphasizes cultural, embodied difference. Combining curse words, spitting, and a voodoo-like marking of the face, Verlia uses untranslatable sacred language: the tenor (meaning) cannot be separated from the vehicle (sign) (Söderlind 9, 12). Her resistance to universal Marxist language echoes the spitting resistance elsewhere to other Western theories (colonial, psychoanalytic, Deleuzian, or feminist). Deconstructing the self/other binary, Adela “spit[s]” back the master’s evil (18), but her selflessness is abject. As the “spitting image” of Adela (35), Elizete dreams “I spit milk each time my mouth open” (12). The relation to the white-inked (m)other milk of Hélène Cixous’ *l’écriture féminine*² is unmistakable though twisted critically in anger. These links to theory associated with other territorial characters contradict Brand’s dominant inscription of Verlia as air, abstract analytic energy, and deterritorialized global politics. While the contradictions defer an individual’s coherence (essence or construction), they embody cultural specificity that resists global assimilation by the abstract rhizome. Consequently, Brand’s deconstruction of identity is not politically deadening. Further, the multiplicity in Verlia enables connection with the different struggles of Elizete.

In her territorial language and body, Elizete inscribes an earthy contrast to Verlia’s airy abstraction. However, as Elizete crosses between territorial discourses without fidelity to any, she deterritorializes concepts and develops an activist poetics. According to Deleuze and Guattari, voice (body) and writing continually cut through each other in territorial representation (*Anti-Oedipus* 203). Such interaction challenges the subordination and subsequent erasure of the body in language (*Anti-Oedipus* 205). Territorial language increases rhizomatic movement:

[T]he chain of territorial signs is continually jumping from one element to another; radiating in all directions; . . . including disjunctions; consuming remains; extracting surplus values; connecting words, bodies, and suffering, and formulas, things, and affects . . . , always in a polyvocal usage—a way of jumping that cannot be contained within an order of meaning, still less within a signifier. (*Anti-Oedipus* 204)

While Verlia represents such territorial leaping, both at the junction and off the cliff, Elizete’s character, language, and thought fully enact its practice.

Marked by the scars of the cane field and patriarchal discourse, Elizete strikes back in the arc of her arm, one with the machete, sweeping between earth and air, nature and construction, in a “gesture taking up all the sky, slicing through blue and white and then the green stalk and the black earth. . . . metal and dust and flesh . . . whirring, seeming to change the air” (202–03). Through arcs, tunnels, and points that connect and derail thought, Elizete deconstructs the stability of discourse and identity. She tunnels into the earth of the quarry to defuse the power of Isaiah’s assault (11) and rearranges language in the wood-lice holes in the walls “where the wood was softened by chewing” (32) to alter her abject social identity.

Destabilizing and leaping between the heterogeneous elements of past narratives, Elizete begins to create new sense. Her negation of self undercuts Oedipal abjection. In Oedipal theory, “identification seeks to produce a [body] ego . . . in compliance with the symbolic position” (Butler 105). The “failure to comply with the law produces instability of the ego at the level of the imaginary” (Butler 105–06) and “abject homosexuality” (Butler 97). While abjection may be eroticized and resistant to normative heterosexuality, it does not change the law: “The imaginary practice of identification must itself be understood as a double movement: in citing the symbolic, an identification (re)invokes and (re)invests the symbolic law, seeks recourse to it as a constituting authority that precedes its imaginary instancing” (Butler 108). “The woman Elizete was given to” swears against these Oedipal phantasms of subject formation, but Adela’s abjection persistently speaks through the subject/object split (“I”/“she”):

Her mouth taste the cool charm of a stone past and I determine to stop this imperfect persistence of flesh jostling the air. Now this time I . . . she dreamless, she . . . I done imagining. Leave is all I could think to do. My hand don’t follow me, every piece of she have a mind by itself. I . . . she say is so things is. I dreamless. I see my hair taken to the four corners of the earth. The parts of me fly ‘way, my head could not hold them together. (36; ellipses in original)

Rejecting the Oedipal foundations of identity, the imaginary, and the symbolic, Elizete reformulates the woman’s words. She links the disorganization of bodies to the disorganization of language. Through the unstable referent of “she” and “I,” Elizete becomes an Adela who is not Adela’s original or the abject woman: “Adela’ voice hovered on their hot cold lips, the two of them, one standing at the wall tracing wood lice the other her head in bay rum, her mouth working coconut to milk” (37). In the maternal genealogy of intoxicated forgetting, the absent sign of possession (*s*) in the demotic

“Adela” becomes rhizomatic potential in the contradictory “hot cold,” the coconut as milk, and the absence of legitimate ownership over signification.

Through the pronoun “she,” Brand connects “the woman Elizete was given to” with Elizete, who twists the woman’s resistance to the Oedipal symbolic with the power of negation in Adela’s evil eye:

[The woman protests] . . . how she had been left a head that pained her and that would only stop for her hands in the earth, and how throwing words was no use to a woman long dead and gone and who never was here; and how the trouble with the dead is they don’t care and this world don’t mean nothing to them; and how she’d been left a tongue that any devil want to light on and take liberty. She falls asleep standing up before the woman releases her, dropped and half awake she murmurs more names for Adela—donkey eye stone, blue finger yam. (37)

The third person exists only in language as a spoken subject, not a speaking subject. Consequently, “she” has no intent. Following territorial derailments, Elizete ignores the woman’s comment about “no use,” as well as the protest against “a tongue any devil want to light on,” and begins “throwing words” and stones, or “summoning the spirits, getting on their nerves” (34). She follows linguistic drift to ease abjection. The woman’s earlier reference to the ritual power of Yoruba stones (Simpson 1207) “the cool charm of a stone past” (36)—loses nostalgic fertility and becomes, in Elizete’s language, a barren “donkey eye stone” (37). Without desire for originary spirits or intending subjects, Elizete’s territorial liberties become the creative unchained leaping of a devilish tongue between multiple unstable bodies and languages.

Elizete takes pieces of Rastafari, Yoruba, and Christian discourse to decolonize the subject in a mobile “avenging grace” (203). While maintaining cultural specificity, the fragments develop rhizomatic connection, contradiction, mutation, and derailment that resist assimilation and create new subjectivity. She draws on a Rastafari violent purification: “I dream of taking his neck with a cutlass. . . . I imagine it as a place with thick and dense vine and alive like veins under my feet. I dream the vine, green and plump, blood running through it and me too running running, spilling blood. . . . Is like nowhere else. I destroying anything in my way. I want it to be peaceful there” (12). The return of the Sons of David to Zion, a land violently cleansed of the Babylonian Western colonizers, partially informs Elizete’s thought. Contradictions, however, arise in the similarity of the scars Elizete receives from Isaiah, her sexist Rastafari partner, and capitalism: “All over from one thing and another, one time or another, is how Isaiah whip them [her legs] for running, is how he wanted to break me from bad habit. . . . Is how the cane cut them from working. Same rhythm” (55). Since anti-

capitalism infuses Rastafari politics (DeCosmo 150), the equation of the scars creates irreconcilable contradiction. Through Isaiah, who reads the Bible (11), Brand alludes to the book of Isaiah, which supports Rastafari protest against the occupation of Judah by “aliens” (Isaiah 1.7), but censures Elizete’s sexuality. Biblical Isaiah rants against sodomy (3.9), proclaims glory will come when women submit to patriarchal rule and “name” (4.1–2), and attacks women’s minds and bodies: the Lord will smite with a scab / the heads of the daughters of Zion, / and the Lord will lay bare their secret parts” (3.17). The Lord’s scabs become Elizete’s scars. While the Rastafari intertext inscribes anti-colonial resistance, feminism and homosexuality remain incommensurable with hetero-patriarchal justice.

Corresponding with Rastafari assimilation of pre-colonial African cultures, Elizete’s thought includes Yoruba deities. Oddly, though, Elizete’s first- and third-person narrators use them against Rastafari discourse, especially its sexism. Shango’s talismanic stone and “moral agency” (Wolff and Warren 36) appear in Elizete’s protest that Isaiah “cut at the red stone in me” (11). Additionally, “the salmon dank sides” of the sand quarry (11) suggest Oya. Like Shango’s, Oya’s symbols include the colour red and the thunderbolt, but water and vengeance (Iverem), which troubles the single perspective of justice, are two of Oya’s aspects. The fiery Shango and watery Oya also meet when Elizete’s narrator describes Verlia throwing the Molotov cocktail into an Aryan bookstore: “She needed fire now. A raging in the throat like water” (97). As the Rastafari and Yoruba narratives of justice and vengeance meet living and working conditions, Elizete begins to develop an analysis of racist and sexist oppression. Rather than rely on an essential subject that struggles against its objectification in language, Brand shows the creation of Elizete’s thought as bits of narrative press against each other.

Oya’s symbol of the cutlass and her dance, “one hand on the waist, the other trembling in the wind” (Iverem), create points of contact for the feminist struggle of Elizete and the Marxist struggle of Verlia. When Verlia says, “Sister,” after Elizete dreams of vengeance against Isaiah, Elizete hears a sound “like bracelets” in the breeze: “Sister. Silvery, silvery the wind take it” (14). Oya is the “goddess of edges, the dynamic interplay between surfaces, of transformation from one state to another” (Gleason, qtd. in Renk 105). While Oya’s narrative enables a feminist alteration of the Rastafari and Marxist narratives, Brand defers its dominance. Elizete comes from an anti-maternal genealogy that contradicts Oya’s aspect as the thunder mother (Iverem), and Verlia defies Oya’s role as Shango’s wife (Iverem): Verlia “hates

the sticky domesticity lurking behind them [the bed, the kitchen, the key]" (204). Rather than suggest return to Oya, Brand's allusions pose Yoruba alternatives to Western and Rastafari narratives while simultaneously resisting the nostalgic legitimacy of pre-linguistic or pre-colonial essence.

The potential for "grace" to decolonize bodies is vital, but Elizete pushes the meaning from Christian theology to movement between discourses without fidelity to any. Elizete says in the first words of the novel, "Grace. Is grace, yes. And I take it quiet, quiet, like thieving sugar" (3). The theft of Christian discourse is, perhaps, the most extreme transgression in the novel. Drawn from the water (Exodus 2.2.10), patriarchal Moses resonates in Elizete's Rastafari perception of Verlia as "brilliant" from her sweat and looking "as if she come out of a river" (15) at the same time that Elizete's lesbian desire contravenes the suggestion. Like Moses, Verlia's body and gaze hold the possibility of release: "I could see she head running ahead of we, she eyes done cut all the cane" (15). However, unlike the Rastafari translation of Christ into Haile Selassie (Redington), Elizete and her narrator's references to Christ become empty interjections: "In trying to get to whatever place was in between—Jesus Christ!—she was dying" (105). Kathleen Renk argues that the transgression of mythological systems enables Brand to evoke a black female agency for change when a character from another story calls to the Christian god, but Oya answers instead (105). *In Another Place, Not Here* troubles teleology further. Elizete evokes no god, but echoes of Haile Selassie, Shango, Oya, Christ, Moses, and several women—Adela in the absence, Verlia who is Elizete's "grace" (5), and the absent character Grace³—answer through the leap of territorial language.

A potentially decolonizing desire develops in the anti-Oedipal leap of multiple, uncontrolled "partial objects [that] lack nothing" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 295). Problems with Oedipal desire have long troubled lesbian and feminist theory, and Brand's deconstruction of self/other does reflect Marilyn Farwell's view that "sameness and differences" in lesbian fiction and poetry avoid the phallic construction of a speaking subject and an object of desire (87). However, Brand radically pushes beyond Farwell's integration of these concepts into "identity politics" (23) and a communal "I" (134). As each other's "grace" (3, 203), Verlia and Elizete contradict identification with the self-same. Instead, desire leaps from a point of similarity into difference as a "bridge" (16), an "arc" (246), or "tunnels" (32) link and derail the discourses of earth and air, theory and practice, Marxism and feminism, and poetry and analysis.

As Brand moves beyond identity, categorical difference destabilizes. Subjects, verbs, and objects lose definition: “Always the door creaks, a dog barks, a frog’s well throats inky, a curtain moves in a breath of wind, a tree yields to a breeze, the constant flute of a *mot mot* hesitates and she [Verlia] thinks someone is out there” (121). Farwell’s shifting subject/object relations and communal identity give way in Brand’s text to the unstable linguistic presence of “I” and “I,” “you,” “she,” “her,” “and the “*mot mot*,” name, voice-sound, or movement in the absence of any stable or originary subject. Elizete thinks,

Better she than me. Yes. Leave is all I . . . she could think of. All the marks on she . . . me is for thinking of leaving. Each time she . . . I see leaving I . . . you could not stop it. As if my hand was out of control or heading for where it ought to be, as easy as if it was coming to rest at my . . . she side. Leave . . . I . . . she ought to be a woman her dress tail disappearing toward the dense rain forest of Tamana going to my life, she marronage, rain, drenched, erasing footfalls. (36, ellipses in original)

As Elizete becomes a multiplicity of “I,” “she,” “you,” and “her,” the female subject/object pronouns displace the patriarchal “I and I” of Rastafari, as well as its essentialist sense of “self-discovery” and community “with JAH present” (Redington). Consequently, the *marronage* becomes a guerrilla attack through poststructuralist language. The originating subject and the object of representation disappear, leaving “signs” that “are empty and slap wet against the face” (70) but decolonize sense.

Particularly during Elizete’s descent into the volcanic La Soufrière, Brand resists the enclosure of representational language. Contradictions such as “walk fast girl, be still” (107) defy logic. Representational substance disappears as “The fifteen-seater poised, plunged into the hot bed of La Soufrière, bird instead of plane” (105). Borders blur: “She did not know the end of the plane and the beginning of the clouds” (106). Self and other meet: “She had . . . slipped into Verlia’s skin until she could not tell who had died and whatever she was living and touching was another life and numb to the bone” (105–06). Elizete crosses between body and language in her desire “to dance the mash potatoes with her [Verlia] in the well of some garden” (105). The plural “potatoes” resists recuperation by the dance called “the mash potato,” thus emphasizing both the territorial (food) and deterritorialized (language) drives of the mouth (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 19–20). Through the poverty and excess of signification in Brand’s language, “nothing remains but intensities,” a strategy of minority writing that Deleuze and Guattari argue resists the cultural encoding of the majority’s language (*Kafka* 19).

Allegorical displacement also “unhinge[s] the given symbolic order . . . [and] evoke[s] a peculiar decentring of modern power” (Koeppnick 61–62). In “the volcanic garden” and “the sulphurous mouth” (105) of *La Soufrière*, the context of volcanic beauty and the American coup prohibit resolution into a simple paradise and hell. The territorial mouth spits back the allusion, just as Verlia “spat on the floor” (184) of her jailer. Symbolism returns as deterritorialized interjections that are full of emotion but empty of content. For example, Christian redemption becomes “Jesus Christ!—she was dying” (105), and the undetermined symbolism of Verlia’s repeated dream of “pillow trees” becomes “exclamation points” (126, 246). The source of life and heart of civilization in the word *well* becomes emphatic hesitation: “And the woman with the bucket, well at the heart there was no bucket, and no woman either” (41). Such displacement resists colonizing inscriptions of the subject by increasing the level of disjointed noise in the language.

The cultivation of noise not only derails the minority text from the majority language but also troubles coherent minority communities that create legitimate interpretations. As Françoise Lionnet notes, the difference between noise and communication depends on familiarity and focus. If one speaks the language or answers the interruption of a telephone, noise changes into communication (Lionnet 331–32). Brand removes the gaze from neo-colonial imperialism, which becomes the “everlasting noise” of the enormous capitalist “machine” (69), the noise of “*po, po, po, po, pound*” (246) and “the grit, grit, groaning bombs’ groan” (244). Rather than refocus the gaze in the minority community, however, Brand inscribes agency for new meaning in the “murmuring nothing” or noise of Adela and “the woman Elizete was given to” (26). The American bombing is answered by more noise as “the sound of bees and cicadas singing tautly tightened the air. . . . Their singing thick as electric wires . . . suspended the island” (117). The electric charge in alliteration, rhythm, and repetition echoes Verlia’s body leaping and shot full of holes: an “electric current, the sign of lightning left after lightning, a faultless arc to the deep turquoise deep” (247). The physical sound of poetic language, rather than the gaze of a speaking subject, temporarily connects the insects and Verlia in unresolved resistance. Body and language cut through each other, destabilizing singular focus. The discordant nouns and verbs—“the bees barking, the cicada shouts” (245)—increase the incoherent yet resistant energy. The beauty of resistance and pain of slaughter commingle in the absence of a singular gaze. While Brand witnesses the devastation, a heterogeneous “noise like the world cracking”

(245) begins to create an anti-utopian hope that defers complete abjection in its multiple resonances.⁴

Brand does not romantically erase communal loss. Elizete initially feels devastated: “She wanted her [Abena] to know without saying . . . to remember . . . in that darkness with those words between them blooming” (111–12). Communication needs at least one other to legitimize knowledge by agreeing on a set of criteria (Lyotard 19). However, Elizete tells Abena, “You wasn’t enough and I wasn’t there” (240). The speech act moves away from the legitimacy of communal interpretation and into multiple contexts. Verlia says to Elizete, “I have work here. Nothing is safe. . . . I cannot take care of you like that; a man can promise things that will never happen not because he is lying but because they are within his possibilities in the world. . . . I can’t promise you” (72–73). The refusal contradicts J.L. Austin’s example of promised realization in the words “I do” performed at the wedding ceremony (Lyotard 9). Unlike Austin’s stable performative context for meaning, the absence of a contract between the speaker, the spoken, and the addressee means there is no safe space.

The contract, even within the shifting pronouns of lesbian writing, resurrects self/other violence. As Elizabeth Meese argues, the shifting pronouns seduce the reader (86). Significantly, Brand equates seduction with the colonization of desire. Verlia wants sugar, even though “the smoke from the [cane] factory so sweet it stink” (84) from slavery and present labour practices: “Sometimes she would wake up with a need to taste sugar. . . . She hates it in the blood, it tastes like saliva, sweet at the bottom of her tongue. It makes her mouth spring water, yet she cannot understand why really . . .” (147). Seduction creates a contract in language, inscribing and regulating desire. As Meese writes, “When I say ‘I love you,’ I want my words to perform their function, to turn you on” (86). In contrast, Verlia says, “Look Elizete, don’t try and seduce me. I don’t believe in seduction” (74). Assimilation into racist Sudbury is “donut smelling walking death sepulchral ice” (149). Such opposition suggests the potential to decolonize desire in the acknowledged absence of common ground between the speaker, the spoken, and the addressee.

Without the contracts of Oedipal subjects and communities, a language of noise, like Deleuzian rhizomatic music (*Thousand Plateaus* 11–12), emphasizes nonlinear, heterogeneous, and even incoherent sense. Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the flows of the rhizome rather than “points or positions” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 8). Brand, however, follows the political

principle of anti-foundational coalition in her rhizome. She stresses the embodied points and positions that resist neo-colonial identities as well as the need to deregulate the heterogeneous flow. She writes, “the verb is such an intrusive part of speech . . . suggesting all the time invasion or intention not to leave things alone . . .” (*Bread* 52). In anti-foundational coalition, Elizete and Abena begin to speak simultaneously. Abena starts “playing with the sound of herself until only the sound itself mattered . . . and Elizete lying under the window murmuring her names did not stop but gave her the music to finish. Blue fly, bottle fish, butter nose, sugar head, ant road, sandy house” (237). Abena empties intended signification, while Elizete enables unchained flows between nouns marked by the multiple lesbian, Caribbean, and Canadian sounds, words, bodies, narratives, people, and landscapes. Such language without stable consensus enables Elizete to speak her life with Verlia: “Rock leap, wall heart, rip eye, cease breath, marl cut, blood leap, clay deep, coal dead, coal deep, never rot, never cease, sand high, bone dirt, dust hard, mud bird, mud fish, mud word, rock flower, coral water, coral heart, coral breath . . .” (241–42). Nouns associated with Verlia’s leaps collide with nouns associated with Elizete’s descents into the mud of La Soufrière, the language tunnels of the wood lice, the walls of the quarry, and the sands of dissolving self (92). Elizete decolonizes language in a rhizome of sound, words, resistance, love, anger, sorrow, joy, persistence, death, rhythm, heartbeat, and breath: incommensurable elements that crack the definable world as they abstract and intersect.

Brand criticizes the ability of identity politics to decolonize writing and subjectivity. Theories of legitimate identity frame the subject in Western thought, drawing essentialist presumptions and perpetuating violent self/other desire. To decolonize subjectivity, Brand negates legitimate subjects, objects, communities, and origins. Simultaneously, she witnesses the reality of neo-colonial violence that attacks bodies and selves, in historic slavery, the Grenada massacre, as well as in contemporary Toronto and the Caribbean. In the two-pronged attack on legitimacy, a shifting third term develops that is neither abjection in otherness nor legitimacy in authentic or proper selves. Brand pushes discourses beyond their proper bounds, developing rhizomatic intersections with other discourses that derail and change the original, developing new, anarchic, and mobile subjectivities for Elizete and Verlia. While much of the methodology in *In Another Place, Not Here* seems parallel to Deleuze and Guattari’s theory, Brand’s differs significantly. Racial, gendered, sexual, cultural, and national texts inscribe desire,

but they also inscribe legitimacy and exclusions that ghettoize and abject. Brand's contradictory pain and hope in the lost self and emphasis on the points of political struggle link the deregulated rhizomatic flow to multiple political movements and the need for material change. By deconstructing legitimacy and identity, Brand changes the reading act. Rather than construct a readership based on common ground and exclude those who feel insulated from the neo-colonial violence, Brand interpellates readers in a culturally hybrid, rhizomatic coalition. As the relationship of Elizete and Verlia suggests, some point of momentary alliance between incommensurable elements may enable the territorial signifiers of the author and her characters to leap into those of the reader.

NOTES

- 1 Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge that micropolitics works between the State and the multiple differences in individuals. They also admit group political action is necessary for subordinated groups (*A Thousand Plateaus* 217, 276). Nonetheless, their ideals espouse "n sexes" that erase differences of gender construction (*Anti-Oedipus* 296), a "tantric egg" that is everything and nothing (*A Thousand Plateaus* 153), a "becoming everybody/everything" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 280), a "becoming imperceptible" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 282), and a nomadic absence of history (*A Thousand Plateaus* 393). As goals, these concepts push the "abstract line" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 280) into a new version of universality that erases differences.
- 2 Elizete, like Cixous, dreams a female embodied voice. The act of spitting milk, however, conveys Brand's quarrel with the liberating potential of the *other* (Cixous 93–94), the unknown metaphorical "dark continent" (Cixous 68–69), and a maternal embodiment that resists self/other violence and phallic language (Cixous 87).
- 3 While Grace never appears as a character in the novel, Elizete's rant on women's names (85–87, 91–92), the capitalization of "Grace" (3), and the repetition of the word raises her spectre.
- 4 Brand elicits a collision of Walter Benjamin's description of the "angel of history" (392) and Wilson Harris' argument that the non-realist historical novel "begin[s] to displace a helpless and hopeless consolidation of powers" (12). See Stephanos Stephanides' brief relation of Harris and Benjamin (113).

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