



uOttawa

L'Université canadienne
Canada's university

**FACULTÉ DES ÉTUDES SUPÉRIEURES
ET POSTDOCTORALES**



uOttawa

L'Université canadienne
Canada's university

**FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND
POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES**

Danielle Wilson

AUTEUR DE LA THÈSE / AUTHOR OF THESIS

M.A. (English)

GRADE / DEGREE

Department of English

FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT / FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

“Maybe Home is an Uneasy Place”: Dionne Brand’s Uneasy Home-Spaces

TITRE DE LA THÈSE / TITLE OF THESIS

Cynthia Sugars

DIRECTEUR (DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS SUPERVISOR

CO-DIRECTEUR (CO-DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS CO-SUPERVISOR

EXAMINATEURS (EXAMINATRICES) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS EXAMINERS

Jennifer Blair

Janice Fiamengo

Gary W. Slater

Le Doyen de la Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales / Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

**“Maybe home is an uneasy place”:
Dionne Brand’s Uneasy Home-Spaces**

Danielle Wilson

Thesis Supervisor: Cynthia Sugars

Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts, English Literature

Department of English
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

© Danielle Wilson, Ottawa, Canada, 2009



Library and Archives
Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-61271-2
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-61271-2

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.


Canada

“When you grow up black anywhere in the western world,
there is an uneasiness . . . an anxiety of place.”
(Brand qtd. in Zackodnik 206)

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
INTRODUCTION	vi
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
“Being here and not being here”: The Impossibility of Home in <i>In Another Place, Not Here</i>	
CHAPTER TWO	29
Disconnection and Disintegration: Unstable Home-Spaces in <i>At the Full and Change of the Moon</i>	
CHAPTER THREE	53
Map-making and Home-making: Home as a Landing Site in <i>A Map to the Door of No Return</i>	
CHAPTER FOUR.....	77
“More comfortable with the discomfort”: Uneasy Home-Spaces in <i>What We All Long For</i>	
WORKS CITED	109

ABSTRACT

When contemporary Caribbean-Canadian writer Dionne Brand encounters home, she is confronted by social norms – domestic and national – that may exclude her based on race, gender, sexuality and birthplace, or that may include her on the conditional denial of any one of these identifications. Reading her memoir and three novels, this study examines Brand’s conceptualization of home and her attempts to uncover its failings, dismantle its borders, and ultimately refigure the concept of home as what I term Brand’s uneasy home-spaces - sites where provisional reterritorializations signal and enable agency, open the possibility of connection through negotiation, and retain uneasiness as a reminder of necessary provisionality. Through prolonged attention to the difference between the theoretically empowering and the materially destructive, Brand resists utopian fantasies of cosmopolitan global citizenship and the metaphorization of homelessness, while also countering, in her later work, easy dismissals of the nation-state by presenting a community that gains agency through identification with the city and nation even as it actively critiques the state.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Professor Cynthia Sugars, for her unwavering encouragement and infinite patience. Her belief in and enthusiasm for this project were indispensable, particularly in those moments where I questioned myself. Her support encouraged me at every stage.

This thesis was partially funded by a generous scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. I would like to thank the Department of English at the University of Ottawa for the guidance that made this funding possible. I am grateful for the letters of recommendation and the critical eyes that studied my proposals. Thanks especially to Professor April London who read every draft of my proposal and who was essential in producing the final copy. I am indebted to the many professors in the English department who have guided and challenged me throughout my undergraduate and graduate years. It has been a pleasure to learn from you.

I am grateful to my family and friends, who were as supportive and patient during my worst moments of frustration as they were when I rambled enthusiastically. I especially would like to thank my mother, Maxine Wilson, for listening to me talk through nearly every page of this thesis over the past year. Without this sounding board, I might not have written a page.

INTRODUCTION

In his introduction to *Rude*, Rinaldo Walcott heralds the presence of “a new Black Canadian politicality that derives its sense of self from living life at the in-between but not being bothered by that condition” (10). Moreover, the “in-between” becomes “a source for making demands of the nation and, when necessary, jettisoning the nation to make necessary or diasporic connections” (10). My thesis investigates if and how this empowering in-betweenness operates in selected prose of Dionne Brand. I consider how the multiply constituted positions of her characters complicate this “politicality” through their complex relationships with Canada as home and not-home. Can Canada operate as a home-space for Brand and her characters? Though Brand’s later work presents a version of Walcott’s empowering in-betweenness, she also suggests that “jettisoning the nation” is a complicated act for those without an identified nation to jettison. Moreover, *What We All Long For* demonstrates that identification with the nation – even as one critiques it – may be an essential component of Walcott’s “necessary or diasporic connections.”

Born in Trinidad and immigrating to Canada at age seventeen, Dionne Brand, a contemporary Caribbean-Canadian writer, navigates Walcott’s in-betweenness and offers an interesting perspective on Canada as home. As a woman, lesbian, and member of the Black diaspora, Brand has a conflicted relationship with the concept of home since its connotations as nation and homeland are overlaid by the alternate associations of home with private and domestic space. Thus, when Brand confronts home as a concept, she is confronting a national home-space that may exclude her based on race, gender, sexuality and birthplace, or one that may include her on the conditional denial of any one of these identifications. Simultaneously, Brand confronts domestic space that is also predicated on a

tradition of homophobia, racism and sexism. In her memoir and three novels, Brand explores these conventional associations of home, and in uncovering the exclusions on which home is founded and destabilizing home in all its manifestations, Brand demonstrates that home – for herself and her characters – is an uneasy place. My thesis follows the shifts in Brand’s conception of this uneasiness as she attempts to imagine a home-space that might enable agency for her characters. I argue that it is precisely through Brand’s reconfiguration of uneasiness that Canadian home-spaces may be sites for transformation and connection. She recoups uneasiness to signal the generative instability of home-spaces; these homes are temporary – though nonetheless powerful – because Brand is always aware of the exclusions that make different versions of home possible. Thus, Brand asks in *A Map to the Door of No Return*, “nation predicated on what?” (68).

Defining Home

The word *home* itself is, of course, a highly charged term that operates on a number of levels. While my focus is on its relation to domestic/private space, regional/community space, and national space, home is to be understood as a shifting metaphorical figure that may signal all or none of these categories at once. As Rosemary Marangoly George notes, home “is usually represented as fixed, rooted, stable – the very antithesis of travel,” yet the concept, in fact, is “fluid” given its simultaneous and contradictory meanings (2). In its associations with domestic space, home “immediately connotes the private sphere of patriarchal hierarchy, gendered self-identity, shelter, comfort, nurture and protection” (George 1). Carol Boyce Davies argues that in Black women’s autobiographical writing, “[t]he mystified notions of home and family are removed from their romantic, idealized moorings,” and “family is sometimes situated as a site of oppression for women” (21).

Domestic space frequently appears as a site of conflict that mirrors struggles with societal norms since “domestic spaces are the product of a society” and “express and reinforce its norms, social practices, and ideologies” (Mezei 81). Home and a desire for home are figured as natural, through the gendering of that space as feminine (George 17). Private and public, however, are not distinct. As Homi Bhabha argues in the Introduction to *The Location of Culture*, domestic space is redrawn “as the space of the normalizing, pastoralizing, and individuating techniques of modern power and police: the personal-*is*-the-political; the world-*in*-the home” (11).

Nowhere is the constant merging of the private and public more clear than in the case of women. In “Dis Place – The Space Between,” M. NourbeSe Philip explains that the constant threat of rape to a woman’s “inner space between the legs” means that every entrance into public space is inflected with this threat to private space (75). Indeed, the threat to the private in the public is complicated further for Black women. Because a Black woman’s body has been historically a site of oppression – womb as producer of slaves, a tool for appeasing male slaves, the (sexual) property of white slave holders – her inner space has been, “in fact, a public space” (77). Katherine McKittrick expands on Philip’s discussion of “dis place” in her work on emotional geographies in *Demonic Grounds*. Considering the Black female body as racialized and sexualized geography, McKittrick argues that the body is “claimed, owned, and controlled by an outsider” (44). Furthermore, since “the racial-sexual body is territorialized, it is marked as decipherable and knowable – as subordinate, inhuman, rape-able, deviant, procreative, placeless” (45). Following Philip and McKittrick, I read Brand’s Black female characters as experiencing all home-spaces under the threat of this territorialization. Brand’s project of deterritorializing home-spaces and dismantling the conventions of home is a project that not only examines how Black

female bodies are territorialized but also one that explores how deterritorializing home-spaces might provide her characters agency over their bodies and the spaces they inhabit.

Like the term *home* itself, home-space carries a number of meanings. For the purposes of this study, I loosely differentiate between domestic, national and communal home-spaces. Though these distinctions are not absolute, as in the communal space created within national and domestic spaces, the categorization is necessary to prevent home-space from becoming a term so amorphous as to be useless. Home-space, in the context of domestic space, refers to the literal space of houses where interactions and experiences are governed by predetermined exclusions and enclosures. In Brand's novels, the experience of domestic home-spaces is almost invariably one of claustrophobia, suffocation, and paralysis. As literal homes, these domestic spaces are marked out, of course, by the physical boundaries of the property, but also by the social norms of domesticity. For characters whose identities defy these norms, these home-spaces provide little or no room for agency. Indeed, in these novels, flight from home recurs as the only means for agency in confining domestic home-spaces; however, agency is not guaranteed by flight given the inevitable dangers of literal homelessness.

Like home-space as domestic space, when the nation is referred to as a home-space it is to be understood as a space predetermined by enclosures and exclusions. As an abstract and literal space, the nation is characterized both by the physical borders that define the space and the norms of its society. Because this space is fixed by parameters that marginalize Brand's characters, her protagonists struggle with the same agency-denying alienation and suffocation within the nation as they do within domesticity. The nation and the domestic home are deemed inadequate by Brand where they seek to define her characters and both deny them the right of self-definition and the opportunity to be

instrumental in the definition of the space itself. Brand's characters struggle to find the space in nation and domesticity for that instrumentality.

Unlike domestic and national home-spaces, the defining characteristic of communal space, which finds its fullest expression in Brand's latest novel, is the space's lack of predetermination. Communal space is defined less by its physical location than by the experience of the community that comprises the space. Whether in an activist demonstration or in a victory parade, communal home-spaces manifest as moments of provisional connection. The physical spaces in which these moments occur lack the established boundaries of borders, and where boundaries do exist they are mutable and temporary. Whereas in predetermined spaces, the experiences and interactions of characters are governed by the rules of the space, communal space is constituted by the characters who inhabit it. Where exclusions and enclosures exist, they are recognized as impermanent and arbitrary. Because characters are instrumental in the spaces' creation, communal home-spaces both offer the opportunity for and are an affirmation of an individual's agency. The problem for Brand's protagonists is to discover the necessary space for agency required to self-consciously and momentarily establish these uneasy home-spaces of community. Where home-spaces fail to be adequate for the characters of Brand's novels, the failure is in the denial of this space for agency.

In "Who is she and what is she to you," Rinaldo Walcott deploys the concepts of house and home as metaphors for Canadian studies and for the nation. He argues the importance of including Black studies in Canadian studies to disturb the "home" of the field and potentially the "home" of the nation, and this disturbance may prove to be generative. Walcott sees a similar disturbance in Brand's work. He argues that her work is characterized by "a continual (re)negotiation and (re)articulation of what nation, home and

family mean” (*Black* 83). Because home, in its every manifestation, “seems to follow the basic pattern of inclusions/exclusions” (George 9), its very existence is always predicated on establishing others to exclude. To create a national home based on strict inclusions and exclusions, a fiction of national unity is created. In “DissemiNation,” Bhabha explains that “[t]o be obliged to forget – in the construction of the national present – is not a question of historical memory; it is the construction of a discourse on society that *performs* the problem of totalizing the people and unifying the national will” (160-61). However, Eva Mackey cautions that “[t]he exclusions of Canadian nationalist discourse are subtler, less obvious” than those that straightforwardly unify through the production of a homogenous (white) culture (21). Indeed, she continues, “[t]he state-sanctioned proliferation of cultural *difference* (albeit limited to specific forms of allowable difference) seems to be the defining characteristic of Canada” (21). Rather than erase difference through homogenization, Canada recognizes heterogeneity in order to produce “the Canadian myth of tolerance” (15), a myth that needs “necessary ‘others’ who reflect back white Canada’s self-image of tolerance” (15-16).ⁱ

Official multiculturalism in Canada is an important element of the attempt to produce the nation as tolerant and to harmonize the country’s heterogeneity. Sneja Gunew, however, explains that “Canadian nationalism (like any other) finds it difficult to sustain the protocols of a non-contradictory nationalist discourse, which attempts to maintain, as Homi Bhabha has argued, the ambiguous task of representing the people-as-one at the same time that they affirm cultural differences within the nation” (23). One contradiction of official multiculturalism’s tolerance and recognition of difference is the implicit power to

ⁱ Mackey is careful to note that, paradoxically, “this notion of Canada’s tolerance coexisted with brutal policies of extermination and cultural genocide” (27).

tolerate (or not tolerate) afforded what Mackey terms “*Canadian-Canadians*” (16), that is, unexamined white Anglophone identity at the centre of Canada’s multicultural policy. Thus, while Canada might not produce an “overt construction of *national cultural homogeneity* . . . the white Anglophone majority undoubtedly has cultural, economic, and political *dominance*” (Mackey 25). Moreover, this group is constructed as the only one authentically Canadian, as the “*Canadian-Canadians*.” Therefore, as state policy, multiculturalism can reinforce conceptions of Canada as a white nation given that “the colonizing English and French are textually left intact as ‘real’ Canadians while legislation is needed to imagine other folks as Canadian” (Walcott, *Black* 79). The result of Canadian identity construed as “Western European whiteness” is the necessary implication that “it’s impossible to be both Black and Canadian at the same time” (Sealy 98). For those members of the Black diaspora who are born in Canada, the effect is to create what Smaro Kamboureli calls “the Canadian uncanny: Canadian-born and ‘foreign’ at the same time” (215). State multiculturalism’s inability to offer social justice becomes an important point in Brand’s struggle to imagine the Canadian nation as a home-space for her characters.

In contrast to the exclusionary models of home as domestic space and as nation, Paul Gilroy, in “It’s a Family Affair,” proposes a “fragile image of nonfamilial community . . . a kind of surrogate, joyfully disorganic, and synthetic kin group” (313). In “A Place on the Map of the World,” Diana Brydon claims that Brand’s *What We All Long For* creates just such a community. In the novel, Brand’s notion of community, argues Brydon, “presents many possible variants on the constitution of the couple, the family, and friendship, destabilizing most normative assumptions about how such relations should be organized and policed” (8). She clarifies, in “Canadian Writers Negotiating Home,” that the “rooted” community of Brand’s characters is “experimental and open-ended without being

uncommitted” (7). In “What’s Home Got to Do With It?” Bidy Martin and Chandra Mohanty declare that home should be constructed as a provisional place of community that “is inherently unstable, contextual; it has to be constantly reevaluated in relation to critical political priorities” (104). This reevaluation is precisely the kind of renegotiation that Walcott discerns in Brand’s work and that Brydon identifies in *What We All Long For*.

Theory and Practice: The Material Reality of a Feminist Politics of Deterritorialization

In *The Politics of Home*, George explains that “[o]ne distinguishing feature of places called home is that they are built on select inclusions” and “manifest on geographical, psychological and material levels” (9). As mentioned above, given some of the conventional associations of home, Brand’s and her characters’ subject positions make their inclusion in home-spaces difficult or impossible. Moreover, Brand’s awareness of the exclusions that make home possible render the space suspect even when her characters are invited into membership.

To combat stable notions of home that might imprison and alienate, several critics have suggested a feministⁱⁱ politics of deterritorializing home. George, Caren Kaplan, and Bidy Martin and Chandra Mohanty all refer to Minnie Bruce Pratt’s “Identity: Skin Blood Heart” in their discussions of dismantling home. In that essay, Pratt explores the hidden exclusions that make each home-space she inhabits possible and ultimately rejects all stable and fixed notions of home. As Kaplan expands Pratt’s personal experiences to a theory of

ⁱⁱ I use the term feminist to identify the theory’s origins in feminist criticism and to recognize the strategic deterritorialization that these feminist critics advance and deploy in their work. While gender (among other factors) may complicate experiences of home, deterritorialization and the potential of strategic reterritorialization are not only available to women, as I argue Brand’s male characters demonstrate.

feminist politics, she argues for a move “away from ‘home’ to deconstruct the terms of social privilege and power” (193). As a politics of home-making, George argues for “a daily resisting of the safety proffered by safe places,” for a “continual stepping out of or transgressing of boundaries and a redrawing of private and public spaces as well as of global divides” (33). Deterritorializing home thus becomes a process where exclusions are uncovered and homes are rejected as inadequate because of these exclusions. Every incarnation of home, however, as George explains above, necessarily produces some element of exclusion. Even the most generative and inclusive home-spaces in Brand’s work restrict membership in some capacity, but when the restrictions are strategically created as provisional, the limiting fixity of home is mitigated. Provisionality is central in the creation of home-space through active process by self-aware participants; the process must be continuously on-going and recognized as experimental. This focus on process echoes Davies’ claim that every term of definition for identity “must be used provisionally,” and “at each arrival at a definition, we begin a new analysis, a new departure, a new interrogation of meaning, new contradictions” (5).

In “What’s Home Got to Do with It?” Martin and Mohanty discuss the potential of such “interminable boundary confusions” (87). In Pratt’s essay, they read “an irreconcilable tension between the search for a secure place from which to speak, within which to act, and the awareness of the price at which secure places are bought, the awareness of the exclusions, the denials, the blindnesses on which they are predicated” (101). Both Pratt and the authors interpreting her work are “aware that stable notions of self and identity are based on exclusion and secured by terror,” but they are “also aware of the risk and terror inherent in breaking through the walls of home” (Martin 91). When I refer to Brand deterritorializing home, I am referring to this process of uncovering exclusions and facing

the terror of leaving home-spaces that she and her characters deem inadequate. While each critic acknowledges the danger of such a move away from repressive yet familiar homes, Pratt concludes that the “uncertainty” and risk of a move away from home may be preferred to “the sensation of being homesick while at ‘home’” (Kaplan 193).

Indeed, a politics of deterritorializing home may provide a solution to the problems of home’s strict borders and exclusions. If homes are persistently destabilized, their exclusions revealed and rejected, then some of the central failings of home may be mitigated. For Brand’s characters, who repeatedly find the homes they inhabit claustrophobic and alienating, dismantling the terms of their confinement emerges as a viable option for agency. For her Black female characters, who, as McKittrick explains, are territorialized and deprived of authority over their own bodies, to deterritorialize home may also mean to deterritorialize the over-writing of their bodies. However, in each of her novels Brand is alert to the specific contexts of her characters’ experiences of home. What may be theoretically empowering may not even be possible in the realities of her characters.

In each critic’s discussion of deterritorializing home, George, Kaplan, and Martin and Mohanty imagine deterritorialization as a process that incorporates active construction through tentative reterritorialization. Martin and Mohanty, for example, pair their insistence on “interminable boundary confusions” with a “responsibility for remapping boundaries and renegotiating connections” (87). In an essay on her own struggles with home and political community, Mohanty explains how re-defining home and understanding that definition as process enabled her to feel at home in political movement. This home was not confining because of its self-conscious provisionality. Home becomes, for Mohanty, a “strategic space” that is characterized by flexibility because the borders are malleable.

Rather than “a comfortable, stable, inherited, and familiar space,” home is “an imaginative, politically charged space” (128). A home such as the one that Mohanty finds in political movement answers the call of “What’s Home Got to Do with It?” for “a new sense of political community that gives up the desire for the kind of home where the suppression of positive differences underwrites familial identity” (99). As Kit Dobson explains in an analysis of *What We All Long For*, such a strategy of provisional alignment and constant process defends against co-optation and reterritorialization by the dominant order.

In Brand’s early novels, however, such strategies of deterritorialization prove impossible for her characters. While Bhabha is right to note in his Introduction to *The Location of Culture* that “[t]o be unhomed is not to be homeless” (9), the experience of being “unhomed” greatly differs when homes are rejected and when homes are denied. Indeed, Brand demonstrates throughout her work how chosen movements and forced movements away from home enable and disable agency respectively. George is particularly attentive to the importance of context in the application of theoretical deterritorialization. Considering “those persons for whom homes, homelands or even nationhood are still unrealized desires,” George asks, “[i]s it feasible then, beginning from Pratt’s stance, to work toward a unilateral rejection of safe-homes?” (33).

Brand tackles this question throughout her novels and memoir. In *In Another Place, Not Here* and *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, Brand demonstrates that safe homes are, in fact, impossible for her characters. While such a demonstration displays the author’s awareness of the inherent problems that make all homes un-safe (for those it includes and excludes), and the rejection of safe homes may seem to respond affirmatively to George’s question, the experiences of her characters in her first two novels preclude any practical power in the rejection. Moreover, George’s use of the term “safe-homes,” as a footnote

explains, complicates her question. Safe homes may suggest the restrictive nature of unexamined comfort and stability, where the safety of these homes is illusory as it depends upon blindness to exclusions and frequently, for people whose identities do not conform to the norms of the space, denial of diverse forms of identification. However, the ability to examine and dismantle constructions of home depends upon a position of tentative security. George's hyphen in the term "safe-homes" deliberately invokes women's shelters for victims of domestic violence. As George's invocation implies, rejecting stability and safety and dismantling exclusions are highly contextual acts. A safe refuge from violence and the exclusion of those who commit violence must not be equated with the unexamined exclusions of static home-spaces. Restrictive homes are to be discarded, but the ability to discard these spaces paradoxically necessitates a position of relative safety. What the experiences of Elizete, Verlia, and Eula demonstrate is that rejecting home-spaces is a matter of privilege. For characters without a home to leave and for characters for whom every incarnation of home has meant alienation and suffocation, to be "unhomed" may equal being "homeless." Even when these characters choose to reject home-spaces, they lack the ability to make the provisional reterritorializations necessary to express agency. The psychological and sometimes literal homelessness of these characters epitomizes Davies' claim that "[t]he figure of the displaced, homeless person is the most poignant, tragic representation of the transnational, capitalist, post-modern condition" (113). Moreover, the physical and psychological dangers these characters face demonstrate the very real material threat of rejecting or being denied home. I argue that Brand's first two novels indicate her dissatisfaction with conventional conceptualizations of home and her difficulty in imagining how the concept might be re-deployed to provide agency to characters who are threatened by home in its every manifestation.

In *A Map to the Door of No Return* and, especially, in *What We All Long For*, I read a shift in Brand's vision of the utility of home as a concept and in her estimation of Canada as a viable home-space for herself and for her characters. While she remains attentive to the particular failings of diverse home-spaces and to the role that context plays in determining agency in these spaces, in the two later works, Brand begins to find potential in the provisional community and processual reterritorializations discussed by George, Kaplan, and Martin and Mohanty. In the momentary alignment Brand discerns on a Vancouver bus in *A Map* and in the multiple provisional connections established by the second-generation characters in *What We All Long For*, Brand figures temporary home-spaces as landing sites that acknowledge the necessary borders they erect only to, as a matter of process, dismantle boundaries and enable affiliation across and through difference. The safety and comfort these temporary home-spaces provide is tempered by uneasiness so that the self-conscious instability precludes the spaces from devolving into permanent and confining borders.

Nevertheless, Brand's position in her memoir is one of privilege, and her attention to the experiences of Jamal and Quy, as well as the first-generation immigrant characters in *What We All Long For*, undermine any wholesale acceptance of deterritorialization as necessarily empowering. Indeed, I argue that she is as alert in these later works to the material risk of deterritorialization as she is in her first two novels. In *Reflections on Exile*, Edward Said ponders how exile has "been transformed so easily into a potent, even enriching, motif of modern culture" (173). Brand is alert to the ways that devastating reality can metamorphose into a figure that clouds the real danger of such a position. Indeed, Brand heeds Ali Behdad's caution that "the metaphoric uses of spatial tropes have led to a problematic discourse of utopian mobility that conflates the privileged experiences of writers and intellectuals with those of the less fortunate immigrants" (401-02). While her

later works imagine home-spaces that enable and, in fact, are built through the agency of her characters, Brand is aware of the ways in which home-spaces and the failures of home work to deny agency – particularly to immigrants who illegally transgress the rigid borders of the nation-state. *A Map* and *What We All Long For*, however, complicate easy dismissals of the nation-state as Brand demonstrates how strategic alignment with the nation and with spaces in the nation might enable agency.

Mapping My Argument

Working chronologically through her memoir and three novels, I trace Brand's shifting conceptions of home and of Canada as a site for potential home-spaces. In Brand's first two novels, homes – where possible – are repressive and exclusionary; her characters are under constant threat within Canada and, indeed, in all of the home-spaces they inhabit. *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996) explores Canada's inability to offer adequate home-spaces to Verlia, a legal immigrant from Trinidad, and Elizete, an illegal immigrant from Grenada. In *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (1999), Brand again critiques Canada's potential as home-space through Eula, who legally immigrates to Canada but finds the country inadequate for her daughter Bola, whom she sends "back home" to Trinidad. In both of these novels, homes – whether in Canada, the Caribbean, or elsewhere – prove limiting, dangerous or impossible for her characters. Significantly, human connection is fractured or unattainable for these psychologically and sometimes physically homeless characters. Brand's memoir, *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging* (2001), traces her experiences of belonging and unbelonging in the Black diaspora. The non-fiction work follows Brand's international journeys, as well as her treks across Canada. The text marks a shift toward a re-conceptualization that, even as Brand acknowledges and

addresses the dangers of home, imagines the potential of provisional community home-spaces to enable connections. In *What We All Long For* (2004), Brand extends the potential of community home-spaces that emerge in *A Map*, complicated by her focus on second-generation Canadians and elaborated in her depiction of Canada and Toronto as possible home-spaces. While domestic home-space remains for her main characters, Tuyen, Carla, Oku and Jackie, a destabilized and even threatening place, Brand suggests the potential for community-based connections to supersede the intra-national borders of a racist nation-state while also reaching beyond the national borders of the state itself. Identifying with and against Canadian (Torontonian) identity, her characters use the uneasy home-spaces they not only inhabit but create to disturb restrictive boundaries within the Canadian nation. Agency is central here, for the second-generation characters of *What We All Long For* attain the power to dismantle and rebuild homes, a power that is impossible in the first two novels. Part of this agency emerges from the ability to claim ownership of space, an ability not equally available to all members of the nation and, of course, easier for the second-generation characters.

In my first chapter, “‘Being here and not being here’: The Impossibility of Home in *In Another Place, Not Here*,” I explore the apparent failure of Canada and the Caribbean to provide adequate home-spaces for Elizete and Verlia. In her first novel, Brand queries the select exclusions that constitute home-spaces, and the ways in which these exclusions render the spaces deficient. Looking at the interconnected connotations of home, I argue that home does not exist for Elizete and Verlia except as a place of extreme vulnerability and violence or as a site of alienation and suffocation. Pamela McCallum and Christian

Olbey read the novel as a neoslave narrativeⁱⁱⁱ that fixes Canada as the destination of escape, so that “Canada’s conventional status as utopia within the antebellum slave narrative is first alluded to . . . then steadily deconstructed by Brand” (168-69). By depicting the continuous failure of home whether in Canada or the Caribbean, Brand demonstrates the impossibility of home for her characters while also exploring some of the racist and sexist underpinnings of the Canadian state. For Elizete and Verlia, “Toronto is a space of radical unbelonging that explodes the benevolent myth of Canadian multiculturalism” (Saul 61). Unable to be at home anywhere, the characters are under constant and irremediable threat in all of the spaces they inhabit. While destabilizing homes and rejecting the safety that their exclusions offer may be theoretically empowering, the physical and psychological homelessness of these characters make empowerment impossible. *In Another Place* begins what I argue is a career-spanning interest for Brand in the material dangers of transgressing borders – especially as an illegal body moving across and within national boundaries – even when acceptance of the strict borders may be equally threatening.

In chapter two, “Disconnection and Distintegration: Unstable Home-Spaces in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*,” I argue that Brand offers a vision of membership in the Black Atlantic as one of figurative homelessness, a homelessness that leaves her characters able to inhabit only radically unstable home-spaces that disable connection and threaten self-definition. While scholarship has focused on the dispersal of Marie Ursule’s descendants as the haunting of the past and a replication of diaspora, my focus on Eula’s

ⁱⁱⁱ McCallum and Olbey use the term “neoslave narrative . . . to refer to novels that retell the stories of slavery in narratives marked by postmodern formal innovations” (163), and that draw “explicitly on conventions and narratorial strategies developed by the antebellum slave narrators” (164). My interest is in their claim that Canada as utopian escape is one convention that Brand deploys (and debunks).

chapter-long letter to her dead mother that details her experiences in Toronto allows me to investigate Brand's continued attention to the failures of Canada as a national home-space. In a review, Salamishah Tillet also identifies this novel as a neoslave narrative. As such, one can read *At the Full* as also debunking the myth of Canada as utopian escape. While I argue that Eula's fear of domestic suffocation, her inability to forge familial and community relationships, and her alienation from the city and country in which she lives suggest Brand's dissatisfaction with Canada as home-space, the continuity of experiences for the characters dispersed around the world demonstrates that the figurative homelessness of the diasporic condition may be devastating irrespective of the nations her characters inhabit. In Marlene Goldman's reading of the novel, figurative homelessness is refigured in terms of "drifting," suggesting that the novel itself offers a restorative map that charts the drifting bodies of the Black Atlantic. However, given that this map is available only to the novelist and readers, and given the horrific experiences of Brand's characters, I conclude that *At the Full* rejects drifting as a viable "alternative to the boundedness of home" (Goldman 13). Again, I emphasize what I believe is an important distinction for Brand: that is, the difference between what is theoretically viable and materially destructive.

My third chapter, "Map-making and Home-making: Home as a Landing Site in *A Map to the Door of No Return*," argues that Brand's memoir marks a shift in her assessment of home and the ability of home-spaces to enable agency and establish connection. In *A Map*, while Brand remains mournful about the tragedy of the Middle Passage (represented by the "Door of No Return"), she begins to imagine how the devastation of such loss (and, indeed, the destruction occasioned by the deterritorialization of home) may also offer the potential for creation. Exploring Goldman's concept of drifting and following Maia Joseph's insistence on landing, I argue that Brand re-imagines

Canadian home-spaces as landing sites that enable strategic and provisional connections and provide an avenue for creative agency. Though Brand remains attentive to the inadequacies of the nation-state and to home as a concept, *A Map* presents a more complicated assessment of the nation than the outright rejection Goldman posits and the irredeemable failure of national home-spaces in Brand's first two novels. While the unstable home-spaces of *At the Full* disabled connection and agency, instability and impermanence are recouped in *A Map* as potentially generative. The "nervous temporariness" that Brand defines as the "existential dilemma" of the Black diaspora becomes (*A Map* 61), in her memoir, not the debilitating instability of her earlier novels, but a signal that she is moving towards the need that she voiced in an interview with Pauline Butling to "become more comfortable with the discomfort" (84). That is, the "nervous temporariness" of the home-spaces inhabited and created in this work are an early expression of what I refer to as uneasy home-spaces. These spaces are provisional ("temporariness") while the uneasiness ("nervous") ensures an awareness of that provisionality. Focusing on the moment of connection established on a Vancouver bus as one instance of Brand's uneasy home-spaces, I argue that *A Map* remains uneasy with Canada as a national home-space; however, Brand refigures the various places in which she finds herself as landing sites with the potential to activate agency and establish connection, while uneasiness ensures that these strategic sites are always temporary. In this text, homes are not only destabilized but temporarily and self-consciously reterritorialized in an active and continuous process by the inhabitants of the space.

My final chapter, "'More comfortable with the discomfort': Uneasy Home-Spaces in *What We All Long For*," argues that Brand rejects conventional definitions of home and recasts the term as a site for temporary connections that remain provisional through a

persistent acknowledgment of the uneasiness of all home-spaces. Throughout her work, Brand demonstrates that the idea of home as a safe, comforting, and stable place is an illusion, but through the second-generation characters of her latest novel, Brand reveals that an acknowledgment of the fallacy and a rejection of the desire for such an impossible place may provide the means for creative agency. Toronto's figuring as a "crossroads" (Brand, *What 3*) enables Tuyen, Carla, Jackie, and Oku to create community-based home-spaces that are multiply connected and provisional. Like Kit Dobson and Diana Brydon, I read Brand's notion of community to be one of shifting connections, powerful precisely because of its shifting, multiplicitous, and uneasy qualities. The momentary alteration of space and establishment of connection on a subway car, the active and continuous transformation of Carla and Tuyen's apartment(s), and the spontaneous and negotiated meal Oku creates with his friends, among other examples, demonstrate the power available in the creation of uneasy home-spaces. However, I argue, essential to this power of transformation and creation is the characters' ability to claim authority in space, an act that Brand reveals is not equally available to all members of the city or nation. Integral to the capacity to deterritorialize and reterritorialize home-spaces is the second-generation characters' ability to see Toronto and Canada as their space to transform. I argue that the novel complicates dismissals of the nation-state by displaying how identification with and against the state might enable agency, while Brand's depictions of the first-generation immigrant characters – and Quy as an illegal immigrant – undermine utopian fantasies of cosmopolitanism. Though Brand remains attentive to the material threat of both metaphorical homelessness and (especially illegal) border-crossing, *What We All Long For* marks an important shift in her vision of home, a vision that might redeem the concept of home when redefined in terms of Brand's uneasy home-spaces.

“Maybe home is an uneasy place”

The title of my thesis is a quotation from Brand’s essay “Bathurst,” published in *Bread Out of Stone* in 1994. Because this essay is the earliest instance of what I call Brand’s uneasy home-spaces, I will quote it at length. “Bathurst” begins,

Bathurst Subway. I say it like home. It’s an uneasy saying, as uneasy as the blue-grey walls, rattling trains, late-laden buses and shrieking streetcars. But when I first came to this country, this city, at seventeen, it was a sign of home.

Funny how home is the first place you look for even if you are running from it, you are nevertheless always running toward it, not the same spot but a spot you’re sure that you’ll know. Maybe home is an uneasy place so Bathurst felt like it, not the trains or the grey walls but the people who passed through it that year, the feeling of common purpose, the intensity of new Black pride, the possibilities for justice and the joy in these. (67)

In this passage, Brand reveals a desire for home and yet an awareness of the inherent discomfort of such places. The word “uneasy” recurs three times, and it appears throughout her work. In this early essay, published before any of her novels, Brand reveals the complicated relationship she has with home and the unease these spaces inspire. By revealing a longing for home, a home that nevertheless inspires discomfort, Brand simultaneously demonstrates home’s failings and its temptations. In the second paragraph of the essay, and throughout “Bathurst,” however, Brand suggests how the discomfort of such places might be redeemed by acknowledging and recouping the uneasiness of home. Bathurst feels like home because of the community created in its space. Significantly, membership in the community is constantly shifting as people “[pass] through” while

affiliation is achieved through shared political consciousness. Through the coalition of the Black Power movement, Brand and the other members of the political group transform “from Negroes into Blacks, from passive into revolutionary” (70). The space remains uneasy as a sign of the discomfort of all home-spaces and as a marker of the space’s and the community’s provisionality. Bathurst appears as the “strategic space” Mohanty also experiences in political community (128).

When Brand considers that home may be an uneasy place, she undercuts conventional associations of home with comfort, stability, and fixity. To remove home from these associations is also to alleviate the claustrophobia and alienation that she associates with home throughout her work. Indeed, what this passage offers is a transformation of the concept of home itself. By retaining uneasiness as a central characteristic of home, Brand reveals the fallacy of home as safety while simultaneously undermining the space’s threat. An uneasy home-space might, as she explains in “Bathurst,” be a “site of new definitions” (69), but the definitions will always be provisional. In a reading of the same essay, McKittrick explains that Bathurst Street is generative while also being dangerous. Though political community offers transformative power, racism makes Toronto hazardous terrain for the members of the movement: “In 1978 we were working [posting flyers in] the four corners of the intersection just after the killing of Albert Johnson by the cops. Only months before they had killed Buddy Evans down on Spadina Avenue. And those who could have saved his life had said that he was just a nigger and left him to die” (74). Interpreting a passage that marks the Bathurst home as “the only oasis of Blacks in the miles and miles to be learned of in the white desert that was the city” (68-69), McKittrick remarks upon “the ways in which [Brand] mixes geographic possibilities with the uninhabitable” (137). Bathurst is uneasy as a site of

strategic and provisional alignment, but it is also uneasy because the community created there remains under threat; that is, Bathurst may be home, but it cannot (and, I argue, Brand believes that it *should not*) be a comfortable space. McKittrick explains that Bathurst is “a site where [Brand] can map a location of new inhabitability (‘home,’ ‘your place’) with an uneasiness that accentuates the discomfort and pain of the uninhabitable” (138). If home is an uneasy place, then Brand recasts the discomfort of home as uneasiness that signals the space’s generative instability while also maintaining an awareness of the continued problems of home.

In her interview with Butling, Brand declares that home as “that whole thing that makes us feel warm and possible” has never existed for diasporic women, but such a definition of home as comfort and safety is inadequate regardless (84). Like the passage in *Bread Out of Stone* that wonders if home might not be an uneasy place, in the interview Brand considers that “[h]ome may not be a place where everything’s going to be fine” (84). Here Brand answers George’s question by responding that all homes are uncomfortable and any notion of home that stands for strict exclusions and stable borders is to be rejected. What the passage in *Bread Out of Stone*, her interview, and her later work reveal is the necessity of rejecting such definitions of home and the temptation to search for such places. Rather, by incorporating uneasiness, Brand demonstrates the viability of her call, in the same interview with Butling, to “become a little more comfortable with the discomfort” (84). Throughout her work, Brand struggles with this need to become comfortable with discomfort as she explores diverse manifestations of home. *In Another Place, Not Here* and *At the Full and Change of the Moon* cannot imagine a home as any place but one of alienation and suffocation, while leaving these sites of confinement proves terrifying and dangerous. However, *A Map to the Door of No Return* and, in particular, *What We All Long*

For return to the tentative suggestions of the Butling interview and *Bread Out of Stone* to imagine how uneasy home-spaces might not only renew home as a concept but might be used as a source and site of agency. Throughout her work, one of the recurrent failures of many conceptualizations of home-space is its tendency to take on a static nature, a stasis that suffocates herself and her characters. Brand's recognition of the instability of all homes complements her embrace of uneasy home-spaces – sites where provisional reterritorializations signal and enable agency, open the possibility of connection through negotiation, and retain uneasiness as a reminder of necessary provisionality. In so doing, she redeems the discomfort of home, mitigates some of the problems associated with home-spaces, and yet refuses to ignore the ways that “home” continues to be a contested space.

CHAPTER ONE

“Being here and not being here”: The Impossibility of Home in *In Another Place, Not Here*

Brand’s first novel, *In Another Place, Not Here*, traces the separate journeys from the Caribbean to Canada of Verlia, a legal immigrant from Trinidad, and Elizete, an illegal immigrant from Grenada. For both characters, the domestic, communal and national home-spaces that they leave in the Caribbean and the ones that they inhabit in Canada are persistently inadequate, repressive and exclusionary. Home does not exist for Elizete and Verlia except as a place of extreme vulnerability and suffocation. The continuity of failed domestic, communal and national home-spaces from the Caribbean to Canada demonstrates the fallacy of Canada as utopian escape and enables Brand to expose some of the xenophobic, racist and sexist attributes of Canadian society. These discriminatory underpinnings render Canada an inadequate national home-space for Elizete and Verlia and in turn disable safe home-spaces at every level. Brand suggests that these inadequacies ultimately deny Afro-Caribbean immigrant women a home in Canada, and that, moreover, homes – in Canada or the Caribbean – are impossible for her characters.

In “What’s Home Got to Do With It?” Bidy Martin and Chandra Mohanty argue that home should be constructed as a provisional place of community that “is inherently unstable, contextual” (104). Responding to Martin and Mohanty, Rosemary Marangoly George discusses the possibility of resisting, redefining, and moving beyond the safety of homes in an effort to reject the exclusions on which home is always established; George, however, notes that such a constantly deterritorialized position may be more complicated for those without safe homes to leave (33). Indeed, what Brand reveals in *In Another Place* is the potential danger and disempowerment in actuality of what might be liberating and

empowering in theory. While destabilizing homes and moving beyond the safety that their exclusions offer may be potentially empowering, for Elizete, who has no safe home to leave, and Verlia, whose every home has meant suffocation, the result is rather one of endangerment.

Similarly, while Rinaldo Walcott has argued for the power of in-between positions for Black Canadians in both his introduction to *Rude* and in *Black Like Who?*, the “simultaneity of being here and not being here” (Walcott, *Black* 42) – a particularly apt description of the in-between for the characters of Brand’s first novel – is devastating for Elizete and Verlia. Walcott continues to explain that “[t]he prospect of in-between-ness is, however, not only produced by the state: it’s also something black folks have chosen through their multiple diasporic and outer-national political identifications.” Just as potential empowerment becomes devastation when destabilizing home becomes not a choice but a necessity or a de facto position, so, too, does the generative potential of “being here and not being here” move from creative power to disempowerment when the agency of choice is denied or disabled. Though the in-between position offered by the absence of stable or safe homes may be theoretically powerful, the literal and psychological homelessness of Elizete and Verlia – and the lack of agency that accompanies such a position – is profoundly dangerous and inescapably destructive.

“homeless, countryless, landless, nameless”

The novel begins with Elizete’s remembrance of her lover, Verlia, and her life in Grenada. Told in alternating first-person and third-person narration in an island dialect, Elizete’s experiences in Grenada are characterized by instability and violence. She is homeless from early childhood when she is abandoned and described as a “stray” (Brand,

In 38). The home-spaces that she does eventually inhabit with an adoptive mother and an abusive husband are repressive and unstable while her existence is defined by the slave-like conditions under which she lives; Elizete explains, “I born to clean Isaiah’ house and work cane since I was a child” (4). The “ordinary” for Elizete, as a Black plantation worker in Grenada, is “the plenty day when all it have for a woman to do is lie down and let a man beat against she body, and work cane and chop up she foot and make children and choke on the dryness in she chest” (4). All that such a position affords Elizete is to be a tool for plantation work and reproduction. Indeed, her position as a tool or object is reinforced by the language used to describe her adoptive “mother” and Isaiah, her rapist, captor and “man” (218): Elizete’s adoptive mother is “[t]he woman they’d given her to” (28), while Isaiah is described similarly as “the man they give me to” (7). Elizete herself plays no role in this gifting since she is merely an object to be moved or bestowed upon others. The “all it have for a woman to do” are the very compulsions and slavery of her life. Indeed, the absolute absence of agency afforded her in the Caribbean is underscored by her inability to remember the “they” who give her away because “[i]t seem to me that one day I wake up under Isaiah” (10). In fact, the lack of agency available to women initially causes Elizete to discount Verlia when she first appears on the plantation because Elizete knows that “[i]t don’t matter what woman say in the world, take it from me” (13).

In her relationship with Isaiah, Elizete is animal property to be tamed as he whips and beats her until he breaks her desire or ability to run away. The animalistic language appears when she describes his raping of her: Isaiah is “the devil” (13) and “he ride me to hell” (10). Like an animal, she is ridden, and the brutality of her life as sexual object is stressed by Elizete’s declaration that “[t]he thought of him and his hardness cut at the red stone in me from sun-up to sundown” (11). The brutal violence of Elizete’s domestic space,

however, is appeased temporarily by her sexual relationship with Verlia. When Isaiah interrupts their lovemaking, the very image of their lesbian sex is enough to expel him from the space: “Isaiah gone mad catching me lying underneath Verlia. . . . I never see him after that” (5). Together, Elizete and Verlia build a tentative domestic home-space that stands in opposition to Elizete’s previous domestic spaces. The space, however, is fragile and disrupted by the American invasion of Grenada in which Verlia is killed. Elizete, in the same powerless position in the Caribbean, now without her revolutionary lover and finding herself in the midst of a failed revolution, leaves Grenada for the city where her dead lover once lived, Toronto.

When Elizete chooses Canada as her destination of escape from the “ordinary” struggle of Caribbean life, she chooses Canada because of Verlia and not because of any vision of the country as a potential utopian escape. As such, Elizete comes to Canada not for the dream of a better life, but because she has nowhere else to go and no other place to imagine beyond the once lived-in city of her dead lover. She had “[n]o reason at all” to come to Canada “unless you call running reason and finding yourself alive, no reason at all she was here except to get out and to be in the last place that Verlia was” (87). She clarifies that Toronto is “a place she had no feeling for except the feeling of escape. And not rescue but escape. Rescue would be too much to ask of anywhere” (70-71). Rescue, after all, is not what she desires. Following Verlia’s death, Elizete tries to annihilate herself with a rock, and when that fails, her “escape” to Toronto becomes the only option of which she can conceive. Part of what Toronto offers Elizete is traces of Verlia and a connection to her through Verlia’s own former lover, Abena; however, Toronto also offers Elizete the chance to sever the connections that imprisoned her in Grenada. Like Verlia’s own flight to Canada, Elizete’s departure is an attempt to escape the known connections that bound and

repressed her: “She would take a chance on a place with no one she knew. All the places with someone, some relative, some known stranger, all those places had chewed her up so perhaps she had found emptiness enough to fill her up here” (71).

The novelty and potential of this “emptiness” to allow one to be made over is suggested and simultaneously undercut in the passage discussing the Jane Street bus preceding this statement. Though hopefulness is expressed in the narrator’s claim that “[i]f you live in this city, nobody knows anybody so you could be anybody” (66), the fractured connections between people both meet Elizete’s hope of finding a place without connections that “chewed her up” and, in meeting the expectations, also ensure that Elizete “could not get her mind to recognize this place” (66). The narrator discusses the allure of abroad and what Canada can represent to the Caribbean immigrant: “that smell of travel which once came like the American dream in suitcases from abroad and which were so seductive, so delicious, so envy filling you wanted to reach out of your skin” (64). But the reality of immigration and that which is found at the source of the smell is that you “find yourself, cramped, faces as sour as yours, silent, looking out the window, looking away from people just like you and people who made it plain they didn’t want to see you either” (64-65). The narrator, with bitter irony, declares, “[a]nd you thought that you were sloughing off skin over the Atlantic dressing in your real self” (65). The dream of immigration and travel is revealed as fractured community; gone are the connections between people in the Caribbean. In Canada, “[i]f you live here you notice that nothing ties people together because you notice people don’t talk to perfect strangers on a bus going up Jane Street” (65).

When Elizete first arrives in Toronto, she declares herself “Columbus” and that “nothing had a name yet, nothing was discovered” (47). While the hopeful newness of

discovery is evinced in this passage, the reference to Columbus also recalls the devastation and destruction of Canada's own colonial history. And though the passage implies that Elizete – ironically appearing as colonizer – will actively name and discover the city, her agency is undercut immediately by the language used to describe her landing: “she'd landed here. . . . It can't make no sense except like a fish floating and ending up wherever the eternal sea take it” (47). Elizete “[l]anded like a fish or a ship. More like fish on somebody's line than ship” (47). As Maia Joseph argues, in Brand's first novel, “the experience of landing tends to be removed from agency” (77). Elizete is like a fish who has drifted here – either caught on someone's line or washed ashore. Again, her lack of agency is emphasized when she wonders if “maybe someone would come along and move her, place her where they felt she ought to be” (Brand, *In* 53).

Elizete herself has no sense of where she might place herself even if she could. With no place to belong and “[n]owhere to go,” she feels like “there was something malformed about her. Like something someone had forgotten” (52). The places where Elizete may “fit in” are only places of labour because, despite her migration, in Canada Elizete is still an object for work: “She'd been told about kitchens and toilets and floors and sewing machines and cuffs and rubber and paint spray and even been offered some sidewalks but nobody told her about any place she wouldn't fit in” (49). Implicit in this passage is the suggestion that the only places she would “fit in” would be sites of menial labour or prostitution because, just as she was in the Caribbean, in Canada Elizete is a tool for patriarchal desire and work production. She cannot read her surroundings since from her first arrival, she “saw nothing or she saw raw surface” (46). She realizes that she “would never know [the city] because she wasn't looking at it” (49). The language she used to describe her surroundings in the Caribbean fails her in Canada. When she reaches for the

invented names that allow her to understand place, Elizete realizes that “[s]he would not come to know this place no matter how much she walked it, no matter if she set herself to knowing, she could not size it up. It resisted knowing, the words would not come” (69). Because she cannot see her surroundings or come to understand them through naming, Elizete is lost. Referring to Elizete’s ability to name in the Caribbean, Joanne Saul argues that “Elizete’s act of naming shows how the rupture with the past – being cut off from history – might in theory have the potential to open up a space of creativity, by however small an act” (60). Elizete’s powerless position in the Caribbean and the failure of language for her in Canada, however, highlight the theoretical¹ nature of Saul’s argument. What limited creativity and authority Elizete gains through naming in the Caribbean is undermined by the brutal reality of her life there while the loss of language in Canada denies even that incomplete authorization.

The blindness that Elizete turns on Toronto is reflected in the city’s response to her: “This city didn’t pay any mind, everybody looked straight ahead of themselves. . . . since landing at the mall it had been three weeks and she’d faded, she hoped, into the concrete and glass” (48-49). Ironically, the blind indifference that threatens her is also that which she seeks for survival. In order to remain on the streets and escape potential deportation, Elizete must navigate the paradoxical position of being invisible and hyper-visible. She hopes she has “faded” in order to escape notice, but she must also ensure that “the cops take notice, a crack head they figured, not homeless, countryless, landless, nameless. No. Crack head” (48). Simultaneously, she must learn “how to . . . disappear” (57; ellipses in original).

¹ The difference between what is theoretically viable and what is materially dangerous recurs throughout Brand’s novels. Later chapters discuss how Brand marks this distinction through her attention to the diverse experiences of mobility, especially the difference between legal and illegal border crossings.

Joanna Luft argues that “Canada offers up a killing irony to the Caribbean immigrant² by making the condition of her survival – her disappearance – the means of her psychic demise” (44).

Eventually escaping literal homelessness, Elizete finds unstable domestic home-spaces in which to live, but these spaces are always volatile and subject to immediate and unpredictable dissolution. These spaces “[fall] apart under suspicion, because suspicion was like air and the only thing you could go on” (Brand, *In* 57); “Suspicion could make people disappear from a room without a word or a trace. It could empty a building, crush it or melt it like a secret bomb” (58). When her fragile space is raided by the immigration authorities, Elizete “slid like a fish, out the back door, while they handcuffed the men. Like a fish, no clothes, no shoes, no nothing, air for water, asphalt for feet” (61).³ The threat of deportation makes suspicion powerful and prevents full connection even with fellow illegal immigrants. Though Elizete comes to share space with another woman from home, she must be careful because “you don’t trust nobody here” (79). Thus, when they do connect temporarily it must also be precariously, for “[i]f they didn’t feel precarious something would be wrong. And at moments when they felt safe from each other, they exchanged stories about how cunning you had to be to live here” (79). The fragility of their connection is stressed by the preposition “from” rather than “with”; Elizete and her room-mate must be certain that they are “safe from each other” and the potential for each to betray the other.

As an illegal immigrant and a homeless woman, each space that Elizete inhabits is simultaneously public and private. The link between her sexuality and her illegality is made

² Though Luft refers to “the Caribbean immigrant,” it is important to acknowledge the diversity of immigrant experiences. Class, race, gender, and legal citizenship, among other factors, alter the contexts of each immigrant. Resisting a unifying “immigrant experience” becomes particularly important when considering Brand’s memoir alongside her fiction.

³ The language of this passage parallels the fish imagery used upon her first arrival in Canada as Elizete is easily reverted to the same position of powerlessness.

clear when Abena initially misinterprets Elizete's visit to the women's centre as an illegal immigrant seeking help because she is pregnant: "Anybody could see that she was illegal she thought and she supposed the other went along with it. Pregnant and illegal. One thing followed the other. Trying to be legal you became pregnant and even more illegal. One way or the other, a woman was always pregnant" (233). As M. NourbeSe Philip explains in "Dis Place – The Space Between," a woman's "inner space between the legs" is under continuous threat of rape in public space, and this threat forces her to read space through the lens of that danger (75). Furthermore, the oppression of Black women's bodies compounds the perpetual threat of rape in public space because her inner space has been historically "a public space" (77). For Elizete, as an illegal immigrant and a homeless woman, the threat to the "inner space between the legs" (75) is constant, for she has no private space; every space she inhabits is a public one. Elizete thus lives – in the streets of Toronto – the duality of private and public spaces that Philip explains is the historical condition of Black female slaves and, she argues, their female diasporic descendants. While Elizete literalizes the merging of private and public spaces, Abena vocalizes the severity of the public threat when she cautions Elizete to go home: "this is where a white man stabs your Black woman body eleven times and goes back to work the next morning; down east, it happened, calmly" (Brand, *In* 109). All that Canada offers female Caribbean immigrants is a threat to their "womanness," which will be "quartered over kitchen, factory, men's dicks" (109).

Elizete knows too well the truth of Abena's admonitions, for she has already had her inner space violated in Canada:

A man you don't know bends you against a wall, a wall in a room, your room. He says this is the procedure, he says you have no rights here, he says

I can make it easier for you if I want, you could get sent back. His dick searches your womb. He says you girls are all the same, whores, sluts, you'll do anything. His dick is a machete, a knife, all the sharp things found on a kitchen table, all the killing things found in a tool shed. He says don't think about moving, I can find you. He shakes the blood off his knife and leaves.

(89)

Just as she lived as an animal object for patriarchal desire in the Caribbean, in Canada Elizete is a sexual object of exploitation. In the domestic space where she works, her employer rapes her and she is left with no recourse or protection: "He knows she will not go to a hospital. He knows that she will not go to a police station. She knows that she cannot go back to the sewing factory. She won't tell anyone" (93). Whatever faint promise Canada may have offered Elizete is undone here. She is as devoid of safe home-spaces as she had been in the Caribbean, and those volatile spaces that she does inhabit are just as violent and dangerous.

"love like this is too small for her"

The second half of the novel follows Verlia's journey from Trinidad to Canada and back to the Caribbean. While Elizete's Caribbean home-spaces are characterized by violence and repression, Verlia's are places of suffocation from her earliest memory. Cursed, she feels, with a family over which she must guard and from which she longs to escape, Verlia "can't remember ever sleeping soundly or without fear" (121). At an early age, "she decided never to sleep again. But to grow up and go away" (125-26). Her denial of sleep and her family is linked to her desire to escape her own constricting body: "She knows that drawing breath is the first mistake; it limits you to feeling your finite body, that

empty box with nothing but a greed for air. She'd like to live, exist or be herself in some other place, less confining, less pinned down, less torturous, less fleshy to tell the truth" (127). Even the very body that she inhabits is too close and constricting for Verlia, who longs to escape the "waiting to live" of life with her family in the Caribbean (131). The disorder and chaos in which they live and over which she keeps a guarding vigil ensure that her home-space is never safe or stable even as she feels inextricably constrained and repressed in its place.

Confined in the Caribbean to a life of waiting with a constant yearning for escape, Verlia does flee her home and family by migrating to Canada. Verlia imagines her move from Trinidad to Canada as a move from the margins to the centre and from ill-defined personhood to a well-defined self. Canada, she thinks, offers her the chance "to become some person at the centre of a life, the bits of her figured out" (134). In the Caribbean, she had been both a witness to her family and a witness to the world. The language of margin and centre recurs through the image of a television screen watched from outside a window. In the Caribbean, Verlia was confined within domestic space by her family, but she was also confined to watching and waiting for a world that she imagined as centre – the white world – a world that she could only glimpse from a doubly removed position: through a television screen barely glimpsed through a window. Entering Canada, Verlia believes that she "was about to step into the world, into the thick grey flashing bulb of the world where one acts instead of watches where one is, is, the sound of 'is' buzzing through her. Coming here, leaving there was the charm, the first of all of her acts" (136). She imagines herself stepping into an agency that is not afforded Black women in the Caribbean, but her imagination also replicates the colonialist pattern of margin and centre. The illusion of this

dichotomy will be revealed in her experiences in Canada, but the fallacy is undercut here also with the references to stage and screen – to the world that she can only imagine.

Upon first arriving at the airport in Toronto, Verlia “feels out there, in the centre” and in the middle of the “screen” (137). She “assume[s] a cinematic distance” at first, as “[t]he lights of the city *lensed* her entrance” to “the world of a movie’s world” (137; my italics). The vision that she has of entering the television screen and taking centre stage is followed immediately by her departure for Sudbury. Though she tried to envision the town, “she cannot imagine it because Sudbury is an English name” (135). Indeed, what she had imagined from her position beyond the window is startling in reality: “The whites are real. She had expected them to feel like plastic to the touch, like a screen. White. She had thought that it was a style, a way of living well that perhaps anyone could acquire” (135-36).

The reality of stepping into the screen is, in fact, a continued sense of being marginalized, of being denied the centre, for everyone in Sudbury but Verlia, her aunt, and her uncle are white; and instead of feeling powerful in the centre of the screen, Verlia “feels a glare, a standing off, a glow around their bodies, her face burns in the grey light” (137). Leaving Toronto for Sudbury, Verlia realizes, “This was not the middle of the world. Where she had planned to be. It is an iron road” (138). Sudbury becomes not the centre or the opportunity for escape from the confinement that Verlia experienced in her Caribbean home-spaces, but instead a continued captivity and another form of slavery. Brand makes this parallel clear when Verlia reads her uncle’s subtext: “they’re saying yes, they’re right, be who they want you to be, tighten your stride, be as thin as burnt paper, taste dust, you’re a nigger, be a good nigger, serve, find some nondescript white people, these here in Sudbury are as good as any, and genuflect” (149-50).

Interestingly, the threat of what Walcott calls Sudbury's role as "the site of black suffocation" (*Black* 47) is figured through its position as domestic space. Verlia immediately senses that her aunt and uncle, childless, long for her to take the absent role, "to fill out the little picture" (Brand, *In* 140). She reads this desire to duplicate a heteronormative family as part of their desire to fit in a white world where they are simultaneously invisible and hyper-visible:

In Sudbury, if they conform to some part of the puzzle, they are convinced that they will be rewarded with acceptance. Ordinarity. Man, woman, husband, wife, couple, parents, Black. They are counting on the first six words. They think that her addition will fill out some of the rest somehow, she senses, make them white in this white town. (141)

Such hope of assimilation, Verlia affirms, is a "bargain" (147) and a "lie" because they are forced to sacrifice parts of themselves – "Don't bring any of that Blackness here" – and yet "they will remain odd, they will never be noticed as fully there" (142).

Again, the repressive nature of domestic space is linked to claustrophobic confinement and weighed upon physicality. While her aunt and uncle seemingly "have decided to cut themselves out in this way to avoid the trouble of their skin" (149), Verlia cannot agree to "a life shrinking in its smallest place" (147). She declares their love to be "too small for her," and so, too, is the "anything" that her uncle promises (148). This constricting "love" and promise of "anything" that are "too small" leave Verlia feeling "heavy" and "nervous" (148). Like the repression of her Caribbean home-space which left her pierced with anxiety, domestic space in Sudbury awakens Verlia's claustrophobia and renews her longing to escape. And, indeed, her longing to escape the repressive suffocation of domestic space – figured here as weighing her down bodily – is imagined as an escape

not only from the suffocation of Sudbury and domesticity but from the physical stranglehold she feels on her body: “She cannot see how they think that this is love, how they think that she should live with them quietly dying in acceptance, asking permission and begging pardon, cutting herself off from any growing, solidifying when she wants to liquefy, to make fluid, grow into her Black self” (148-49).

The space where Verlia believes she will be able to “grow into her Black self” is Toronto, and it is to there that she escapes. In Toronto, “big as it is, such as it is, she can finally sleep. She feels safe, such as it is. There are so many lives being lived, such difference she is sure that her singular one will not determine the make of the day” (153). No longer under the compulsion to watch over her family, and free of the constricting small spaces she inhabited in the Caribbean and in Sudbury, Verlia can forego her vigil and step out of the role of guardian and into the role of agent. Indeed, the newfound agency is emphasized when Brand writes, “She knows that this city will not disappoint her because she expects nothing; only what she can make” (154).

What Verlia makes of her own domestic space is a place that defies the chaos of her Caribbean home through its scarcity: “She’ll never furnish this room, a place to sleep perhaps, a table to eat from but nothing else. She wants it bare, everything bare. No photographs, no sentiment, no memory. Everything down to the bone, everything she thinks, now bone sharp and clean” (156). Standing in opposition to the constricting ties of the Caribbean and Sudbury, her domestic space in Toronto is devoid of suffocation because of its absence of familial connections. Moreover, Verlia is able to sever the ties to her former life and her former self. She can, in a sense, be made – that is, make herself – anew.

In fact, to say that she expects nothing of the city is both imprecise and exact. What she expects is this ability to sever connections and strip herself bare. The location itself,

however, is immaterial to her; Toronto is not a place from which she expects anything, but it is, in fact, a place from which she expects nothing – no thing to tie her down: “And it doesn’t matter that it’s Toronto or a country named Canada. Right now that is incidental” (159). What matters is not the specificity of place but the distance from the confinement of home that the city offers. She could have made herself anew in “any city from which she could look back from a distance separating her own being from its everyday pull. Any city where she could be new. Any city where she could start out . . . no family, no grief” (159-60). Verlia expects nothing of Toronto because it offers her no connection to her past and no connection to it as a place. She can finally sleep in its parameters because she has achieved the breathing room, the separation and the distance for which she has always longed.

Utter disconnection, however, is not what Verlia seeks or finds, for she comes to the city to seek out the Black Power movement, and in it she finds a temporary community home-space. In contrast to the too small love offered by her aunt and uncle in Sudbury, in the movement in Toronto, Verlia “come[s] into some real love” (158). While the strictures of her familial relations held her down, the newness of the movement and its surrogate family frees her: “Henson-Garvey Park, we named it, right here in Toronto. Look at us laughing into this new name and into our new selves” (158). The movement gives Verlia the opportunity to remake herself and to choose her connections. This real love she experiences in political solidarity is expressed as “joy” and contrasted with the claustrophobic false love of her biological kin. Brand writes, “joy wasn’t in anything she’d seen so far. Not in the family, not in what they told her, not in working fields, not in eating, not in what passed for affection, not in family, cousins, brothers, uncles, aunts” (164). The repetition of “family” emphasizes the inadequacy of these relations and the domestic home-

spaces they provided. The “joy” and “real love” of the movement, on the other hand, offer Verlia liberation rather than suffocation.

In a demonstration march with the movement, as the “crowd gather[s] like a sea,” Verlia

marched in the middle of it, near the front trying to look serious but wanting to laugh for the joy bubbling in her chest, the crowd around her like sugar. . . . The crowd like sugar down her back, sisters and brothers to the left and right of her marching. So much goes through her when the chant pushes from her lips, she wants to cry and all of her feels like melting into it, sugar. “Power to the People!” The crowd and her voice sugaring. (167)

Verlia is finally in the centre that she longed for, but it is not the falsely imagined centre of a white world television screen or the colonialist middle of a centre-margin dichotomy; rather, she is within the centre of a collective that affirms itself as present and heard. In “melting” into this collective community space, Verlia finally escapes the threat of solidification and is able “to liquefy, to make fluid, to grow into her Black self” (149). The agency and power implicit in this act is emphasized by Brand’s declaration that “[t]hey invent sugar” (168), an inversion of control over the sugarcane plantation that symbolizes oppression throughout the novel. Indeed, the “invent[ion]” of sugar implies a reassertion of control over space that pre-exists colonial oppression. The power of community in that moment both claims authority in the space in which they march and *reclaims* control over the space of Black exploitation in the Caribbean.

The community space created in the movement becomes Verlia’s home, and it is a home wherein connections are forged along political rather than familial lines. The ability to choose connection based on political solidarity is paramount to Verlia: “The cell has

been her life here. Holding her together like family, it's the only family she can bear. Comradeship chosen, friendship that was not chance or biology" (192). The power to choose her own family affords Verlia freedom from the suffocating connections that plague her relations with biological family. This chosen family based on political ideals, furthermore, replicates what Chandra Mohanty defines as her own home-space in "Genealogies of Community, Home, and Nation." Identifying with feminist women of colour in the United States, Mohanty envisions her

home, not as a comfortable, stable, inherited, and familiar space but instead as an imaginative, politically charged space in which the familiarity and sense of affection and commitment lay in shared collective analysis of social injustice, as well as a vision of radical transformation. Political solidarity and a sense of family could be melded together imaginatively to create a strategic space I could call 'home.' (128)

Though Verlia initially finds comfort in her own equivalent of this "strategic space," the movement as a communal home-space is not ultimately enough to prevent the suffocation that Verlia always longs to escape.

"People," Verlia realizes, "tied you down, all their fear and weakness tied you down," and "[s]he wanted distance from that" (Brand, *In* 190). Indeed, she begins to feel the same claustrophobia in her community space as she felt in the domestic spaces of Sudbury and the Caribbean. Her once fulfilling work "had begun to seem endless, useless, and she hated that feeling. Just like home again. She needed to move, feel light" (190). Again, being weighed down physically recurs here in her description of the claustrophobic associations; where the liquid collectivity had once liberated her, she now finds herself bound and stifled by the connections.

Dissatisfied with the movement's political progress, Verlia joins a radical cell, but with the changing connections comes a change in the freeing collectivity that she once experienced: "She no longer knew almost everyone any more and gradually all the greetings shared, the power to the people brother and sister faded into vague nods of anonymity" (192). The disappearance into anonymity and the dissolution of her community home-space threatens Verlia's sense of self. Where once the nothingness that Toronto offered her was freeing, Verlia now finds herself fading into nothingness herself. She wonders if she will "become one of those women arrested in the long gaze of better memories even if they weren't better, just not here?" (198). As she ponders this question, the pronoun slips between the "you" of "one of those women" and the "she" of Verlia until she realized that "here does not hold still, you absorb it and it . . . you disappear" (199; ellipses in original). Though the city once offered her the opportunity to strip bare of connections and discover herself, it now threatens to dissolve her completely. Just as she had felt in Trinidad, Verlia now "only felt things as someone watching but not living" (94). She loses her memory and her sense of self. Verlia later explains to Elizete that "her self got shoved down behind her senses" (94). She was, in fact, no longer a self but an object: "She'd changed into something like a sidewalk or a box or a pencil or a bit of paper folded in a pocket, she'd lost a way of making herself exist" (95). Moreover, she loses her sense of identity and the purpose that gave her agency. She is stripped of the opportunity for agency and to be an actor in her own life just as she is stripped of all connections. In her decision to forsake Toronto for political agitation in the Caribbean, Verlia realizes that – like her aunt and uncle who had stripped away parts of themselves to belong and not belong in Canada – she "had deserted herself she knew, given up a continent of voices she knew then for fragmented ones" (95).

Luft argues that Verlia's loss of self is a result of stripping herself too bare and that the very thing she sought in Toronto – its nothingness – is what undoes her. Canada, she argues, “fulfills Verlia's desire to be disembodied through its practice of rendering Caribbean immigrants invisible” (42), but the result is that “Verlia becomes too fleshless, too spare” (40). Initially, what Verlia had loved about the city was “its confrontation, its concrete rudeness, its clarity. There was a way that it stood against her plainly and right in her face. It did not deceive. It was against her from the beginning” (Brand, *In* 162-63). While the initial overtness of its confrontation is comforting, the futility of fighting against a world she cannot access and which does not recognize her ultimately wears Verlia down.

Elsewhere in the novel, Verlia describes the city as comprised of two worlds: “One so opaque that she ignores it as much as she can – this one is white and runs things; it is as glassy as its downtown buildings and as secretive; its conversations are not understandable, its motions something to keep an eye on, something to look for threat in” (180). Verlia lives in the “other world growing steadily at its borders” (180). The division of the city is so exact that Verlia “knows that you can live in a city which is divided even though there are no gates, no observable blockades. She lives in this city for years without talking personally to a white person or having one talk to her” (181); and initially this separation is comforting to her, for she “cannot imagine being friends with the enemy or that any one of them could surface from their city long enough to notice another human being” (181). Indeed, she is excited by the change and growth provided by the “new world growing steadily on the edge of the other” (180), where she can “make it seem as if she's never left home. Except that everyone is from someplace else and the cadences are not the same, new rhythms have to be made and her mouth is soft wire around these new sounds. She willingly changes” (181). But this community space generated through shared and shifting

language, too, dissolves in the city until “[t]here was nowhere that that talk could take them any more, no significance to it except as quaint speech, talk no longer working like broom or shelter” (96). The “shelter” of community that it offered dissolves in Toronto, and Verlia realizes that the excitement and generative possibilities of everybody being “from someplace else” is negated because “this city does not give them a chance to say this; it pushes their confusion underground, it wraps them in the same skin and slides them to the side like so much meat wrapped in brown paper” (182). The cold confrontation ultimately reduces Verlia to an object and denies her the ability to create or inhabit home-spaces that can be anything but suffocating or self-dissolving. As Luft explains, what Verlia sought was an escape from the stifling connections that bound her and were figured as a weighed upon physicality. In Toronto, however, Verlia is plagued by “the weight in her head of airlessness, of not belonging” (194).

“Seduction is a thing between a man and a woman”

One place in the novel where the space to belong and share connections may be temporarily found is in the sexual relationships between women. Luft argues that Brand portrays “the Caribbean woman herself as a passage, or a means for passage, to another place” (33). She continues to explain that

In bodily terms, the image of a passage evokes the sexual and reproductive aspects of a woman’s body, aspects that historically have been inseparable in patriarchal discourse. The lesbianism of Brand’s characters contravenes this confining equation because it allows for women’s sexual pleasure free of an attendant collusion with, or subservience to, a patriarchal economy of either child production or sexual abuse. (34)

Luft aligns the scenes of lesbian love with water and the ability to liquefy that recalls Verlia's experience in the movement's march. "The sensual physicality of these love scenes," argues Luft, "foils the brutality of heterosexual encounters in the book and casts lesbian relationships as spaces of safety and integrity for women to immerse themselves in the tangibility of their own and others' bodies" (36). While Luft is correct to point out the links between liberating water, passages, and lesbian love in this novel, and while Elizete's and Verlia's lovemaking is enough to expel Isaiah and transform the abusive domestic space, there are ultimately no safe places for Black women in the novel.

The lesbian love between Elizete and Verlia, indeed, does stand in opposition to heterosexual relationships. Verlia twice explains to Elizete the difference between what they share and what is shared between men and women. "I am not a man," Verlia tells Elizete, "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" (Brand, *In* 72). Verlia again expresses the potential for artificiality in the relationships between men and women as opposed to the sincerity of lesbian love when she cautions, "Elizete, don't try and seduce me. . . . If you're coming you come with your head clear. Seduction is a thing between a man and a woman. There is no seduction between women. This is harder" (74). Because of the finite possibilities for women, they cannot "seduce" or "lie" to each other; the raw experience of one another is imaged as more genuine and real than the heterosexual experience. However, as Verlia thinks about her relationship with Abena while in Toronto, she considers that "[e]very communion has some betrayal anyway – every time you touch someone, every time you open your mouth" (186). Because of this necessary betrayal, the sincerity Brand ascribes to lesbian love becomes all the more vital.

Nevertheless, the raw purity and safety potentially available in lesbian relationships is as fragile as all connections are in this novel.

Just as Verlia rejects the seduction of promises between women, she also rejects domesticity. Whether one in which she is a child, as in the home-spaces in Sudbury and the Caribbean, or one in which she is a lover, as in the home-spaces she inhabits in Toronto with Abena, Verlia cannot abide domestic space that might threaten her liberty. In Toronto, the space she shares with Abena is as claustrophobic as Sudbury and the Caribbean:

This small space getting smaller, down to her and Abena, was stifling and hopeless. Nothing more hopeless than two people down to themselves for company, for air; nothing more hopeless than a room where all the talk is why not and what about me and I feel this and I want that and love me, love me, love me. Nothing more hopeless than a house where some accustomed play-acting had to be done and repeated in every house across cities, forests, ice-caps, continents. Dull language on tongues to [sic] lazy to say no and this is not how I'll live, tied to a single human being. (97-98)

Verlia's distaste for all forms of domesticity is later made clear: "She wants nothing more. Not the bed that comes with it, not the kitchen, not the key to the door. She hates the sticky domesticity lurking behind them. . . . Just her sparse room, sparse, sparse and clear, just the empty floor and sometimes a woman with her back to kiss, her company to keep all night" (204). Though lesbian love stands in opposition to heterosexual love and offers momentary comfort, the safety offered in its domestic home-spaces is as threatening to Verlia as any other incarnation of domesticity.

Early in the text, Elizete declares, "A woman can be a bridge, limber and living, breathless, because she don't know where the bridge might lead. . . . A woman can be a

bridge from these bodies whipping cane. A way to cross over” (16). For Elizete, Verlia is her bridge, and her death does serve as an impetus for Elizete to “cross over” to Canada; however, the crossing ultimately leads only to Elizete’s struggle as a homeless and illegal immigrant. While she may have moved beyond the cane plantation, Elizete is still a neoslave in the factories she works; she is still an object of patriarchal desire; and she is still oppressed and without a safe home. While the love she shares with Verlia is the only home Elizete finds in the novel, it, too, is ultimately too fleeting to protect her. Because of the fragile positions of Black women in both the Caribbean and Canada, the potential for safety that Luft argues exists in Brand’s vision of lesbian love must always be brief and ultimately elusive.

“being here and not being here”

What Elizete and Verlia seek in Canada is to escape the connections that threaten them in the Caribbean. The problem with Toronto, however, is that the city offers them too much of what they seek and they are left bereft in its disconnection. As Luft argues, “[u]nlike in the Caribbean, place in Canada is one not of agonizing associations but of agonizing disassociations. As Verlia discovers after fifteen years and Elizete senses immediately, Canada refuses to recognize the Caribbean immigrant or to be recognized by her,” and though the position may initially seem freeing, the “indifference” of the city masks an “active hostility” that ultimately threatens to destroy each character (28). In the forced invisibility of marginalization, Caribbean immigrants become mere objects, for what affects “Third World people going to the white man country” carries “an inhuman quality. Already nobody was interested in whether they felt mixed up or fucked up. Already their stories were becoming lies because nobody wanted to listen” (Brand, *In* 60). This

indifference to their stories renders them lies “because what you say doesn’t matter. And there’s no tracing or lasting to your stories” (60). Moreover, the city’s lack of recognition and enmity not only renders one’s stories lies but may actually rob one’s ability to speak, as both Elizete and Verlia experience Toronto’s “way of making you speechless” (94). And if one is able to survive the speechlessness, the homelessness, and the disappearance of self – as Abena’s mother did – the result is self-hatred. Abena explains, “a whole generation” of Caribbean women “went to England or America or Canada or some big city as fast as their wit could get them there because they were women and all they had to live on was wit since nobody considered them whole people” (230). However, these women do not find that they are “whole people” in their new cities because “when they spilled out on this other continent they understood the first time a white voice spoke to them that they were less than they thought” (232).

Thus, when Abena tells Elizete, “Go home, this is not a place for us” (229), the weight of the experiences of the novel’s immigrants declares how true this statement is. The futility of the statement’s absurd truth rings in further musing on Canada’s inadequacy as home:

“Go home, this is not a place for us.” Well, as if anybody thought so. As if anybody would dream. Everybody knew it was temporary. This was a place to make money, someone had said to her, not a place to live. What money could be made. None if your skin was Black and nothing hanging between your legs. Oh, you could scrimp, take any damn thing they had to offer and hear them bad-talk your colour. But you couldn’t live. (229)

Indeed, in this novel Canada cannot offer Caribbean women the space necessary to build their own home-spaces, but a return to the Caribbean is as hopeless a crossing as the

immigration to Canada. Even as Brand criticizes the racist and sexist failings of the nation and exposes the illusion of Canada as an adequate national home-space for Caribbean immigrants, she also illustrates that “no country will do” (110). *In Another Place* declares that there is no “home” to which Brand’s characters can return and no space to build a “home” in Canada, for the condition of being a Black diasporic woman in Canada or the Caribbean is the condition of homelessness.

The continuity between the conditions of Caribbean and Canadian life is considered by Pamela McCallum and Christian Olbey when they argue that *In Another Place* is a neoslave narrative, a term they use “to refer to novels that retell the stories of slavery in narratives marked by postmodern formal innovations” (163), and that draw “explicitly on conventions and narratorial techniques developed by the antebellum slave narrators” (164).⁴ They argue that “what becomes readily apparent in Brand’s deployment of the neoslave narrative is that this generic emergence is a strategic means of building on past cultural constructions of oppression and liberation in order to speak more effectively to contemporary forms of oppression and liberation” (165). The most relevant to this chapter of the conventions that McCallum and Olbey identify in Brand’s first novel is her use of Canada as destination of flight for both Elizete and Verlia. For the writers of the antebellum slave narratives, “constructions of Canada are always already utopic ones, standing as ideal antitheses to the material reality of the slave state of the US” (168). “Of course,” they continue, “the status of Canada as utopia is highly ambiguous, no less for Verlia, Elizete, and Abena than for the nineteenth-century fugitive slaves” (168).

⁴ “Of [James] Olney’s twelve identifiable conventions, three – flight, the description of work, and the omnipresence of the whip – along with a fourth to which he alludes but does not explicitly list – the construction of collectivity – are crucial to Brand’s novel” (McCallum 167).

Indeed, if Brand's purpose in drawing on this generic convention is to expose "contemporary forms of oppression and liberation," it is by debunking the myth of Canada as utopia and by revealing the continuity of oppression from the Caribbean to Canada.

McCallum and Olbey explain:

Canada's conventional status as utopia within the antebellum slave narrative is first alluded to – its opposition to the neoslavery of Grenada, its role as haven holding out the promise of freedom from patriarchal oppression and the brutal forms of precapitalist agricultural labour – then steadily deconstructed by Brand, not only through representing the activities of virulent racists such as the Klan but also by depicting the blunted expectations and stunted lives of her immigrants. (168-69)

Luft also reads the continuity of oppression between the Caribbean and Canada as Brand's indictment of Canada's supposed role as different. She reads the novel as paralleling Adela, Elizete's adopted ancestor who was taken from Africa to be enslaved in the Caribbean, and the two main characters in order to display "the severity of the mental and corporeal deterioration of self that follows upon immigration to Canada for Afro-Caribbeans, for whom the fairy tale of assimilation reads more like a slave narrative" (48). This paralleling, Luft argues, enables Brand to formulate a "condemnation of racial politics in Canada" (28). Indeed, McCallum and Olbey and Luft demonstrate the historical parallels between slavery, the neoslavery of the Caribbean, and the experiences of Elizete and Verlia in Toronto. Saul argues that "the chains of slavery echo on a bus on Jane Street in Toronto because history is inescapable" (61). In fact, the passage to which Saul refers demonstrates Brand's view of the certainty of oppression for her characters, her vision of life in the Black diaspora, and the inevitability that all home-spaces will fail her characters. In the passage that mocks an

immigrant desire to “[slough] off skin over the Atlantic dressing in your real self,” Brand writes, “Here. Impermanence, which perhaps you felt all along. Perhaps it was built into you long before you came and coming was not so much another place but travelling, a continuation, absently, the ringing in your ears of iron bracelets on stones, the ancient wicked music of chain and the end of the world” (*In* 65).

Home cannot and does not exist for Brand’s characters whether in Canada or in the Caribbean. The title of the novel itself, as Heather Smyth explains, announces that “place, or in particular a sense of belonging to a place, is always deferred” (“Sexual” 151). The inability to be at home anywhere for either character renders each homeless and under perpetual threat of violence, suffocation, alienation and destruction. Such a position of homelessness, it has been argued, may lead to the potential for power. George, Davies, Kaplan, and Martin and Mohanty have discussed the active feminist possibilities of rejecting the stability of home. Indeed, George’s discussion of the necessary “daily resisting of the safety proffered by safe places” (33) sounds much like Verlia’s desire to avoid the “bargain” offered by the “lie” of domesticity in Sudbury. The physical and psychic devastation of homelessness for these characters, however, renders the potential for political empowerment void. I do not wish to suggest that these critics are blind to the debilitating dangers of destabilizing homes. George cautions that deterritorializing home as a political imperative presupposes having a home to leave. For people who have never experienced home, community or nation, deterritorialization as empowerment may be impossible (George 33). Martin and Mohanty, likewise, recognize an awareness “of the risk and terror inherent in breaking through the walls of home” (91). Though these critics have gestured towards the dangers implicit in rejecting all stable homes, *In Another Place, Not Here* demonstrates how “the metaphoric uses of spatial tropes have led to a problematic

discourse of utopian mobility that conflates the privileged experiences of writers and intellectuals with those of the less fortunate immigrants” (Behdad 401-02). Thus, while an “exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional” (Said 185), the reality of dislocation for Brand’s characters is that homes cannot even be strategically provisional without threatening the bodies found within them.

CHAPTER TWO
Disconnection and Disintegration:
Unstable Home-Spaces in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*

While *In Another Place, Not Here* was concerned with making explicit the particular failings of Canada as a national home-space for female Caribbean immigrants, *At the Full and Change of the Moon* is less preoccupied with Canada as nation than it is with what Erica Johnson calls the “existential condition that results from [the characters’] inheritance of their ancestors’ traumas” (par. 21), that is, the condition of being a member of the Black diaspora. Indeed, several critics⁵ have noted that the novel’s tracing of one family’s multi-generational dispersal throughout the world replicates the Black Atlantic. The continuity between Eula’s experience of failed home-spaces in Canada and the failed home-spaces of both her ancestors in the Caribbean and her relatives around the world signals Brand’s attention to such an “existential condition” of figurative homelessness irrespective of the particular nation state where her characters reside. Indeed, the impermanence and instability that Eula experiences in Canada is the realization of a condition which she was always already experiencing as a member of the Black diaspora. Brand depicts the desire for an alternative to this condition of dispersal following the trauma of the Middle Passage, an alternative to Eula’s sense that they “had been scattered out with a violent randomness” (*At* 258). In the radically unstable home-spaces that Eula occupies as a member of the Black diaspora, however, she loses even the most tenuous of connections to such an alternative, and this disconnection threatens her with disintegration.

Like her first novel, *At the Full and Change of the Moon* follows Caribbean immigrants as they flee unsatisfactory Caribbean home-spaces for potential homes in

⁵ See, for example, Salamishah Tillet’s review of *At the Full* and Rinaldo Walcott’s “Rhetorics of Blackness, Rhetorics of Belonging.”

Europe and North America; and like *In Another Place*'s Elizete and Verlia, these characters find themselves figuratively homeless in their destinations. In Canada, Eula finds that domestic and community home-spaces remain oppressive and hostile; moreover, in Canada, she loses all sense of connection to family and to her past. Trying to escape what she regards as stasis in the Caribbean, Eula finds in Canada threatening instability and impermanence. The radical instability of Eula's Canadian home-space denies her intimate connection at every level and threatens to dissolve her sense of self.

Marlene Goldman notes that “[v]irtually all of Brand’s characters are denied, or wilfully refuse, the solace of home and the experience of belonging, compelled, as they are, to navigate the flux and change instigated by the Middle Passage” (17). In this navigation of “flux” or “in-betweenness” (19), Goldman discerns an alternative to home and belonging in the concept of drifting. In fact, conceptually, the novel provides the alternative genealogical line that Eula desires in its charting of the characters’ drift through the Black Atlantic. What is conceptually powerful for Brand the novelist, however, remains dangerous for her characters, for while *At the Full* offers a mapped genealogy that counters the rupture of the Middle Passage, the power and the map are never accessed by her characters. While reading the diasporic condition of figurative homelessness as empowering drifting might be theoretically powerful for critics and for Brand as novelist, her characters themselves continue to be threatened by the instability and inadequacies of their home-spaces. The reality of diaspora for the characters of *At the Full* is that the figurative homelessness of drifting is characterized by loneliness, alienation and fractured connections (to the past and to one another).

The “Drift” of Diaspora and Traumatic Haunting across the Black Atlantic

The first two chapters of *At the Full* chronicle Marie Ursule’s rebellion on Mon Chagrin plantation in the nineteenth century and her daughter Bola’s life at Culebra Bay where she bore the children who would be scattered to make the novel’s many generations. Following this initial section, the bulk of *At the Full* is divided into largely distinct chapters that follow the lives of those descendants into the late twentieth century. In the chapter titled “Blue Airmail Letter,” Eula Childs writes a letter to her dead mother detailing her life in Toronto. Just as *In Another Place*’s Verlia left her Caribbean home to escape its stifling repression, Eula escapes to Canada from Terre Bouillante, a town figured as suffocating. Terre Bouillante, once the Maroon camp that her ancestor Kamena futilely sought, becomes, by contrast, a stuffy, choking space for Kamena’s descendants. Terre Bouillante roughly translates as boiling earth, a name which evokes both the dried claustrophobic land that Eula and Priest describe, while “boiling” simultaneously signals liquid imagery. For Kamena, Terre Bouillante is bubbling, boiling, overflowing with life and freedom, but a return to this site is always deferred. Indeed, when he fails to find his way back to the Maroon camp, Brand describes him as “emaciated from lack of water. . . . Kamena had turned into a skeleton searching for his Maroonage. The last day [Bola] recalled of him, he was burnt up with walking and dried away with crying, starved with remembering” (*At* 60). Unable to return to the boiling earth of Terre Bouillante, Kamena dries out and disappears from Bola’s life and the novel. This land that Kamena sought, however, does not afford such liquid power to his descendants. For Eula and Priest, Terre Bouillante as a home-space is suffocating and ultimately inhospitable.

Bola’s son, identified as “the one who stole her footsteps” on the genealogical chart that opens the novel, fled Culebra Bay and found his way to Terre Bouillante, where he

“built that almost airless house of ours, so strong, so impenetrable” (254). Though Bola’s son built the house as security against impermanence, the strength and impenetrability act to contain as much as they protect his descendants. Eula describes the house as “small” while the strength of its barriers firmly separate its interior from the world outside. Eula recalls that “there was always so much confusion. . . . Everything was uncontrollable. Our house was so small with so many people” (239-40). The interior chaos of the home, claustrophobic in its size and in its frenzied smothering, contrasts with the exterior of the town, which alternately smothers in its stillness. “Terre Bouillante,” Eula writes, “was so quiet outside, so hushed, it was at the same time as if life was not going on” (240). While the interior figures as chaos into which Eula is “lost” (239), the exterior presents an absolute stillness that stifles in its inactivity.

When Eula’s brother Carlyle (or Priest) recalls the same place, he remembers similar images of suffocating enclosures and stifling stillness: “It was the tightness of Terre Bouillante, the pervading secrecy that seemed to wrap itself around the small town” (139). The “airless” house that Eula describes is mirrored in the airless quality of the town itself: “The uniform latticed shutters of Terre Bouillante’s houses did not even open for a breeze” (140). While “the one who stole her footsteps” had loved that “everything [was] closed and secure, everything private” (140), for his descendants the town is a “prison” (141). While *In Another Place*’s Verlia is so restrained by her Caribbean home-space that she finds herself in a constant state of waiting to live, Terre Bouillante itself is described as lifeless. The qualities that enabled the town to survive as a Maroon camp and those that had appealed to a boy terrified by impermanence render the place stagnant and desolate for Brand’s contemporary characters: “What had taught Terre Bouillante to survive kept it from living and Carlyle felt it stifle him” (141). Moreover, the suffocating quality of the town and

home is depicted as shame in Priest's chapter: "An enveloping sense of shame wrapped around them all, and there was no cause he could point to for all this shame, and he didn't understand it and he didn't want it" (139). For Priest, the only way to escape this suffocating inheritance is to abandon all sense of shame by becoming a criminal. For Eula, the escape from Terre Bouillante's asphyxiation is her migration to Canada.

As a Maroon camp, Terre Bouillante was an ideal home-space for fleeing slaves who sought stability and disconnection from an outside world that hunted and enslaved them. For characters who want to experience the world, such a place is inadequate.⁶ Just as Verlia's Caribbean existence was imagined as life on the margins, Terre Bouillante is figured as past, as outside, as margin. Both Priest and Eula journey from a Caribbean "margin" to a metropolitan "centre" in their respective flights to the United States (New York) and Canada (Toronto). Just as Brand toyed with the centre-margin dichotomy in her first novel, images of the Caribbean as margin and North America as centre are undercut ironically in *At the Full*, for when her characters arrive in the imagined centre, they find themselves living in the margins of the metropolises.

Eula and Priest, however, are not the only characters suffocated by their Caribbean home-spaces. For Adrian and Maya Dovett, brother and sister born on the island of Curacao off the coast of Venezuela, their Caribbean home-spaces are similarly suffocating. In language that recalls both the suffocation described by Eula and Priest and the claustrophobic bodily weight of repressive home-spaces for *In Another Place's* Verlia, Maya describes how the weight of her father overwhelmed both their domestic space and the home-space of the island itself. Her father, Dovett, "filled the rooms of the house with

⁶ As I discuss in my Introduction, the ability to reject home necessitates some measure of safety. Though the world may still be a dangerous place for Eula and Priest, removed as they are from the threat of slavery, the context of their "safe" home differs from that of their ancestors.

his dense needs” (216). Like the uncontrollable chaos of Eula’s Terre Bouillante home, Dovett’s house is filled with anxiety because he made his family “worried and nervous and pessimistic even though what he wanted was what was right, better treatment, better places to live, better pay; but in his body it all felt heavy and distant and dense” (216). What Maya seeks is “weightlessness” (218), but her father “filled not only the house but the island with his heaviness, and she wanted to leave” (217). Maya and Adrian try to escape this weight in their flights to Amsterdam and the United States. As Salamishah Tillet argues, however, each flight results in an “incessant sense of wandering and homelessness” (915), for the characters “are fractured and limited by the racism and economics of their migrant countries” (916).

Repeatedly in the novel, characters are compelled to flee claustrophobic Caribbean space in attempts to free themselves of stifling oppression, often figured as weight. That is, they attempt to rid themselves of the claustrophobic weight of the legacy of slavery by fleeing the islands of their birth for Europe or North America. These characters seek both to better their material lives with dreams of immigration and, perhaps unconsciously, to rid themselves of the haunting shame that chokes them. Like Eula and Priest, however, Bola’s descendants cannot escape the legacy of slavery, a history from which they are alienated and simultaneously by which they are haunted.

In her review of the novel, Tillet refers to *At the Full* as a neoslave narrative. Maureen Moynagh categorizes the text as “postslavery literature” and quotes from George Handley’s *Postslavery Literatures in the Americas* to define the genre as texts that “return to slavery’s past . . . in order to understand its relationship to the present” (57). As such, *At the Full* operates with a political motive similar to the one Pamela McCallum and Christian Olbey read in *In Another Place, Not Here*. That is, in Brand’s first two novels, the “generic

emergence [of the neoslave narrative⁷] is a strategic means of building on past cultural constructions of oppression and liberation in order to speak more effectively to contemporary forms of oppression and liberation” (McCallum 165). *At the Full* is preoccupied with revealing slavery’s “relationship to the present” by uncovering the “contemporary forms of oppression” that persist as its legacy. In demonstrating how the crimes of the past haunt her characters, Brand reveals the continued oppression of their contemporary lives. The continuity of slavery’s legacy and its inherent oppression finds its fullest expression in the figurative homelessness of each of the novel’s twentieth-century characters, for, as Johnson argues, “the psychic exile experienced by Marie Ursule and Kamena becomes manifest in their descendents through a proliferating narrative of exile” (par. 20), an exile that finds no relief whether in the Caribbean, Europe, or North America. Kamena describes the perpetual condition of exile when he asks, “Do we arrive already empty, gut of everything already, knowing no remedy will ease the drift of our soul, how heavy, how like the sea our tears is; some of us does not recover from the sight, the wound of our heavy black bodies sinking in water” (Brand, *At* 59). What Kamena articulates here, and what Brand repeatedly suggests in the novel, is that the “drift” of diaspora is continuous homelessness plagued by the haunting trauma of the Middle Passage. While Kamena declares that “some” do “not recover from the sight,” the novel indicates that even those who did not witness the trauma firsthand may not recover from its haunting legacy.

⁷ Though McCallum and Olbey are referring directly to the genre of neoslave narratives, I believe the claim applies equally to postslavery literature as defined by Moynagh.

Fractured Connections and Radical Instability

In her flight to Canada, Eula seeks to escape the claustrophobic stasis she feels in the Caribbean, but her sister's Toronto home offers only further enclosure with Sese "telling [her] what to do at every turn" (232). Feeling controlled in the domestic space of her sister, Eula leaves her sister's home and severs the already fragile connection between them. When Eula sees her sister years later on a Toronto street, she hides until Sese passes and remarks that "it was as if I had left her completely and left this family" (233). Indeed, familial connections are strained for both sisters as neither woman is willing or able to keep her child. While Sese gives her son up for adoption in Canada, Eula sends her daughter back to Trinidad to be with their mother. Though Eula feels little connection to her daughter and Sese is consumed by an obsessive desire to observe her son in his adopted life, the women share the same sense of dissatisfaction with the home-spaces that they might have provided for their children. Later in the chapter, Eula declares that she "did her [daughter] a favour, I sent her to the past, to be with" Eula's mother (247). While Eula and Priest earlier feel threatened by Terre Bouillante's stasis, the alignment of the town with the past is figured here as nevertheless more favourable than the Canadian present. Because Eula is divorced from her family and severed from that past, her daughter can only access history through a literal return. Indeed, Eula's absolute disconnection from family and community means she can only offer her daughter a radically unstable present without connection to the past. Having lived in both an unstable home-space in Toronto and a static home-space in Terre Bouillante, Eula judges a return to the past as preferable.

After leaving Sese's stifling home and disconnecting from her family, Eula attempts to establish her independence. One of the places where Eula tries to make her own space is at university, but she finds herself in a community to which she cannot belong. She feels

herself marked as an outsider from the outset, one who needs to try and “fit in” rather than one who belongs (238). Her identification as outsider makes Eula feel hyper-visible, as if “everyone was staring at me” (238). Never feeling that she belongs, Eula also never has the space from which to speak comfortably. She worries that what she might say “would seem unintelligent” and confirm her sense of not belonging (238). Though she notes that she “could have gone on living a life that way” (238), the novel suggests that such a life would be akin to the “bargain” or “lie” that *In Another Place*’s Verlia refuses from her uncle in Sudbury. University offers Eula only checked speech, hyper-visibility, and insecurity. Indeed, the link between Eula’s sensed hyper-visibility and the doubt of her own voice is made clear when she discovers that her silence is a result of her fear of uncontrollable speech rather than a manifestation of shyness:

some days I simply wanted to curse, to spit at the whole room of people and the teacher. I felt burning, the front of my chest and my head was consumed in anger and I wanted to curse. I don’t know why. Sometimes it wasn’t even what they were saying, more that they seemed all sly, gesturing toward me with their eyes and smiles and the things they knew. (238)

Excluded from the community of the classroom and, she notes specifically, the community of knowledge that her classmates enjoy, Eula reads the space as hostile and finds her place within it unstable. She fears losing control of herself and erupting into unruly speech because the instability of her position in the classroom community threatens the stability of her self. The radical instability of the failed community space means that not only can Eula not speak freely, but she may not even be able to control her speech. For Eula, the inability to establish safe space in community threatens her ability to retain control over her own body. Without a stable space, Eula threatens to dissolve into incoherence and bodily chaos.

The Violent Repression of Suffocating Domestic Home-Spaces

Family is not the only connection that Eula hides from in Toronto. The father of her child, never named, drives her across the city: “I have moved all over this city because of this man. I wasn’t afraid of him; I simply did not want to do something bad to him” (242). Eula fears what she might do when confronted by him, so she seeks to avoid him until she finally grows “tired of him” and of moving and dispels him with a simple, “Go away now” (242). Though she does not fear violence from him, she may fear it from herself. Her concern that she might “do something bad to him” is ambiguous; she may be worried about an eruption of violence in herself, but she may also be worried about hurting him if they were to share a connection. To Eula, the man represents claustrophobic domesticity, and she cannot bear even to communicate with that threat. Like her fear of exploding into aggressive speech in the hostile environment of the classroom, Eula fears what may emerge from her if she steps into even the briefest connection with constricting domestic space.

Indeed, in its association with the father of her child, domestic space is inherently threatening to Eula. When he takes her to meet his mother and she enters the home, “all [Eula] wanted to do was run out of the room” (248). Just as her home in *Terre Bouillante* figures as crowded and suffocating, this domestic space in Toronto appears overly full: “all I saw was a room full to the brim with all that they could buy and stuff into a small room. And a mother. Full of expectations” (248). Here domesticity is associated with the accumulation of possessions, where Eula may become another item placed in the room. Moreover, the overly full expectations of the mother are aligned with these abundant possessions to link the domestic role to the capitalist economy. If she accepts the expectations and becomes another item in the crowded domestic space, Eula will become an object and a reproductive agent. The obligations associated with the traditional domestic

role that she reads as the mother's expectations threaten to suffocate Eula: "I cannot tell you how I felt choked. I could not breathe and he smiled so lovingly at his mother and then at me and I felt hopeless and wanted to run" (248). The look that the man passes over Eula and his mother makes the expectations clear. To stay is to become the mother and accept a traditional domestic role that would asphyxiate Eula.

The threat of this domesticity, however, is also a temptation, and despite her desire to run, Eula does conceive a child with the man. She confesses that she "was also trying desperately to feel something for this man because everyone said that I should" (247), but ultimately it is the image of his mother that moves Eula to sleep with him. The woman reminds her of her own mother, and in seeing the resemblance, Eula attempts to establish a connection, to feel for him what she believes is expected of her. Giving in to the expectations she reads and allowing herself to succumb to domesticity, Eula sleeps with the man, but the sexual encounter only serves to sever all connection rather than reinforce it: "I saw his face over me and felt his bones brush me like flailing sticks . . . and I could not wait to get out of his small room or go to sleep, seeing my mistake. I turned my head toward the wall, I felt as if I were in a coffin" (249). Again, the space feels too small, and the image of the coffin not only reinforces the claustrophobic size but also suggests the threat of such intimacy. For Eula, to accept the life offered by the domestic space full of possessions and expectations is to accept death.

Throughout the novel, domestic space is associated with danger and containment. Significantly, ordering domestic space is linked to a repressive ordering of the self, so that cleaning house becomes a metaphor for regulating a person's potentially disruptive desires and for controlling memory. In the chapter "A Sudden and Big Lust," Cordelia Rojas – a descendant of Marie Ursule born in Venezuela in the early twentieth century – spends her

life repressing her sexual desires and this repression is figured as keeping her house in order. When her lust erupts, the energy used for repression is transferred to her long-ignored desires: “The vigour she had used all these years to contain her memory, to clean her house and maintain her children, had turned on her” (121). Brand aligns the containment of memory, the rearing of children, and the cleaning of the home to suggest that the obligations of domestic space demand that her (female) characters focus as much attention on ordering their selves as they do their homes.

The repression of the self within domestic spaces is established most clearly in Eula’s sister, Sese. Throughout Eula’s chapter, Sese is associated with domestic space and with cleaning the home in particular. Though their connection is not fully severed until Toronto, Eula confesses that she “never really knew” her sister: “I only remembered her in the polish-shined corners of our house, lurking. She never spoke. She cleaned every corner of that house as if she were rubbing out her thoughts” (253). Eula recalls her sister’s face “as luminous as the doorjamb she had shined” and remarks that “Sese had a smallness and a secretiveness just like the corners of our house” (254). Like Cordelia, Sese orders her unruly thoughts and desires by cleaning and maintaining domestic space. The repressive qualities of Brand’s domestic spaces are thus doubled as characters repress their memories and desires within the oppressive space by reinforcing and maintaining the space itself.

The link between domesticity and the commodification of women that is gestured at in Eula’s reading of domestic space is established more fully in Maya’s chapter, “In a Window.” When Maya first arrives in Amsterdam, she is fascinated and confused by the domestic images of the women in the windows. Once she realizes that they are prostitutes, Maya decides to enter a window herself: “She was struck by the domesticity of the scenes, their plainness, their obvious clarity, their acceptance of something that happened in the

world every day. That simplicity made her decide what she had to do” (214-15). Part of what the window makes plain is the commodification of women in domesticity. Maya makes the connection explicit when she considers the similarity between her staged domesticity and the domesticity of conventional (heterosexual) home-spaces:

Perhaps this was what women who married men did, she thought. Puttered and puttered at domesticity, fixing curtains and chairs and lamps, decorating the abattoir where they were soon slaughtered; primped and laid out doilies and candles to sup up the odours of violence; kept their own fingers busy with cooking so they themselves wouldn't cut a throat, and perfumed themselves so as not to smell their own fear and rage. (212)

Just as Eula feared what she would say in the classroom or what she would do to the father of her child, the women that Maya imagines in conventional domestic space may erupt into violence at any moment. To order the house and thus contain their own unruly desires, the women decorate and play at their own tableaux of domesticity even as the threat – that they may be decorating the site of their own slaughter – hovers over and represses them.

Failed Intimacy in Hostile and Unstable Home-Spaces

While membership in the Black diaspora may enable what Rinaldo Walcott terms “black Atlantic exchanges, dialogues, conversations” or “transnational and outer-national political identifications” (*Black* 26), these connections are closed to Eula and her relatives. Not only are they unable to forge these transnational associations, but the characters struggle to connect with all people and places. Perpetually isolated, the characters are cut off from the exchanges that might make their drifting politically powerful. Instead, the characters find themselves alienated from every figure that might connect them to any

tentative home-spaces. Disconnected from her family in Trinidad and divided irrevocably from her sister in Toronto, Eula has no familial connection. In fact, she has no sense of community or intimacy with anyone. In Moynagh's reading of the novel as enacting melancholy, she perceives a similar lack of connection when she explains that "[t]he melancholic is inhibited from forming community. . . . The isolation of Brand's characters and their inability to recognize their relationship to one another underscore this point" (69). Thus, if Bola's dispersed descendants replicate diaspora, then connections between the descendants might be termed diasporic associations; however, where these connections exist at all – with known and unknown relatives – the links are fragile and partial. While Eula recognizes her brother's likeness in Adrian, and Priest imagines there must be some familial connection, the characters cannot know how they are related.

This lack of connection to a past that yet haunts her and the lack of personal connection renders Eula bereft in the Toronto subway. She recalls, "When I was twenty or so it was all I could do to hold myself to the platform of a subway, not to leap" (Brand, *At* 256). Feeling no connection to the city or the country in which she lives and no connection to a past or to relations that might ground her, Eula is adrift in a tragic way. Without the home-spaces that might steady her and enable connection, Eula can only hold fast to the platform to prevent herself from leaping. Though I declare her adrift, the word "leap" is important. Eula is not fighting against drifting off the platform; she is fighting against the urge to leap, an active compulsion. The drive to leap seems parallel to her urge for violent speech at the university and her fear of harming her child's father. As such, the involuntary

inclination to leap appears as another moment in which Eula feels out of control of her own body.⁸

Divided from her family and rejecting the domesticity offered by the father of her child, Eula denies all forms of connection. Her loneliness and alienation is poignant. In sleeping with the father of her child, Eula discovers that the home-space he offers can only be suffocating and destructive. Furthermore, in sharing what might be considered a moment of intense intimacy, Eula also discovers how alone she is: “when I make love to someone I am sad after. I am sad for how much they cannot know about me, for how single I am. It seems as if in that very moment, which is what people call intimacy, I find myself alone. Someone else can never know you. . . . No one can truly be with you” (228). Eula’s account of loneliness in sexual intimacy recalls Adrian’s great-great-grandfather’s description of Bola: “She was the most alone woman he had known. He tried to know her but all he left with each time was a sense of her as the only inhabitant of her life. . . . Even when they were most together [in sex] . . . he could not say that he felt her close” (187). What is affirming in Bola is devastating in her descendant. Similarly, the failure of intimacy is a legacy of Eula’s own grandfather: “Something of the one who stole Bola’s footsteps remained in his family, his need for and yet disappointment with love. How love can never be enough . . . how each moment his mother, Bola, spent in her own life he sensed her singularity and therefore his loneliness” (141). Because connections are so fractured, any attempt at intimacy signals only its hopeless insufficiency. Eula cannot find comfort in love or communion with another person; she is reminded only of her perpetual alienation and the instability of all connections.

⁸ Of course, the term also recalls Verlia’s leap at the end of *In Another Place, Not Here*.

Her realization of abject loneliness makes Eula both unwilling and unable to attempt human connection. She recalls, “I dropped everyone as I did Sese” (238). She refuses these connections because of the suffocating weight that they may place on her. Proud of her ability to be “self-contained” (249), Eula has no patience for the obligations imposed on her by others. When she thinks of the father of her child and his willingness to rely on her, she is dismayed: “what had I said to make him think he could count on me, or that I was capable of doing all these things, let alone holding his happiness in my hand?” (248). Eula finds herself inadequate for such obligations, and thus she rejects the connections that might compel her to attempt and fail at such intimacy. She does not “like people giving [her] anything. How terrifying to have to handle their souls, to touch their moist soft insides with your hand” (248). Eula fears not only her own potential failure at intimate connections; she also fears what she perceives as the inevitable loss if she were to connect with another: “I didn’t want anyone to become old or sick and die right when I loved them, so I had to make space and find other people who didn’t want me at their bedsides or when they hurt themselves, others who would not ask and not expect” (239).

While the threat of domesticity hovers in Eula’s sexual encounter with her child’s father, and she senses her loneliness most acutely when she has sex, intimacy may be possible for Adrian, but it is tainted by the spaces in which it occurs. For Adrian, the implications of intimate acts and what they may represent in hostile spaces disable connection. When Adrian is held in an immigration detention centre in the United States, another man attempts to have sex with him, and though Adrian imagines that such affection might be pleasurable, he cannot enjoy the intimacy in the hostile space of a prison:

The cold sweat on his skin glistening and somebody trying to fuck him up the ass in that barbed-wire prison, somebody he’d have to try to turn around

and kill, not because he didn't want the warmth of another body but because this ass-fucking was for points and power, not love, and the next morning he had to be still fresh and dangerous for this camp. Wouldn't mind if it had an ounce of tenderness in it, but it couldn't, not here. Even if he noticed that the man touched him almost tenderly, felt him softly, kissed his hands in his own moment of weakness, he had to put him down. You could always mistake these things and then you're gone. (184)

Adrian does not reject intimacy, but he cannot trust the tenderness he seems to feel from the other man. Even when all signs indicate that the connection is sincere, the space in which it occurs renders all connections suspect. The violence and hostility of the space makes intimate connection impossible. Thus, even when these characters can imagine the potential for connection, such connection is halted by the hostile spaces they inhabit. Thus every connection – personal, familial, transnational – is potentially unstable and hostile; failed intimacy accompanies a failed home-space.

Geographical and Genealogical Mappings

While the continuity of experience for Brand's characters between the Caribbean, Europe and North America works to dismantle subtly the fiction of Canada's multicultural difference, Brand also overtly plays with the myth of Canada's multicultural moral superiority to the "melting pot" of the United States. Brand invokes a contrast between American and Canadian cities only to dissolve it.

When Eula drives through the United States to pick up her brother, she observes the American cities in surprise: "She had not thought that they would look so old, so worn down" (134). The American "cities were like mounds of refuse, scourings and dregs.

Bridges seeming to lead nowhere climbed over the cities, even the concrete seemed rotted to her, the steel underneath weeping brown stains down the side. . . . Where others saw glamour she saw something so cold and corrosive she didn't want to stand on the streets" (134-35). In the American cities, Eula sees garbage and destruction. The cities are both self-destructing in their rot and threatening in the potential for the "corrosive" power to sweep over its inhabitants. In contrast to these cities of waste and ruin, Toronto is described as clean and calm. Eula longs to return to the Canadian city: "She preferred the clean coolness, the slow reserve of Toronto" (134). Here Toronto stands in opposition to the destructive and destroyed American cities. Canada, it seems, may offer Eula a potentially generative space.

The Toronto that Eula describes in her chapter, however, is one that appears very much like the American cities that frighten her; indeed, the language of rubbish and ruin returns in her description of the Canadian city: "I am living in a city at the end of the world, Mama. It is rubble. It is where everyone has been swept up, all of it, all of us are debris, things that a land cleaning itself spits up. . . . It is as if some pustule erupted from the ground and it is this city. It is bloated and dry at the same time, crumbling with newness, rubbed in glitter" (238).⁹ The destruction that Eula glimpsed in the American cities and the "corrosive" force she felt threatened by in New York are invoked when Eula reads the landscape of Toronto as deteriorating: "The streets here are full of decay. . . . Mama, everyone here is decaying" (240). Eula recalls that the city had once appeared fresh to her: "When I first came they [the city's people] were all new, at least they all seemed brand new all the time. Now they are all decaying on the streets and the streets themselves seem old

⁹ The description of the city as "bloated and dry at the same time" conjures the image of *Terre Bouillante*. As such, the passage also works to reinforce the continuity of failed home-spaces from the Caribbean to Canada.

and crumbling, the concrete is chipped and old garbage decays in the gutters” (240). The word “seemed” suggests Eula’s potential misreading of the city. Though Toronto and its people seemed “new” and different from the American cities, the appearance may have been deceiving. Similarly, Canada appears to be different with its claims to a multicultural society, but ultimately the nation offers the same experience of marginality and psychic rupture.

In these streets of ruin, Eula feels herself slipping away, drifting to the point of dissolution: “Dear Mama, I stand on the corner of a street and I am falling away” (255). The threat of such disorder and disintegration is both linked to and temporarily mitigated by her study of maps. Eula writes, “My forehead feels like thin paper, the kind you use to trace a figure or a map. I can hear it rustle under my fingers, if I let go all of it will pour into my hands, all of my thoughts and the thick oxidizing matter of me. The creases of lines on my fingers are dusty like crushed paper” (234). Eula feels like the paper on which a map is traced, and the inevitable deterioration of such paper may be both terrifying and freeing. The violence of being over-written is hinted at in the image of her fingers as “crushed paper” while the passage itself underscores the very instability of such over-writing. Although the deterioration of Eula as map is threatening in its disintegration, an earlier passage in the novel suggests the inherent ability of the mapped to escape beyond the page:

Maps are such subjective things, borders move all the time. There are encroachments and retreats. A map, like the one on [Lieutenant-Governor] Hill’s desk, can only describe the will of estate owners and governors. Or perhaps their hopes. This map cannot note the great fluidity of maps, which is like the fluidity of air. Paper rarely contains – even its latitudinal and longitudinal lines gesture continuations. Paper does not halt land any more

than it can halt thoughts. Or rain showers, for that matter. The best cartographer is only trying to hold water, to draw approximations of rocks, inclines, bays, depths, plains. (52)

While a break beyond the page may be liberating, loss of the only coherence she has known – however limiting – terrorizes Eula. She is like water being temporarily held by paper. Mapping threatens to forcibly contain her while potential release from this containment appears equally violent. She is threatened both by over-writing and by the inevitable break when the paper can no longer hold.

In her collecting of maps, she finds temporary reprieve from chaos in the firm lines of the page. The lines and maps themselves, however, are arbitrary. When Eula finds herself lost in the United States and unable to return to Toronto, she finds her way with maps that do not describe the terrain she travels: “In the trunk of the car I had brought all my maps and when I was so tired that I did not know my way, I would pull off to the side of the road and search my maps. Any one would do, even a map of France or a map of Guyana. Their steadiness steadied me, it did not matter that they were not where I was. Their definite lines brought order to my head” (231). In finding her way through the United States with maps of France and Guyana, Eula implicitly recognizes the arbitrariness of all maps. Nevertheless, the “definite lines” comfort her, but they can only do so temporarily.

In Toronto, she feels the containment of maps give way even as the novel demonstrates the danger of being mapped as a piece of paper. Perhaps Eula might be able to hold herself together if she were able to fashion her own map. She wonders if she had written to her mother if she might have been able to steady herself, if the words might have established control: “If I had sent them [words] to you instead of only writing them in my head or tracing them on the walls of subways in this city, perhaps I would hold myself

together” (256). If Eula could replace the arbitrary map that confines her with her own words, words that might connect her to her mother, she might be able to prevent “falling away” into disintegration in Toronto. Eula does not write the words until her mother’s death, however, and she does not replace the colonialist map with one of her own.

What Eula longs for is to replace the predetermined map, and she expresses this longing in her desire for a genealogical line: “I would like one single line of ancestry, Mama. One line from you to me and farther back, but a line that I can trace” (246). The use of the words “trace” and “line” recalls Eula’s comfort in maps, and the passage suggests that she might find a similar comfort in such a line of ancestry. She continues,

I would like one line full of people who have no reason to forget anything, or forgetting would not help them or matter because the line would be constant, unchangeable. A line that I can reach for in my brain when I feel off kilter. Something to pull me back. I want a village and a seashore and a rock out in the ocean and the certainty that when the moon is in the full the sea will rise and for that whole time I will be watching what all of my ancestry have watched for, for all ages. (246-47)

The novel itself traces such a line and offers a family tree on the opening page that, as Joan Thomas argues, presents “a legacy not grounded in documents and property and political power, but carried in blood” (D8). Johanna Garvey also reads the family tree and the ancestral line that runs through the novel as a map: “Viewing genealogical imaging under the rubric of cartography, one can see that Brand’s method of mapping family via Bola’s extended relations has the potential to disrupt colonial legacies and ideologies” (495). The line that Eula longs for, Garvey argues, “is precisely what Brand offers in her vision of Bola’s Black Atlantic, originating from the site of Culebra Bay, and replicated in a drawing

done by that first Bola” (499). However, Eula has no conscious access to this line or legacy, and the one map that she can access that might resemble such a line Eula cannot read accurately. Bola’s drawing of Culebra Bay, the origin of the novel’s ancestral line, appears as “nothing” to Eula: “Only an old yellowing paper, moths had eaten at the creases and it was stained in water or food and it seemed that once it had been crumpled up to be thrown out” (Brand, *At* 252). Eula longs for both a genealogical map and a home-space linked to her disrupted history; both these images are figured in Bola’s drawing, which Eula cannot read. Seeing the drawing of the home-space she desires, Eula sees “only a drawing of a rock and an ocean and a far shore with sticks for someone swimming in the ocean” (254). Though Eula recognizes the drawing as the work of her ancestor Bola and knows the site to be the village that she longs for, Eula nevertheless cannot understand why, when Bola “had so many children, so many lovers, so much life . . . this is all she drew” (254). Because Eula cannot read the drawing as an alternative map, she sends it back to Trinidad to “[w]hoever is there” because she has “no use” for it (255). With access to the recovered line to ground herself, Eula might be able to fashion a home-space that enables rather than disables connection; in an empowering home-space, Eula might be able to forge the connections that would partially recover the lost genealogy. Disconnected from both, however, Eula remains threatened by instability. Unable to feel liberated by dissolution and without an alternative map, Eula remains alienated and on the brink of disintegration.

Diasporic “Drift” as Disconnection and Disintegration

Goldman argues that “[b]y tracing the wandering paths and the solitary spaces familiar to those who have been dislocated, Brand’s texts offer a politically-charged alternative to the desire for belonging and possession” (14). In her reading of *At the Full*,

she acknowledges that passages like Eula's and Adrian's chapters "emphasize the negative implications of drifting," but Goldman argues that "Brand nonetheless also reveals the positive imaginative and political possibilities of the diasporic space of in-betweenness" (19). However, the devastating disconnection of each of Bola's descendants prevents such a potential from being realized; the reality for the characters of *At the Full* is that drifting leaves them figuratively homeless and bereft of connections that might relieve or empower that homelessness. Though the novel itself may provide an alternative to disconnection in the family tree offered on the opening page and in the connections woven between the characters, this alternative is present only to readers. As such, "Diaspora in the novel, then, is both the loss of community and its creation through the act of reading, insofar as we forge the (absent) links that are impracticable for the characters themselves" (Moynagh 69). While Brand may create such a community in her readers, it remains inaccessible to her characters, who are divested of the agency necessary to make those connections.

While *In Another Place, Not Here* displays a continuity between the Caribbean and Canada by disrupting Canada's claims to moral superiority through its multicultural policy, *At the Full and Change of the Moon* extends the continuity by illustrating that the condition of diasporic homelessness is potentially destructive irrespective of one's location. Canada fails to offer Eula a national home-space, as the Caribbean, the United States, and Europe fail her relatives. The absence of home renders Brand's characters bereft and denies them the ability to establish connections within or beyond their respective locations.

Though the characters remain tragically unable to access Brand's alternatively charted genealogy or establish a home-space that might allow diasporic connections, *At the Full and Change of the Moon* nevertheless signals Brand's desire to devise a form of mapping that might recover disrupted memory, even as the novel acknowledges the

unattainability of such a map for individual characters because of the rupture of the Middle Passage. My next chapter considers Brand's memoir, *A Map to the Door of No Return*, which continues to wrestle with mapping the unmappable. In this work, Brand begins to imagine home-spaces as landing sites that might enable connection while still acknowledging the alienation and historical gaps inherent in membership in the Black diaspora.

CHAPTER THREE

Map-making and Home-making: Home as a Landing Site in *A Map to the Door of No Return*

In my Introduction, I refer to what Rinaldo Walcott calls “a new Black Canadian politicality that derives its sense of self from living life at the in-between but not being bothered by that condition” (*Rude* 10). While Brand’s first two novels illustrate the devastation and paralysis of such an in-between position of “being here and not being here,” her memoir demonstrates a shift toward the empowerment that Walcott sees in in-betweenness. It would not be a fair assessment to claim that Brand is not “bothered by that condition,” for *A Map to the Door of No Return* retains the mourning and tragic loss of her earlier novels; however, Walcott’s identification of the in-between as a “source” points to an agency that emerges in Brand’s memoir (*Rude* 10). In *A Map*, Brand begins to consider how loss and destruction (occasioned by slavery and represented by the Door of No Return, but also by the dismantling and destabilizing of home-spaces) might provide the potential for creative agency. While Brand continues to struggle with the in-between, with belonging, and with Canada as a home-space, *A Map* opens up the possibility of Canada as a landing site (indeed, a series of landing sites) where home-spaces may be provisionally built. Where agency and connection seemed impossible in the earlier novels, *A Map* imagines the potential for connections to emerge in and through self-consciously and provisionally created Canadian home-spaces.

Though the text continues to mourn the tragedy of the Middle Passage, the memoir marks an emerging conception of how the painful devastation of drifting in the in-between of the Black diaspora might be acknowledged and recouped as the creative potential of landing. In order to retain balance between mourning loss and imagining empowerment,

Brand continues to trouble the home-spaces she inhabits from domestic space to the national space of Canada. While *A Map* does much of the same destabilizing of home-spaces as the earlier novels in Brand's insistence on uncovering the hidden and not so hidden dangers of home, radical deterritorialization becomes not the paralysis and devastation that it was for Verlia, Elizete, and Eula, but the grounds for contingent and temporary reterritorializations enabling and enabled by connection.

Mapping the Door

In *The Politics of Home*, Rosemary Marangoly George explains that "homes are not neutral places. Imagining a home is as political an act as is imagining a nation" (6). In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand suggests that imagining a map is similarly political. The title of her memoir indicates Brand's interest in both mapping and in the rupture of the Door of No Return and the trauma of the Middle Passage. In an interview with Paulo da Costa, Brand offers a definition of the Door of No Return: "Africans were taken out of many ports along the West Coast of Africa, and these ports came to be known as 'the door of no return,' for those Africans as well as for those who took them. I was fascinated by the fact that those places, those ports, had metamorphosed into this metaphor called the door of no return" (par. 6). The dedication of the text to "the other dwellers of the door" marks the Door of No Return as a place from which members of the Black diaspora engage in the world. The Door of No Return is both real and imagined because, Brand explains, it "is of course no place at all but a metaphor for place. . . . it is no one place but a collection of places" (*A Map* 18). If to be a member of the Black diaspora is to dwell within the Door of No Return, then indeed the Door must be a "collection of places." That is, because of dispersal, the diaspora is composed of members from an international collection of places,

but also those members establish their sense of place, of where they dwell, from a variety of locations. This sense of international connection is not, of course, new to Brand's work, but the diversity of home-space is important for Brand's work of deterritorializing home. The multifariousness of dwelling within the door indicates, as Maia Joseph explains, that "the Door is, for Brand, an opening into deterritorialized multiplicity" (79).

The initial movement through the Door of No Return is "a rupture in history" and, Brand writes, "a rupture of geography" (*Map 5*), which makes writing a map to that site – "real, imaginary and imagined" (19) – necessary to any project of recovery. Thus, understanding the Door of No Return as the dwelling place of the Black diaspora and mapping that location as examining the conditions of membership in the diaspora, Brand also sets out, in *A Map*, to do the work of creation that she identifies as possible from the Door of No Return. In an interview with Maya Mavjee, she explains that "[t]o make a map is to create a definition of a place. Some maps are made to places you don't know even exist – to a new place. I wanted to lift that idea of map-making. I want to live in another kind of world. In a sense, that is the map I am writing" (par. 6). In writing her map, Brand must also confront the convention of map-making where, as the editors explain in the Introduction to "Place" in the *Postcolonial Studies Reader*, the "map is the crucial signifier of control over place and thus of power over the inscription of being" (Ashcroft et al 392). In order to avoid the enclosure and over-writing of conventional map-making, Brand follows Graham Huggan's call in *Territorial Disputes*. He argues for a shift away from analyses of the map "as a means of spatial confinement or systematic organization" and towards an understanding of mapping "as a medium of spatial perception that allows for the reformulation of links both within and between cultures" (153).

Thus, when Brand considers how a seventeenth-century map of Abyssinia was created without ever having visited the location, she concludes “that places and those who inhabit them are indeed fictions” (*Map* 18). Paul Huebener explains, “For this mapmaker, Abyssinia is an abstraction known through letters and stories; his map is a creative work. The implication, though, of Brand’s suggestion that Abyssinia and other places are fictions is that every map – every schema for knowing a place – is a creative work” (619). Thus, Brand destabilizes all notions of place as fixed and emphasizes the creative energy inherent in mapping. Mapping becomes creative and perceptual. Huebener cautions that “[s]aying that a place is a fiction is not the same as saying that it is a lie or that it doesn’t exist; rather, it is an acknowledgment of the shaping and reshaping process in which we are engaged when we tell ourselves stories – topographical, political, perceptual, or otherwise – about our surroundings” (620). Map-making thus becomes the personal process of knowing a place, of claiming agency in that space, while simultaneously destabilizing all fixity of place.

While the Door of No Return is both metaphor and historical place, it is also, significantly, a *door*. Brand writes, “It is a door which makes the word *door* impossible and dangerous, cunning and disagreeable” (19). Kathy Mezei explains that, “[i]n alerting us to the danger and the *unheimlich* of a familiar domestic object, Brand, too, questions the meaning of the everyday language of home and the effect of this language on the formation of identity and belonging” (93). In questioning the domestic through her deployment of the door as metaphor, Brand positions the Door of No Return as “a domestic space which ridicules any idea of home, return, and comfort” (Mezei 93).

Brand brings together the idea of the Door as a metaphor in which she dwells and the fictional quality of place to suggest that having “one’s belonging lodged in a metaphor

is . . . to be a kind of fiction. To live in the Black Diaspora is I think to live as a fiction – a creation of empires, and also self-creation” (18). While Brand gestures to the ways in which identity is over-written by colonial and neo-colonial “empires” and conventional map-making, she also locates the power of “self-creation” in the “creation place” of the Door of No Return (6), in the experience of Black diaspora. While the Door is a site of rupture, Brand suggests that the rupture also presents the possibility of creative renewal.

Beyond Belonging: Deterritorializing Drift

Marlene Goldman reads both *At the Full and Change of the Moon* and *A Map* as similarly presenting a theory of drift that “offers an alternative to the boundedness of home and the nation-state” (13). While I disagree that drifting is a viable option for the characters of *At the Full*, *A Map* does suggest that Brand views drifting as characteristic of and potentially powerful for members of the Black diaspora. Indeed, Brand declares “drift” to be the diasporic condition: “We, on the other hand, have no such immediate sense of belonging, only of drift” (*A Map* 118). In her insistence on the fictional quality of all maps and therefore the fictional quality of place, Brand “demonstrates that the links between people and homes are social creations, discourses of ‘affiliation’ which are learned, created, recalled and sometimes forgotten” (Goldman 14). Thus, Brand destabilizes not only place but the concept of home-spaces, while her emphasis on creativity suggests the potential for creative agency in this deterritorialization. While drifting was ultimately paralyzing in *In Another Place* and *At the Full*, and radical deterritorialization offered the characters of the earlier novels no ability to establish connection or claim authority in space, deterritorializing drift, in *A Map*, becomes a source for creation. The feminist politics of deterritorializing home, as defined by George’s “daily resisting of the safety proffered by

safe places,” a “continual stepping out of or transgressing of boundaries and a redrawing of private and public spaces as well as of global divides” (33), becomes not only the condition of Brand’s membership in the Black diaspora but her source of power in making connections.

Brand demonstrates her resistance to the easy comfort of home – to which she may not have access but which she does, at some points, desire – in her response to the twice quoted line of Eduardo Galeano. Galeano wrote, “I’m nostalgic for a country which doesn’t yet exist on a map” (qtd in Brand, *A Map* 85). Brand responds, “Dear Eduardo, I am not nostalgic. Belonging does not interest me. I had once thought that it did. Until I examined the underpinnings” (85). The underpinnings are the exclusions that make home possible, and her insistence on rejecting such an image of belonging and on examining those exclusions align her position of drifting with a feminist politics of deterritorialized homes. Caren Kaplan explains, “A desire to be and feel ‘at home’ is examined in light of who and what made the conditions of security and contentment possible” (192-93). Brand signals her attention to the underpinnings and her rejection of static notions of belonging and identity in her interview with Mavjee: “My objections lie with the people who hang onto what they call identities for the most awful reasons, and those are the reasons of exclusion” (par. 9). The belonging that Brand rejects is that static belonging of unexamined home-spaces. Here she signals her “resisting of the safety proffered by safe places” (George 33) in favour of diasporic connection, of deterritorialization, of drift.

Indeed, Brand continues to suggest that this deterritorialized position is inherent to membership in the Black diaspora. If one were to accept the “safety” of national home-space through a turn to national identification, for instance, one is still not guaranteed membership in the nation:

Some of us in the Diaspora long so for nation – some continuous thread of biological or communal association, some bloodline or legacy which will cement our rights in the place we live. The problem of course is that even if those existed – and they certainly do, even if it is in the human contraband which we represent in the romance – they do not guarantee nation for Blacks in the Diaspora. (67)

In her rejection of a stable home-space and her recognition of the potential figurative homelessness even in the home of the nation, Brand demonstrates what Kaplan reads in Minnie Bruce Pratt's memoir: "The uncertainty of this situation is preferable . . . to the sensation of being homesick while at 'home'" (193). Brand both chooses deterritorialization and has it as her condition of being; she both denies and is denied belonging in fixed home-spaces.

In destabilizing fixed conceptions of home and space, Brand also destabilizes the concept of identity as arising from a fixed place. In *The Politics of Home*, George argues that, in immigrant fiction, "identity is linked only hypothetically (and through hyphenation) to a specific geographical place on the map. . . . The association between an adequate self and a place to call home is held up to scrutiny and then let go" (200). Brand echoes this view of identity and home-space in her interview with Mavjee: "I wanted to challenge the idea of constantly having to fix oneself as a way of finding identity. How do you or I collect ourselves each morning? How do we disturb the deeply troublesome labels that admit no complexity, no range but which come to represent us in the world? I think that's the argument at the centre of the book" (par. 11). Thus, Brand's project of destabilizing fixed notions of identity is linked to her deterritorialization of home and place.

Where identity is derived from place, the rupture of the Door of No Return and its severing from history “transformed [people in the Black diaspora] into bodies emptied of being, bodies emptied of self-interpretation, into which new interpretations could be placed” (Brand, *A Map* 93). These new interpretations render diasporic bodies “occupied” (94). If identity is contingent on home and members of the Black diaspora are figuratively homeless, they are denied the ability to self-define. Brand elaborates this denial of agency when she discusses the regulation of the Black body in the diaspora. “By regulated” Brand means “that there are specific societal functions [the Black body] is put to, quite outside of its own agency – functions which in fact deny and resist its agency” (37). Brand argues that since “[t]he Black body is culturally encoded” as certain signs, the “ascriptions are easily at hand for everyday use. Much as one would use a tool or instrument to execute some need or want” (36). Because of this function as sign and “tool,” there is no divide between the private and public. Just as Eula experiences in university in *At the Full*, “[e]very space you occupy is public space, that is, space definable by everyone. That is, the image which emerges from the Door of No Return is public property belonging to a public exclusive of the Black bodies which signify it” (50). Thus, when Brand challenges identities fixed by place, she challenges identities over which members of the Black diaspora have no power. When she challenges fixed notions of place, she challenges “that domesticated, captive, open space” where people in the diaspora find themselves defined.

The shift between Brand’s first two novels and *A Map* is not in the deterritorializing of drift, for the characters of her earlier novels had no access to stable home-spaces, but in Brand’s vision of this position as powerful, potentially enabling a form of reterritorialization, and therefore affirming a degree of agency. In her interview with da Costa, Brand articulates acceptance of and power in deterritorialization when she celebrates

rootlessness: “Rootlessness is not a problem for me, and it doesn’t have to do with Canada in particular. I think it has to do with that door. I think that after that door, rootedness is impossible. I think that perhaps rootlessness is origin for some” (par. 9). She elaborates on rootlessness as origin to suggest that the condition is, in fact, desirable in its ability to undo fixity and provide territory for creation: “If we were to use it well, this idea of no place, of rootlessness, it would be an incredibly interesting starting point for relocating selves in the world. On the one hand, you find something out of destruction, but what you can possibly make of it seems to me infinite” (par. 9). Rootlessness and deterritorialization here enable agency and creation. However, it is important to note that the creative agency may be ascribed to deterritorialized drift, but “relocating ourselves” and “what you can make of it” suggest the importance of reterritorializing. Indeed, in Kaplan’s discussion of deterritorialization, she emphasizes the importance of re-making that which is destabilized: “What we gain is a reterritorialization; we inhabit a world of our making” (195). To inhabit a world of her own making, Brand relocates herself in the world through provisional connection and temporary reterritorialization. The creative agency may be enabled by drift, but it is enacted by landing.

The Temptation and Suffocation of Security

While the deterritorialization of home shifts from radically disempowering to potentially empowering in Brand’s memoir, the trope of domestic home-space as claustrophobic recurs in *A Map* as it had in *In Another Place* and *At the Full*. Musing on home, Brand declares that she “was never sure that [she] wanted to go home” (*A Map* 63):

I liked the streets of the city. I liked other people’s houses, other people’s lives. . . . Home suggests order and routine, tradition, family. Someone

else's order struck me as fascinating – truthfully, suffocating. I would pass by those same houses at night and feel a sense of suffocation, enclosure, cloister . . . these houses, so secure, seemed stifling. It was as if they said that there was no more about the world to happen, no more to know. (63-64)

The conventional associations of home, for Brand, of “order and routine, tradition, family” are not comforting and protective but instead synonymous with “suffocation.” Part of what may be suffocating in the enclosure of domesticity is its subscription to these conventional notions. Brand's identification of these terms in particular signals her discomfort with the conventions and conventional associations of domestic home-space. As Mezei explains, “because domestic spaces are the product of a society, they express and reinforce its norms, social practices, and ideologies” (81). Brand's rejection of domestic space is simultaneously a rejection of the “norms, social practices, and ideologies” she sees reinforced in domesticity and at work in Canadian society. Her preference for “the streets of the city” signals her unwillingness to enter this domestic space even as her voyeuristic view into other people's homes indicates her fascination with domesticity and with those who choose domesticity.

Notably, the security offered in the homes is linked to their stifling quality for Brand, a link which suggests the price of safety offered in domestic home-spaces. While homes may provide safety, they also enclose; and, just as *At the Full's Terre Bouillante* becomes suffocating in its extreme seclusion for the descendants of those who sought it out as refuge, Brand suggests that this enclosure is stifling because of its disengagement from the outside world. She reads those who choose the safety of this domestic space as disconnected from the exterior by their “cloister,” a word which invokes the seclusion of a monastery or convent. The secure and stifling houses indicate that “there was no more

about the world to happen, no more to know.” To choose domesticity, Brand suggests, is to retreat from the world.

A retreat from a hostile world, however, may be tempting, and while the characters of *In Another Place* and the contemporary descendants in *At the Full* reject the temptation (or never have the option available to them), in *A Map*, Brand does succumb to the tempting security of domestic home-space in Burnt River, Ontario. Brand’s reading of her surroundings in Burnt River cause her to retreat into the safety of her home, “the armour of [her] car” (140), and to disengage from the community that surrounds her. Despite driving through the town every morning, she “never become[s] so familiar with [it] as not to think of [her] car as [her] armour” (140). She locates the source of this disengagement in fear, a “fear of people” which she has inherited from her grandmother (143). Brand explains, “Like my grandmother, for me the outside is treacherous. This is country where people mind their own business; they are as cold and forbidding as the landscape. . . . They are suspicious of strangers. I can only imagine nightmarishly what they think of me. I am grateful for their sense of privacy” (145). Because of her reading of the surroundings as “treacherous,” Brand retreats to the confined spaces of home and car and away from engagement with community. Unsure of how she will be received, and frightened by the potential for racism and rejection, she cannot make connections across the safety of her own home-space. While her home may offer her protection from the exterior that she fears, Brand is also necessarily cut off from that exterior. Her disengagement, like the disengagement of those within the domestic spaces she views in the city, suggests that “there was no more about the world to happen, no more to know” (64). In protecting herself from the outside world, she disables any potential for connection with or understanding of that world. The danger of domesticity is in such disconnection; however, Brand’s retreat

also suggests that the theoretical missive to reject the safety of safe places for the uncertainty of deterritorialization may hold a real threat to an individual in the material world. As in the earlier novels where Brand troubled the material application of theoretical empowerment by demonstrating the physical and psychological threat faced by characters without safe home-spaces to leave, the danger – societal rejection but also physical threat – that Brand reads in the exterior of Burnt River complicates any assessment of how a deterritorialized feminist politics might be lived by an individual.

“nation predicated on what?”

The temptation to retreat into the safety offered by domestic home-spaces is paralleled in the seeming safety of belonging to a nation-state. However, as it did for Elizete, Verlia and Eula, Canada appears to fail Brand as a national home-space while she simultaneously questions whether any national home-space might be desirable. Brand writes,

It is of course tempting to try to enter this nation of Canada. It is even more tempting to see that desire as a rightful thing . . . it would be easy, given the terms of entry for white settlers and immigrants, to presume that these same terms can be legitimately used to cement such a right. The right to nation.

What we have to ask ourselves is, as everyone else in the nation should ask themselves also, nation predicated on what? (68)

In this passage, Brand signals the “underpinnings” of belonging that exclude full membership to, among others, Black people. Brand’s reference to the terms of entrance for “white settlers and immigrants” suggests that the terms of belonging are more stringent – perhaps impossible – for members of the Black diaspora. Her recognition of both the desire

for and the denial of national home-space echoes the uneasiness that Bidy Martin and Chandra Mohanty read in deterritorializing home: “There is an irreconcilable tension between the search for a secure place from which to speak, within which to act, and the awareness of the price at which secure places are bought, the awareness of the exclusions, the denials, the blindnesses on which they are predicated” (101). When Brand asks, “nation predicated on what?” she gestures toward the myriad exclusions of the nation-state, and of Canada in particular.

Nation-states, defined by borders, are necessarily exclusionary, and they enact the power to exclude, Brand argues, through a fiction of origins. Origins, she explains, “are arbitrary,” and “[n]ation-states are configurations of origins as exclusionary power structures which have legitimacy based solely on conquest and acquisition” (*A Map* 64). Brand continues her consideration of the fiction of origins and its basis as exclusion from national home-spaces by turning to the particularity of Canada, where, she declares, “[e]ntry into nation and therefore home pervades the public discourse” (65): “Here at home, in Canada, we are all implicated in this sense of origins. It is a manufactured origin nevertheless playing to our need for home, however tyrannical. This country, in the main a country of immigrants, is always redefining origins, jockeying and smarming for degrees of belonging” (64). The nation, therefore, is predicated on the exclusion of others whose origins are deemed elsewhere. For an immigrant to Canada, national home-space becomes an impossibility. Indeed, even in the country of one’s birth, being read as elsewhere and other can deny one membership in the national home-space, as Brand indicates in her questions of the terms of belonging for white settlers and immigrants and the terms for members of the Black diaspora, and as she will examine at length in her next novel, *What We All Long For*.

In Brand's uncovering of the exclusions on which the nation is predicated, she challenges both nationalism and what she calls "crossnationalisms" (71). Brand rejects not only the sense of origins in Canadian nationalisms, but also "the sense of origins used by the powerless to contest power in a society," which she identifies as nationalism's "mirror" (69). She rejects these mirror-images because of their fixing and exclusionary properties since "they must draw very definite borders both to contain their constituencies as well as, in the case of the powerful, to aggressively exclude the other and, in the case of the powerless, to weakly do the same while waving a white flag to the powerful for inclusion. Each of these arguments," she continues, "select and calcify origins" (69-70). Origins become static and identity is fixed in a stable past, so that the failures of nationalisms, Brand suggests, become the failures of "hyphenated narratives" (70) and "crossnationalisms" (71). The calcification of origins renders them simplistic: "It makes people cling to the most narrow of definitions of culture and identity, and deploy the most banal characteristics as exemplary. National identity is a dance of artificiality, since what it dances must essentially be unchanging" (72).

Origins, however, Brand explains, become void in a city, for "[c]ities collect people, stray and lost and deliberate arrivants. Origins are rehabilitated and rebuilt here" (62). Given Brand's rejection of calcified origins, the potential for cities to offer a space to re-evaluate and refashion origins seems significant and positive. Indeed, Saul notes that "the cityspace, while harbouring the homeless and the destitute, can, at the same time, become a space of multiple and colliding identities" (62). However, city space is not necessarily conducive to connection across these "multiple and colliding identities" since the nation-state's emphasis on origins demands that, even in a city where origins are unsettled, a new sense of origins is created. That is, "A city is a place where the old migrants transmogrify

into citizens with disappeared origins who look at new migrants as if at strangers, forgetting their own flights. And the new migrants remain immigrants until they too can disappear their origins” (Brand, *A Map* 63). In fact, later in the text, Brand counters an optimistic reading of city space when she writes that “[e]veryone thinks that a city is full of hope, but it isn’t. Sometimes it is the end of imagination” (110). To become a citizen, migrants must “disappear” their elsewhere origins and replace those with neo-origins. Since the nation-state encourages a vision of membership based on the neo-origins, old migrants demonstrate their citizenship through a distance from new immigrants.

While Brand rejects the calcification of origins and exclusions based on those fixed origins, she also rejects the erasure of the past that is demonstrated in disappearing origins. Indeed, in contrast to the positivity of connection across diverse experiences, the passage suggests a homogenizing impulse. Rather than demonstrate the positive potential for change and flux in the city, Brand suggests that – as in her earlier novels – Toronto “remains an inhospitable space” for immigrants (Joseph 86). In between the two passages quoted above, Brand offers a series of transformations for immigrants to the city, where individuals are detached from diverse backgrounds and occupations and converted into mostly menial workers in the city space. Canada, and Toronto in particular, offers limited potential for transformation while simultaneously denying any association – however complex or simplistic – with origins elsewhere. Indeed, the city space rehabilitates diverse origins into “calcified” national belonging and homogenizes “multiple and colliding identities.”

Brand recalls how her own uncle was transformed in Canadian city space from a man connected to his past through artistry to a man “parenthesized” by “[s]teel and nickel”

(124). Much like Verlia's uncle in *In Another Place*, Brand's uncle eventually finds himself in Sudbury. Brand can only muse about his fate:

I suspect that he was drowned the way one drowns, often willingly, in any metropole. The city drowns out your longings and your fears, replacing them with its own anonymous desire. These three cities in the northern hemisphere took him to the more mundane vulgar acts of acquisition, away from any contemplation of the self into the hurly-burly of a packaged life, property and consumption. And he may have been grateful. (124)

Though Brand notes that her uncle may have “drowned . . . willingly” and been “grateful” for it, she suggests the inevitability of his drowning as a failure of Canadian nation-space. Given the echo of Verlia's uncle, “packaged life” suggests the simulated performance of his life, the superficiality of his existence. Simultaneously, his position as “parenthesized” marks Brand's uncle as marginalized in the space he occupies. Like Verlia's uncle, he must perform and enact belonging according to social scripts yet nevertheless is always denied full participation. While her uncle may be satisfied with this position, Brand remains dissatisfied with Canada's continued failure to offer immigrant members of the Black diaspora agency and full membership in national spaces.

Brand's critique of the societal norms that homogenize, parenthesize, and threaten members of the Black diaspora within Canada is most clearly evidenced in her experiences in Burnt River. Even after she lives in the northern Ontario town for two years, the threat of racism that Brand reads in her surroundings ensures that the place still “fills [her] with a sense of dread. . . . I fear the people more than the elements, which are themselves brutal” (143). Her fear extends not only to the potential denial of her identity – rejection by the other inhabitants “[a]s if I do not exist” (141) – but also the potential of a physical threat:

“What I am afraid of is that waking up in another room, minutes away by car, the mechanic walks up and takes my face for a target, my arm for something to bite, my car for a bear” (141). She finds herself, because of this fear, attempting to appease the threat, to appear less threatening: “I am much more eager to please or not to cause offence here in this town, which is all white except for the Chinese people who took over the restaurant” (147). In *Burnt River*, Brand performs the same “lie” of belonging that her uncle and Verlia’s uncle perform in Sudbury. The “oppressive social forces . . . endanger her emotional survival at *Burnt River*” (Joseph 82). Because of her fear, Brand retreats from connection; indeed, Joseph notes that her “fear produces and hardens the boundaries that separate her from others” (83).

The racism that she reads in *Burnt River* renders both Brand and the other inhabitants mutually incomprehensible. Registering her fear that the mechanic will misread her, Brand also acknowledges that she cannot accurately read him: “I read his face coming apart with something – a word I think. I ask for gas; I cannot know what his response is. I pass money out the window. I assume we have got the gist of each other and I drive away from the constant uncertainty of encounters” (Brand, *A Map* 142). Fear not only causes Brand to retreat and disable connection, but it actually prevents her from reading and being read accurately. She both is excluded and excludes herself from community space in *Burnt River*, and she is parenthesized by this exclusion.

What We Can Make of It: Landing and Connecting

Though Brand’s exploration of “nation predicated on what” suggests that there can be no national home-space in Canada for members of the Black diaspora, potential community and connection does emerge in the text. Indeed, if the work of uncovering the

exclusions inherent in national home-space and examining the underpinnings of Canadian society might be considered destabilizing and deterritorializing, the process also involves the creative reterritorializations deriving from and necessary to Brand's emerging sense of agency in the Black diaspora. Reterritorialization is, in fact, essential in affording any agency to a deterritorialized position. In "What's Home Got to Do with It?" Martin and Mohanty argue that a feminist politics of deterritorialization "insists . . . on our responsibility for remapping boundaries and renegotiating connections" (87), and connection becomes an essential component of Brand's reterritorializations.

In "Wondering into Country," Joseph extends Goldman's reading of Brand's drift to shift attention to landing. Goldman argues that "the concept of drifting invites readers to re-theorize home as a constellation of multiple sites – a series of somewheres that cannot be captured under any one place name" (14). Since Brand defines the Door of No Return as the dwelling of members of the Black diaspora and this dwelling as "no one place but a collection of places," Goldman's reading of "home as a constellation of multiple sites" is appropriate to *A Map*. However, these "multiple sites" and this "collection of places" must be understood as landing sites, for, as Joseph points out, Brand herself declares that "Landing is what people in the Diaspora do" (*A Map* 150). Joseph argues that Brand "repeatedly engages in creative, provisional reterritorializations of spaces within the Canadian nation" (76), and these spaces are understood as locations of landing.

Brand's declaration that "[l]anding is what people in the Diaspora do" recalls and contrasts with *In Another Place*'s Elizete landing in Toronto. Joseph also distinguishes between the agency available in landing in the earlier novel and in Brand's memoir. When Brand writes that Elizete "[l]anded like a fish or a ship. More like fish on somebody's line than ship" (*In Another Place* 47), she marks Elizete's movement in and encounters with

space as involuntary and powerless. In her remarks on landing in *A Map*, however, Brand initially summons this sense of powerlessness in order to reject it. Considering her position in Burnt River, Brand comments, “What I am doing out here I do not know. I mean of course in the sense that I did not know I would end up here. *End up* is not the right phrase. My life is not over. *Land* may be a better word” (*A Map* 150). Brand’s confusion over how she “end[ed] up” in Burnt River initially suggests loss of control over her movement, but her replacement of the term with landing refigures the self as the agent of movement. While the places where she lands are not premeditated, the term *landing* retains the mobility of drift while shifting focus to the individual places in which she finds herself. For Brand, “Burnt River is another outpost, another destination,” yet she “had no destination in mind. I am without destination; that is one of the inherited traits of the Diaspora” (150). Her claim that “the next thought leads me to the next place” marks her as the agent of her own movement and distinguishes her landing from that of Elizete (150). While the passage does align with Goldman’s concept of drifting, Brand emphasizes the places to which she drifts, the sites on which she lands. By focusing on landing sites, Brand opens up the possibilities of diasporic drift to active engagements with place. Her emphasis on multiple destinations and spontaneous mobility, however, couples the fluidity of diaspora with the landing that people in the diaspora do. Brand uses landing not only to assert a sense of agency but also to reject the permanence and finality of “end up.” A landing site, therefore, might enable agency while signalling the impermanence that Brand reads as necessary for any viable home-space.

Despite the significant shift toward a theory of drifting and landing that enables agency and imagines viable home-spaces, Brand’s memoir is not a radical re-casting of her conception of home and of Canada as home-space. Brand remains attentive to the failures

of the nation, especially in its treatment of non-white immigrants. Context is significant. Brand's position¹⁰ throughout much of the text (and in its moment of writing) affords her a mobility and authority that were impossible for *In Another Place*'s Elizete, for example. I note this context not to undermine the significance of a shift towards agency, but only to suggest that Brand's insistence on the devastating disempowerment possible in the diverse experiences of the earlier novels' characters haunts the power of drifting, landing, and home-making in this text.

In each of Brand's landing sites – from Toronto to Burnt River to Vancouver – “she maps ways of seeing and moving, of making sense of space, that exist in the midst of or despite the systems of power that govern social relations,” and this “approach allows her to articulate and interrogate her positioning in relation to specific narratives and social structures that shape her experience of Canada” (Joseph 77). Thus, Brand's fear in Burnt River causes her to retreat into domestic space and deny connection with the community, but the necessity of survival when her car breaks down makes Brand momentarily step out of her “armour” and engage with her surroundings. As she heads down the road to seek help that she knows might potentially open her up to other “people's disdain” (*A Map* 144), Brand declares that “[t]he road knows that wherever you find yourself you are” (152). Joseph reads this line as “an acceptance that she seems to have achieved by opening herself to the potential of the space in which she finds herself. Notably, in her rephrasing, Brand locates understanding in the in-between space of the road, rather than consolidating it within the enclosed, familiar space of the self” (84). To ensure survival, Brand must step

¹⁰ Brand's economic stability and her legal standing as citizen, for example, distinguish her position from that of the homeless and illegal Elizete.

out of her enclosure; in doing so, she opens herself to both the threat and potential of her community.

Joseph reads similar moments of openness and connection in Brand's experiences in Toronto and Vancouver. She explains that "[i]n the Toronto sections of her memoir, she attempts to maintain an affective openness to the people of the city who have tended to remain invisible not only to the nation, but also to her" (85), and this openness is enabled through Brand's vision. Travelling the city, Brand emphasizes the role that seeing plays in establishing connection: "There is a city here where I walk to see how others live. I could, I suppose, see about myself only. I could be unaffected. . . . But Neruda summons me, is waiting for me at the end of every sentence. I cannot ignore my hands 'stained with garbage and sadness'" (*A Map* 100). Brand cannot disconnect from the other members of the city because she feels implicated in their lives. She "cannot resist seeing" (100), and in seeing she opens herself up to connection; she is implicated in her observation. Significantly, the connections forged through this implicating vision have the power to transform space. Brand seeks out the periphery of the city and, in her connection to the edges and to the city as a whole, she dismantles the binary of margin and centre: "These are people on the edges of the city, some would say, not emblematic. I know they might be the edges and easily ignored, but they curl into the middle" (101). Her observations of, implication in, and connection with these edges redraw the boundaries of the city. She destabilizes the space by uncovering its edges, and, through her connections across the dismantled divisions, the division between periphery and centre is blurred. Through her openness, the city is temporarily transformed for Brand.

On the Granville bus in Vancouver, Brand has a similar moment of connection that transforms space and offers temporary community. The passage begins by gesturing toward

the theft of native land and the erasure of its historical paths and names before Brand notes a Salish woman board the bus and ask the driver for directions. She identifies the woman as lost, as well as the bus driver since “[w]here he is from is indescribable and equally vanished from his memory or the memory of anyone he may remember,” though he “knows the way newly mapped, superimposed on this piece of land” (220). Lost, the man and woman are also countryless (220), and this sense of loss sparks a connection between Brand, her friend, the bus driver, and the Salish woman; the moment of connection transforms the bus on which they travel. “It is only the Granville bus, surely,” Brand writes, “But a bus where a ragged mirage of histories comes into a momentary realization” (221). The others on the bus disappear so that the space is only occupied, imaginatively, by the four who have “perfected” a connection and transformation in diverse ways (221). The acknowledgment of difference across the connection allows Brand to “[chart] provisional alignment via the recognition of non-identical experiences of loss” (Joseph 89). Joseph figures this instance, significantly, as “a moment of dwelling” (89). Space is transformed and connections are enabled, and the bus momentarily becomes a home-space that mourns loss but provides connection and comfort. The moment of connection is occasioned by loss and by the diverse experiences of and responses to that loss. While the rupture of the Door of No Return provides Brand the ground on which to build creative agency, the “ruptures – and the sharedness of these ruptures” (Saul 63) provide her the means for forging connections and transforming space.

Joseph notes, however, the exclusions created by Brand’s reterritorialization on the Granville bus when the others on the bus become invisible and excluded from the “dwelling” of the four. Reading this exclusion as a “foregrounding of blind spots,” Joseph suggests that the exclusion demonstrates “the need for provisionality in Brand’s creative

reterritorializations” (89). The “realization” of connection and transformation is, significantly, “momentary,” suggesting that the created space is already provisional and transient. The movement of the bus through the streets and the inevitability of its members’ departure reinforce the provisionality and changeability of the space. Such instances of connection in Brand’s landing sites “are not predictable or premeditated; rather, they chart a different sense of place, which is simultaneously unexpected, rooted, and rootless” (McKittrick 104). Brand is aware of the exclusions of her reterritorialized home-space and thus figures it as temporary and shifting in order to acknowledge its limitations. Its power is derived not only from the connections between the temporary members of the space but also in the space’s instability. To avoid becoming the exclusionary model that Brand rejects, the space must be momentary yet resonant in its impermanence.

Instability and impermanence are, Brand suggests, the condition of the diaspora, for “[t]o the descendants of the nineteenth-century Indian and African Diaspora, a nervous temporariness is our existential dilemma” (*A Map* 61). In *A Map*, Brand recoups this “nervous temporariness” as a generative instability. The “temporariness” marks the spaces members inhabit as always unstable while their nervousness – or uneasiness – demonstrates awareness of that instability. At the end of the text, Brand writes, “A map, then, is only a life of conversations about a forgotten list of irretrievable selves” (224). The “life of conversations” signals both the continuous process of Brand’s map-making – her understanding of place is always changing – and the incessant variability of the places that she makes – they are always provisional – while “conversations” marks the necessity of connections in any imagined home-space. Paul Huebener reads the passage as a signal “that

maps, like names, like people, and like places, exist for us through conversation: through a keeping of company with each other, with our surroundings, and with our pasts” (624).

In *A Map*, the deterritorialized and shifting condition of the Black diaspora, when combined with connectedness, provides Brand the agency necessary to self-consciously, provisionally, and powerfully create home-spaces within Canada. Though Brand does refer to Canada as home several times in her memoir, she remains uneasy with Canada as a national home-space and with national home-spaces in general. Instead, Brand considers the various places in which she finds herself across the country as landing sites where she might actively create her own sense of home, always momentary. In *A Map*, Brand demonstrates what M. NourbeSe Philip declares in *A Genealogy of Resistance*: “For some of us, home is but a moment. Defying the permanent lodged in its meaning” (26).

CHAPTER FOUR
“More comfortable with the discomfort”:
Uneasy Home-Spaces in *What We All Long For*

While Brand’s first two novels explored the failures of all home-spaces for her characters and *A Map to the Door of No Return* suggested that all homes are fictions, in *What We All Long For* Brand presents an empowering potential in the *creative* construction of home-spaces. As in her earlier work, Brand examines the limitations of domestic, community and national home-spaces, especially as seen through first-generation immigrants to Canada; however, in this more recent work, the discomfort occasioned by limited homes is harnessed as impetus for agency while the fictionality of home becomes the means for creation. Since discomfort with homes that are locked in the past has been a motivation throughout her work for her characters to reject their claustrophobic and limiting home-spaces, *What We All Long For*’s recouping of that discomfort in their actively created spaces signals Brand’s – and her characters’ – awareness of the limitations and necessary provisionality of viable home-spaces. If one of the primary limitations of home is its stasis, an uneasy awareness of the instability of home in all its manifestations – even in the generative community-based home-spaces of the novel – counters paralysis by compelling Brand’s characters into a continuous process of dismantling and rebuilding the spaces they inhabit. When home no longer stands for strict exclusions, saving or imprisoning cloisters, and stable borders, home-spaces might not only be possible for Brand’s characters but might signal their agency in space.

In an interview with Pauline Butling, Brand explains that home as conventionally understood, as “that whole thing that makes us feel warm and possible,” was never available to women of colour (84). She continues, “[h]ome may not be a place where

everything's going to be fine" (84). Throughout her earlier work, Brand demonstrates that the homes her characters occupy are, in fact, contrary to safety, warmth and possibility; home, as any place safe or comforting, never exists for Verlia, Elizete, Eula, and others. However, what Brand articulates in this interview and demonstrates in *What We All Long For* is the necessity of releasing these definitions of home and abandoning a search for such a place. Instead, what Brand calls for is to "become a little more comfortable with the discomfort of throwing everything up in the air in order to see the possibilities that might become available" (84). Throughout her prose, Brand herself has worked through becoming "more comfortable with the discomfort" by disrupting received notions of home and offering a model for its creation that redeems and incorporates that discomfort. I refer to these actively created home-spaces, built through the potential of that discomfort, as uneasy home-spaces, where provisional reterritorializations enable connection and agency but retain uneasiness as a reminder of the spaces' provisionality.

Through her depiction of both the first-generation immigrant parents and their second-generation children, however, Brand suggests that the ability to recoup uneasiness and actively build home-spaces is not equally available to all citizens. While Brand remains alert to the particular failings of Canada and Toronto specifically as home-spaces, the novel nevertheless counters easy dismissals of the nation-state by foregrounding how Tuyen, Carla, Oku and Jackie's identification as Canadian-(Toronto-)born empowers them in city spaces. Through her attention to their parents and to Tuyen's lost brother, Quy, Brand suggests the ways in which one's position in nation-space can both enable and restrict one's ability to create viable, empowering, and uneasy home-spaces.

**“born in the city from people born elsewhere”:
Rejecting and Being Rejected by “regular Canadian life”**

What is avoided in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* when Eula sends her daughter Bola back to the Caribbean, and what is briefly examined in *A Map to the Door of No Return*'s scenes in the Jarvis Street courthouse, takes centre stage in this novel: Brand shifts her focus from first-generation migration to the second-generation children of those immigrants. In her depiction of the second-generation, however, Brand also describes the experiences of her characters' parents and how those experiences influence Tuyen, Carla, Oku and Jackie's understanding of and ability to create home-spaces. While “[t]he migratory paths that led their parents to Toronto may fit within multicultural narratives of optimism, upward mobility, or gratefulness – upon their arrival, they find these narratives waiting for them and scripting them” (Smyth, “Being” 278). As such, Brand demonstrates her continued attention to the legacy of racism that denies citizenship, belonging, and home to many racial-minority immigrants to Canada.

The parents who are given the most attention in the novel and in whom we can most see the way racial-minority immigrants are “script[ed]” in Canadian society are Tuyen's parents, Cam and Tuan. In their flight from Vietnam, they lose their son, Quy, and this fracture is paralleled in the state's refusal to officially recognize their previous professional qualifications. Tuan, as an engineer, and Cam, as a doctor, are denied professional recognition and forced to work unloading fruit boxes and as a manicurist respectively. The parallel between their loss and their misrecognition is made explicit when Tuan “welcomed the rebuff of Canadian officials and employers to his licensing as a civil engineer as it matched his sense of unworthiness and dishonour” (Brand, *What* 114). Resigned to the loss of their professions, Cam and Tuan open a Vietnamese restaurant, the Saigon Pearl. Again,

Brand parallels their inability to incorporate their previous identities in their new city with the loss of their son:

They were being defined by the city. They had come thinking that they would be who they were, or at least who they had managed to remain. After the loss of Quy, it made a resigned sense to them that they would lose other parts of themselves. Once they accepted that, it was easy to see themselves the way the city saw them: Vietnamese food. (66-67)

Cam and Tuan are over-written by the gaze of the city – the nation – and begin to see themselves through the lens of that gaze. They are reduced to the “stereotypical view of ethnicity that the city foists upon them” (Dobson 94). They have no agency in their self-definition, and the definition that they accept underscores this powerlessness: they become food to be consumed while simultaneously working to reinforce the nation’s vision of a multicultural city. They are and they provide the visible marker of a superficial multiculturalism where limited ideas of culture and ethnicity are distilled into a consumable product: food.

While the Saigon Pearl demonstrates Cam and Tuan’s acceptance of definition by the city along strict stereotyped ethnic lines, Tuyen’s childhood experiences at the restaurant indicate her own refusal of these imposed borders and definitions. She felt “exposed in the restaurant when European clientele were present” (Brand, *What* 129), suggesting her awareness and rejection of a gaze that fixes her as food producer and product. Moreover, her reaction to racial-minority customers demonstrates her denial of associations along strict ethnic or racial lines: “when the customers were Vietnamese or Korean or African or South Asian, she hated, then, the sense of sameness or ease she was supposed to feel with them” (129-30).

Unable to assert self-definition in the city and plagued by the loss of their son, Cam and Tuan find themselves locked in a past they cannot access and prevented from participating fully in the present. In their attempt “to belong to a nation-state that refuses to recognize them because of their ancestry,” Tuyen’s parents “are paralyzed, striving for an impossible acceptance alongside a nostalgia for a lost past” (Dobson 88). The static figuring of their domestic space marks this paralysis. Attaining financial success through their restaurant, they flee to the suburbs in Richmond Hill “where immigrants go to get away from other immigrants” and ironically find themselves among other immigrants similarly fleeing each other (54). In fact, the narrator makes clear that the attempt to escape “other immigrants” is an attempt to escape “themselves – or at least . . . the self they think is helpless, weak, unsuitable, and always in some kind of trouble” (55). The move to the suburbs figures as an attempt to perform what they see as “regular Canadian life” (47): “They hate the self that keeps drawing attention, the one that can’t fit in because of colour or language, or both, and they think that moving to a suburb will somehow eradicate that person once and for all” (55). For Cam and Tuan, their suburban home becomes a marker of their Canadian-ness and an attempt to obliterate their immigrant status. The superficiality of their belonging symbolized by the suburban home is underscored in Tuyen’s assessment of Richmond Hill: “It was artificial. The whole development seemed highly contrived, as if it were made all of cardboard and set down quickly and precariously. Someone’s idea of luxury, which was really anti-septic, and for all its cars and spaciousness, it was nevertheless rootless and desolate” (55). The development is precarious because the sense of belonging the home transmits is contingent upon an acceptance of the dominant narratives that reduce Cam and Tuan to stereotypes, that force them to deny their immigrant past, and yet never admit them – for all their acquiescence to stereotypes and their denials

of self – as full citizens of the state. Their belonging itself is artificial and precarious. Tuyen dismisses these terms of belonging and recognizes that all homes created under subscription to these over-writing narratives will be artificial and hollow.

In the same performance of perceived Canadian normalcy, Tuan and Cam's wealth becomes a capitalist acquisition that Tuyen reads as a "voracious getting. They had everything and nothing. They didn't even like or savour having everything, they simply had it as a matter of course" (62). The objects have little meaning for them as they collect them both as a sign of their wealth and participation in capitalist commerce and as an accumulation against the losses of their past. The duality of the house as marker of normalcy and defence against loss is demonstrated in Cam's frantic collecting, refusal to throw anything out, laminating of all documents, and covering furniture in plastic: "If she could wrap everything in plastic or laminate it, Tuyen felt, she would" (63). The house is thus "preserved and prevented from being properly used or lived in" (McKibbin 506). Like many domestic spaces in Brand's work, Tuyen's home is stifling in its static positioning in the past and in its chaotic clutter. She describes the house as "schizophrenic" (Brand, *What* 62), and she declares that she has to leave because "there's too much clutter, too many things, I can't think" (63). Her parents' home, as other domestic spaces, is presented as over-full and potentially suffocating in its power to overwhelm her thoughts.

The desire to retain all possessions and collect them in one place is mirrored in their vision of familial life. Tuyen knows that she can always rely on her father because "[s]he was his possession, like his whole family was" (56). Tuan reiterates this collectivity in his attempts to recall Tuyen to the family home: "How you think a family works? Same house, same money, same life" (57). While Tuyen is assured of her father's presence because she, and all of his family, are his possessions, she chafes at the idea of being owned by family:

“‘Alike’ – the word revolted her; it gave her some other unwanted feeling of possession” (157). She rejects the sense of obligation that her familial ties demand, an obligation that she figures as being “held” or restricted (61). The “smallness of family,” for Tuyen, is in the automatic and inherited “duty” that family demands (61); she finds no room for choice or alliances that surpass inheritance in this biological familial structure.

Cam and Tuan’s domestic home-space becomes not only a signal of their belonging – a belonging that is superficial only and contingent upon their reduction to stereotyped ethnicity – but also a fortification against loss: “*Guard the home you have, and regret vanishes*. This is what in his outward demeanour [Tuan] strove for” (114). Of course, only in the “outward” subscription to “regular Canadian life” and in the denial of their immigrant identity does the family belong, and only in this “outward demeanour” can Tuan pretend that “regret vanishes.” Rather, regret plagues the family and locks them in a static position. The home is stifling in its stasis while regret drives every act of accumulation and preservation. Just as the haunting of the past is translated into a haunting shame in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, the paralysis of her parents and the overwhelming regret over their loss becomes, for Tuyen, “a kind of lapping shame” (20). The regret that Tuan and Cam seek to banish with order nevertheless persists and hovers over their daughter: “It was this overwhelming sense of regret that Tuyen had fled. It would descend on her if she spent any length of time at the house in Richmond Hill or in the too-long presence of any of the family” (268-69). Regret haunts not only the familial domestic space but also each moment of connection between members of the family.

While the other parents of the main characters are not given as extensive attention as Cam and Tuan, each presentation does demonstrate similar failed expectations of immigration, lack of belonging, and paralysis in their longing for a lost past. The regret that

plagues Tuyen's household is similarly evident in Oku's musing on his Caribbean-born father: "Or did he want the hard-headed bitterness of his father, living in the fantasies of *if only*" (175). Like Tuyen, Oku understands his parents as locked in the past, "[a]s people who somehow lived in the near past and were unable or unwilling to step into the present" (190). While Oku is the only character who still lives with his parents, his feelings of confinement eventually push him out of their home. Throughout the novel, this domestic space is "increasingly uncomfortable" while his desire is "for a sense of sovereignty" (174).

Though arriving in Toronto from Nova Scotia and thus not performing the same transnational flights as Tuyen's parents from Vietnam, Oku's from the Caribbean, or Carla's from Italy and Jamaica, "Jackie's parents' move from Halifax is both figured as a shift from *within* the African diaspora and also marked by the same hopes and all-or-nothing investment as a move between countries" (Smyth, "Being" 278). And like Cam and Tuan whose expectations of self-identity are denied in immigration, Carla's parents are surprised by their inability to retain control of self-definition: "They weren't the same people who had taken that train to Toronto fifteen years ago. Well, no one ever is, but they weren't those two people much more so than they'd imagined. They weren't the people they were going to be or had set out to be, the people they had envisioned" (Brand, *What* 264). Just as Tuyen's parents remain locked in a past they cannot access – for the fear of returning to Vietnam paralyzes them so greatly that they cannot return even to search for their lost Quy – Jackie's parents imagine an impossible return to Halifax. Though almost all friends and relatives in Nova Scotia, too, have moved on, they continue to dream about a return to a place that thus no longer exists: "So there was no one to go back to, but the thought remained a fantasy, and as fantasies do, it pictured Nova Scotia, Halifax, as paradise on earth and Toronto as a wretched hellhole" (93).

While Tuyen's parents submit to definition by the city and attempt to install themselves in a myth of regular Canadian suburbia, Jackie's parents initially resist definition and experience a liberating community home-space in the Paramount nightclub. The Paramount is a place where "people went to feel in their own skin, in their own life" (95). Emily Johansen argues that the Paramount is an example of what Nancy Fraser calls "subaltern counterpublics"; that is, "alternative publics" that "are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs" (Fraser qtd. in Johansen 49-50). In the Paramount, Jackie's parents can assert their own identities because "blackness becomes central rather than marginalized" (Johansen 53). Similarly, against the erasure of identity by the city and the homogenizing impulse in defining racial-minority others, the "Paramount also reveals the heterogeneity of blackness – something which is elided by the city" (53). However, the power to assert their Black identities dissolves when the Paramount is closed. Without the space to feel at home in their bodies, "Jackie's mother and father were lost. Everyone in Alexandra Park was lost" (Brand, *What* 178). The loss of the Paramount is figured as a loss of "fantasy" and "imagination" because without the space to exercise self-definition (179), Jackie's parents lose all sense of agency – even the power to imagine themselves. As Dobson notes, the loss of the Paramount "prompts the narrative to query who controls the city, noting that communities built from the ground up are threatened by development. . . by the city's elites" (95). The narrator muses, "How does life disappear like that? It does it all the time in a city. One moment a corner is a certain corner, gorgeous with your desires, then it disappears under the constant construction of this and that" (Brand, *What* 183). Given the short-lived nature of the Paramount as a community home-space, Dobson concludes "that

communities formed through racial limitations are fragile, given the power of the wealthy and white” (95). While the community space of the Paramount is a temporary source of power, its loss removes Jackie’s parents’ only source of agency and renders them as paralyzed between a lost past and an unfulfilled present as the parents of Tuyen and Oku.

Carla’s mother, Angie, appears as a figure both resistant and submissive to the overwriting of racial-minorities in the novel. Angie’s decision to have a relationship and children with Derek, a Black man, is figured throughout the novel as crossing a border. While the parents of the other main characters largely submit to rigid views of ethnic, racial, and class boundaries, boundaries which are especially visible in “the mapping of the city into ethnic neighbourhoods” signalling “isolated enclosures of difference” (Smyth, “Being” 279),¹¹ Angie rejects the ethnic borders defined by her Italian-Canadian ancestry. Her move towards Derek is a move out of her ethnic community home-space, but it is also figured as a move away from the domesticity she sees in that community:

Angie didn’t want to be anyone ordinary in Little Italy. She was scared of the Saturday shopping and the Sunday churching and the Sunday dinners where her brothers’ wives and her mother and she would busy themselves with cooking while her brothers and her father drank wine and scowled at the television or insulted each other about not knowing what real work was. She was scared of the screaming nieces and nephews and the inane talk about babies and wedding showers and houses in the new suburbs of Toronto. So Angie cut all that off with one flight into the most forbidden place on her family’s earth. (Brand, *What* 315)

¹¹ See Brosseau and Tavares for a literal mapping of these neighbourhoods in the novel.

She rejects both the notion that racial borders are impassable and the immigrant fantasy of flight to the suburbs enacted by Cam and Tuan. She is scared and suffocated by the enclosure of domestic space in Little Italy and transgresses those boundaries to free herself of the suffocation. However, Angie's move away from the stifling home-space does not free her from either what she reads as threatening domesticity or enclosing borders. Carla's childhood home in Angie's apartment, as noted by Johansen, is one of "exhilarating domestic space" (Brand, *What* 239). Johansen explains, "Angie's apartment is defined by gendered expectations. Her apartment is described by Carla as a site of either complete maternal love . . . or of illicit sexuality," a duality that, as "mother and mistress," performs "a madonna/whore dichotomy" (54). Indeed, Johansen argues that Angie occupies the position of the "spurned woman" when she positions herself – and Carla – across the street from Derek's home with his legal wife, Nadine. The novel supports this interpretation as Angie becomes increasingly anxious when the house is vacant, as if her sense of self can only be located in relation to the home of her lover. Indeed, though Angie transgresses boundaries and frees herself of the suffocation that scares her in her own community, she is nevertheless unable to assert her own self-definition. She exists only in relation to her lover, and the loss of this source of recognition terrifies and ultimately drives her to suicide.

On the day of her suicide, Angie plays a game that similarly reveals her search for recognition: "if someone said hello to her on the way, she wouldn't do it" (Brand, *What* 246). Angie searches for any sign that she is visible as a person; she "was waiting for a look that said that she existed, that her life was understandable. That was what the game meant" (246). She "needs, but will not ask for, acknowledgement from those who hold power of whatever sort" (Johansen 57). Angie herself has no power to assert her own identity and thus becomes as defined by the city as Tuan and Cam; that is, the city can't or won't

acknowledge her and so she ceases to exist. Her suicide, as Marc Brosseau and David Tavares note, is symbolic of the fate that may await those who transgress identity and racial borders (88). Moreover, Angie's position once crossing those borders signals the danger of reterritorialization and co-optation by dominant narratives. Having rejected borders, she nevertheless finds herself locked into the gendered archetype of "madonna/whore" that binds her identity to the public image of the "spurned woman." Furthermore, her search for rather than claim of recognition in the space of this dominant narrative signals the danger of accepting the over-writing of identity even and especially for border-crossers.

**"Every horn is alone, but they're together, crashing":
Creating Community, Transforming Space**

Dobson and Johansen provide two seemingly contradictory but, I argue, complementary readings of the second-generation characters' creation of space. Both critics rightfully note that these characters are actively engaged in the creation of spaces with an agency impossible for their parents. Dobson argues that the characters, recognizing the transitive quality of the city and engaging in deterritorialization, see the city as a space "for the creation of a viable sense of self – a space for building culture from below" (89). Dobson enlists the concept of drifting from Marlene Goldman¹² to argue that "Brand's liberated notion of selfhood risks becoming reinscribed by a loose, cosmopolitan sense of placid globalism if we fail to note that deterritorialization and drifting need to be ongoing processes" (90). To avoid reterritorialization by the dominant order, "ensuring [drifting bodies'] ongoing motion becomes a key concern in Brand's novel" (90). Dobson thus claims that the characters resist reterritorialization by being always in motion. Johansen, on

¹² See Chapter Two (pages 50-51) and Chapter Three (pages 57-58) for discussion of Goldman's concept of drifting as it applies to Brand's earlier work.

the other hand, sets herself against Dobson when she argues that the characters themselves reterritorialize what she calls “‘territorialized cosmopolitan’ subjectivities”; that is, “subjectivities with multiple affiliations across axes of gender, ethnicity, class, and sexuality which are not unrooted or free-floating but are principally and firmly located in the physicality of Toronto” (49). Indeed, in a footnote, Johansen explicitly sets her argument in opposition to Dobson’s. However, I would like to suggest that the two critical positions may be combined in the concept that I am calling Brand’s uneasy home-spaces. While Johansen’s focus on the material place – often public – that the characters reterritorialize seems to oppose the constant motion read by Dobson, the concept of uneasy home-spaces might combine the two perspectives by highlighting the way that material places are *temporarily* and self-consciously reterritorialized. That is, characters build home-spaces in their movements through the city, homes that may even be – like the Vancouver bus in *A Map to the Door of No Return* – themselves in motion, or ones that represent motion in their self-conscious provisionality.

The term “uneasy” calls attention to the refusal of these spaces to become the unexamined and comfortable homes that ignore exclusions while also recouping the discomfort that is present in all of the previous homes of these characters. A passage describing Tuyen’s sculpture carving demonstrates how uneasiness may work to prevent the threatening fixity of a term like *home*, often read as inherently stable: “The figures were bending and standing in uneasy positions; some were headless in an extreme agony, or was it elation?” (Brand, *What* 43). The figures are being carved – that is, made permanent and fixed – into the wood, but instability is instilled into the position. The narrator describes the figures as “uneasy,” a term that recurs at least ten times in the novel, appears repeatedly

throughout criticism on Brand,¹³ and most notably occurs in the passage from *Bread Out of Stone* that I cite in my Introduction and from which I take my title. Uneasiness is doubled in the figures and in their viewers. The figures are carved and thus fixed but appear in positions that express motion (agitation) and emotion (agony or elation). Indeed, the uneasiness may spring in part from their resistance to interpretation; the state of the figures remains an irresolvable question. The figures are uneasy in their fixed yet moving position, and uneasiness is mirrored in their audience because of their un-interpretability. The “or was it” of the narrator’s question reiterates the resistance to definition even as the very carving of the figures into wood seems to imply static fixity.

Though this passage is certainly not an example of the uneasy home-spaces created by the characters in the novel, the figures may serve symbolically for the work that those home-spaces do. Characters create a home-space that defies stasis in its temporality and in the shifting properties of that space; moreover, like the resistance to interpretation of the figures, these spaces resist being co-opted or reterritorialized by the racist, sexist and xenophobic narratives that define and imprison their parents.

In the opening pages of the novel, we first meet three of the main characters – Tuyen, Carla, and Oku – on the subway in a scene that recalls *A Map*’s Vancouver bus. As they enter the quiet car, “they crash into one another, giggling. Their laughter rattles around in the car, then they grow mockingly self-conscious and quiet, noticing the uptightness on the train, but they can’t stay serious and explode again into laughter” (2). Entering the train, they subtly change the quality of the space with their laughter. Dobson, however, notes that the transformation is not without danger. The characters are eventually “subdued by the taut

¹³ Though I have not found any critics who discuss the term, Huebener, Johansen, and McKibbin, among others, employ “uneasy” when discussing Brand and her work.

silence around them, as if succumbing to some law they'd broken" (3) while the thoughts of "some other jealous rider" (3), who assures him or herself that they're just "free loaders" and that "[l]ife will get them hard some time" (4), signals the inherent threat of the space. Dobson argues that these interjections indicate the narrative's "aware[ness] of the risks of their self-proclaimed freedom, casting doubt on their futures" (96). Nevertheless, the characters alter the quality of the space and affect the other riders. Their words will follow the other riders all day. Indeed, the laughter itself disrupts the divisions between people on the car and forces them to come out of themselves for a moment. One rider, whom the narrative suggests is Tuyen's lost brother Quy, is "pierce[d]" by the laughter and "it surprises him out of his own declensions on fate" (4). In "Fiction of Belonging," David Chariandy refers to "a shift in the very atmosphere of the train" and terms the effect of the characters' words and laughter "strangely infective" (827).

The moment leads the narrator to expound on the permeability of the lives on the train, suggesting that the main characters have "disrupted" this distance (Brand, *What* 3). The narrator continues, "What floats in the air on a subway train like this is chance. People stand or sit with the thin magnetic film of their life wrapped around them. They think they're safe, but they know they're not. Any minute you can crash into someone else's life, and if you're lucky, it's good, it's like walking on light" (4). The distance and separation of the individuals on the train is momentarily overcome, but the space is fragile and multiply constituted. It remains uneasy not only because it is momentary and unstable but because of the internal dissonance signalled by the jealous rider. Risk is apparent in the negative responses of the passengers, but the power to connect is present. Indeed, the narrator's declaration that at "[a]ny minute you can crash into someone else's life" recalls Oku, Carla and Tuyen's entrance to the train where they "crash into one another" (2). The moment is

short-lived, but the characters have the power to alter the spaces they inhabit and to dissolve the fallible borders that people erect around themselves.

The moment, however, differs from the bus ride in *A Map*, where deliberate exclusions are made as connections are established through a shared sense of loss. While provisionality and spontaneity remain consistent markers of these spaces, in *What We All Long For*'s subway train the only borders erected are the material walls of the train and connection is established upon the shared sense of space. While the Vancouver bus recouped past loss for a present connection, the Toronto subway's home-space is founded upon and grounded in the present. While I do not mean to suggest that the Vancouver bus did not acknowledge the differences of the members of that community space, the scene in the later novel has the advantage of incorporating those made invisible on *A Map*'s bus; moreover, the temporary borders erected on the bus are dissolved on the subway without ignoring the dissonance and danger in the community. And while the scene in *A Map* foregrounded Brand's agency in creating those connections across diverse experiences of loss, the scene in *What We All Long For* attributes to Tuyen, Carla and Oku the power to affect and alter even those who were made invisible in Brand's earlier constructed home-space.

While the characters transform the space of the subway car without clear intention to create space, they also actively and self-consciously build home-spaces throughout the novel. Tuyen, having left the static domestic space of her parents, builds her own home-space in her College Street apartment that is both private and public with internal and external borders that continually shift. Because the apartment where she lives is both art studio and art gallery, Tuyen's home-space is never definitively private or public. While she has fled there from the claustrophobia of her parents' house, the place is a "refuge," not

only for herself, and “not just for their immediate circle but for all the people they picked up along the way to their twenties” (23). Thus, the apartment is a community home-space for the central characters and their friends. The external borders of the apartment itself are permeable. Because Carla lives in the only other apartment on the floor, “[t]he doors to their apartments, which were adjacent, were usually left open” (52), effectively transforming the floor into one home-space. When Carla and Tuyen host parties, “both apartments and the hallway were full of smoke and music” (23) so that the whole floor becomes a site of community. Nevertheless, these borders are shifting and the doors may be closed to divide the apartments again into separate spaces. Within Tuyen’s apartment, she has dismantled the divisions to make room for her art work and for its display. Tuyen “had surreptitiously broken down the wall between her bedroom and the kitchen, making one large room for her installations” (25). Though the narrator notes that Tuyen “had virtually destroyed the apartment” (25), she has, in fact, dismantled the apartment as it was received and transformed it to suit her needs for a shifting home-space.

Tuyen and Carla’s home-space(s) become sites of creation for not only Tuyen’s art but for a reclaiming of that object which defined Tuyen’s parents: food. While Tuyen and Carla themselves abhor cooking, which the narrator links to their childhood experiences of traversing cross-cultural worlds where food was a marker of difference, Oku uses the space of the apartments to create meals that dissolve those strict ethnic borders where food is the ultimate sign of ethnicity. Indeed, while the first-generation characters cling to or are forced to be defined by food as the external signifier of ethnicity, Oku creates meals from a variety of sources, “looking to open boundaries where his father prefers the comfort of the known” (Dobson 99). Carla and Tuyen “loved those visits, when he would throw together what to them were impossible ingredients and come up with sumptuous meals” (Brand, *What* 129).

Oku's combining of ingredients that do not seem to belong together points to the heterogeneous construction of the meals. He is able to take the seemingly incompatible items and combine them into a larger and fully harmonious meal in part because his skills are derived from numerous cooks and diverse kitchens. Oku "had taken his mother's training and augmented it along the way with all the training of all the mothers of the friends he had," so that his "tastes had expanded from this base to a repertoire that was vast and cosmopolitan" (132). When Oku cooks a meal in the apartment, the scene becomes not only a marker of his cosmopolitanism but also symbolic of the type of community space that the characters generate. The meal is consumed by Carla, Tuyen, Oku, and also the graffiti crew who, smelling the food from the alley below, ask Oku if they can join. Oku agrees by "bargain[ing] with them for rice and cardamom and cloves and chilies" (132); moreover, he cooks the rice in a manner learned from the graffiti crew themselves.

Like the apartment, the meal stretches borders by reaching out into the street and inviting others to join. And like the moment on the subway train, the meal functions upon the element of chance. Oku's meal "is full of signifiers of heterogeneity, coalition, and cosmopolitanism. The meal is made from ingredients on hand or gained by barter, suggesting provisionality; the group eating the meal is diverse yet linked through affinity and friendship" (Smyth, "Being" 280). It is an improvisational creation based on the materials available, inviting in the people who happen to be present, and, as Smyth indicates, the bargaining signals not only improvisation but negotiation of the space. Though Oku creates the meal, he does so in negotiation with the graffiti crew and in the space created by Carla and Tuyen. The meal thus becomes a collaboration of community that, with food as symbolic marker of ethnic divisions, dissolves prescribed ethnic borders and undermines any attempt to distill culture or ethnicity down to food. The moment of the

meal, of course, is temporary but potentially repeatable. Upon repetition, however, the elements will be different and the meal and community will similarly change without becoming any less restorative or border-crossing.

In opposition to the familial ties that Tuyen feels bound by, the four friends establish a community that substitutes for what they did not experience at home or by which they felt suffocated. Finding each other in childhood and sharing in the navigation of the city, as children “born in the city from people born elsewhere” (Brand, *What* 20), the characters establish their own close-knit family, and “[n]ow that friendship of opposition to the state of things, and their common oddness, held all of them together” (19). This passage points to two features of this familial group: they connect with one another across and through difference (their shared “oddness” manifests diversely), and they connect through “opposition to the state of things,” an opposition to the nostalgia of their parents and to a national narrative that will only recognize these Canadian-born characters as racialized others. As Dobson notes, the four friends “are linked by their desire for inclusivity, and not limited by the discourses that are handed to them” (100). Moreover, while Tuyen is repulsed by the hold of her family, the embrace of this group is figured as positive and generative because of its political and social agency and because of its recognition and refusal to elide differences within the family.

The community that Brand creates in the novel seems to answer the calls of Paul Gilroy, Biddy Martin and Chandra Mohanty for a model of community that might replace a limiting notion of family. In “What’s Home Got to Do with It?” Martin and Mohanty express “the need for a new sense of political community that gives up the desire for the kind of home where the suppression of positive differences underwrites familial identity” (99). In “It’s a Family Affair,” Gilroy explains how Black political and social problems are

figured as “the crisis of black masculinity,” which in turn is “resolved through the mystic reconstruction of the ideal heterosexual family” (313). In contrast to this structure that reinforces gendered and sexual norms, Gilroy advocates for a “fragile image of nonfamilial community . . . a kind of surrogate, joyfully disorganic, and synthetic kin group” that “constitutes itself slowly and tentatively – in and around desire, through music, affirmation, celebration, and play” (313). For Tuyen, the difference between being held by genealogical ties and being held by this chosen group is underscored when she explains the difference between loving her family and loving her surrogate family:

She didn't mind caring for people who were not her family – it was so much easier; they actually did not expect it and were more than grateful for it.

With other people you could begin from the beginning, together you could create your own forces, your own stories. Love was easier, it was unexpected, pure. Because it was unasked for, unsolicited, yes, unexpected.

(Brand, *What* 128)

Outside of her inherited family, Tuyen imagines agency in the creation of the community. The emphasis on beginning anew and writing one's own stories indicates the way that inheritance can limit the agency of the inheritors. There is no choice in family, but there is choice in the surrogate family that the four friends create. Like Brand's earlier characters, Tuyen bristles at the obligation to care for biological family. However, her rejection is not the same as Eula's refusal, in *At the Full*, to care for anyone for fear of loss, nor is the rejection precisely like *In Another Place*'s Verlia, though the passage does recall Verlia's surrogate political family. Unlike Verlia, however, Tuyen's formation of community extends beyond racial borders. While Verlia found community in the politically driven Movement, Tuyen's surrogate family retains the political motivation of “opposition to the

state of things” while the “common oddness” of the group connects without erasing differences. As Dobson notes above, this strategy proves more successful in the novel than alliances formed along racial lines, as exemplified in the dissolution of the counterpublic Paramount nightclub. Furthermore, the repetition of “unexpected” highlights the element of chance that pervades connections in the novel. Chance links the community to the present: “they are also fully rooted in their own time and place. Yet the nature of their rootedness is experimental and open-ended without being uncommitted” (Brydon, “Canadian Writers” 7). Chance signals their presence in the moment and the space they inhabit while also pointing to the provisionality of these moments and thus to the shifting nature of their community.

Tuyen finds this loving embrace not only in the community of her friends but in her very experience of the city. Again, this fluid connection is opposed to the limitations of her family’s home: “Familiarity was not what she wanted or what would make her feel as if she were in the world. It was the opposite. The alien touch of sidewalks, the hooded looks of crowds. She loved the unfriendliness, the coolness. It was warmer than the warmth of her family in Richmond Hill” (Brand, *What* 62). Public spaces throughout the city, like the moment on the subway, become sites of spontaneous transformation and connection. As with their surrogate family and like the scene on the subway, heterogeneity is central to these moments: “On any given day, on any particular corner, on any crossroads, you can find the city’s heterogeneity, like some physical light. And Tuyen found herself always in the middle of observing it” (142). Like the elements of Oku’s meal that seem incompatible but combine in ways that retain their sources yet create anew, the heterogeneity of the city creates a new language. In that “polyphonic” voicing, Tuyen locates hope and beauty (149). Repeatedly the “murmuring” is described as language, as “that gathering of voices and

longings that summed themselves up into a kind of language, yet indescribable” (149). The dissolution of boundaries between people – of the multiple voices combining together – “all sums up into a kind of new vocabulary” (154), one that has the power to transform both the speakers and the space in which it is spoken.

This transformation of individual voices into a “new vocabulary” invites comparison with Ornette Coleman’s “The Jungle Is a Skyscraper.” Oku’s description of the music recalls the narrator’s opening explanation of how people crash into one another in the city, while also invoking the language creation Tuyen hears in the city’s streets: “Hear that thick mass of horns? They do this harmolodic modulation, different instruments playing in different keys but in another communion, right, and all that rushing energy, dozens of themes just rushing together” (228). The “rushing energy” is reminiscent of the crashing power of transformation, and the “communion” suggests the new creation from these disparate elements. Tuyen’s remarks that “[e]very horn is alone, but they’re together, crashing” (228-29) qualifies that sense of communion as one that, like their community group, acknowledges difference in connection. That is, difference is not forgotten or subsumed in the communion yet the union is never compromised by those differences. Indeed, the affective power of the music and the transformative power of all such home-spaces created by the characters is located in the ability to speak in a “new vocabulary” that is nevertheless “polyphonic.”

The community that the characters create and their experiences of transformation on the city’s “crossroads” figure as both what Diana Brydon refers to as “the multitude” and as an alliance that Heather Smyth reads as opposing the limitations of official multiculturalism. In “A Place on the Map of the World,” Brydon compares the World Cup celebration to “what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have called the ‘multitude’” (3).

Brydon quotes from their *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* to explain the term. She writes, “They define the multitude as ‘singularities that act in common.’ Unlike what they term ‘the undifferentiated unity of the people’ . . . the multitude ‘is not unified but remains plural and multiple’” (Brydon 3). The term seems especially apt for a community that achieves communion without erasing difference, a community, in fact, that reaches communion *through* an alliance of difference. Smyth similarly recognizes these elements in the community of the novel and argues that it “lends us a model for heterogeneity that is an alternative to multiculturalism” (“Being” 274). Smyth, like many critics of official multiculturalism, sees the limitations of the policy in its privileging of race or ethnicity and its essentializing of those forms of identification.¹⁴ The second-generation characters refuse identifications along strict racial or ethnic or national lines; both their identifications and their formations of space are always shifting. Their surrogate family group and their transformation of home-spaces invite the recognition of their differences as a source of creative power.

Some of the most remarked upon scenes in the novel are those describing the World Cup celebration. While the narrator notes that World Cup soccer can exacerbate divisions between ethnic neighbourhoods in the city, the Korean victory over Italy transforms the streets and offers a moment of transnational connection for Tuyen. As the celebration spills into the streets, Tuyen feels a sense of transformative connection that is rooted in her experience of the others: “She loved being in the middle of whirling people, people spinning on emotion” (Brand, *What* 204). As she listens to a television announcer, both the infectious street celebration and opposition to the over-writing voice enables Tuyen to

¹⁴ The Preamble to the Canadian Multiculturalism Act makes the available terms of identification explicit: “the Government of Canada recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society” (qtd. in Smyth 288).

make a transnational connection beyond her inherited national ancestry: “As she left the apartment, she heard a television announcer say, ‘I didn’t know we had a Korea Town in the city.’ Asshole, she thought, you wouldn’t. You fuckers live as if we don’t live here. She wasn’t Korean, of course, but World Cup made her feel that way” (204). In the announcer’s shock, Tuyen hears the over-writing of diverse communities and rejects the invisibility imposed by the white elite. A shared sense of difference and an opposition to the erasing white voice enable Tuyen to imagine herself as Korean: “the ‘we’ of the announcer and the ‘you’ and ‘we’ of Tuyen’s rejoinder line up not with ethnic origin but rather with positions of racial and economic privilege and with Tuyen’s shared identification with the diasporic Korean community” (Smyth, “Being” 281). In opposition to the white announcer, Tuyen aligns herself with the Korean celebrants. She makes a temporary identification spurred by both an opposition to the dominant order and by the emotion she feels in the streets. This identification reaches beyond heritage so that she can momentarily understand herself beyond received ethnic or national claims. The World Cup celebrations “offer a means for imagining identifications and loyalties that cross over ethnic or national borders,” so that the terms of identification “are relational and shifting, and not necessarily tied to country of origin” (Smyth, “Being” 281).

In a bar during the celebration, Oku declares that “[d]ays like this are a warning. A promise” (Brand, *What* 210). He remarks that a man’s declaration that “this was the happiest day he’d ever had in this city” is both “pitiful” and “visionary” (210). The man’s claim points to the struggles he has experienced as a Korean immigrant to Canada, but the statement is visionary in its acknowledgement of the joy and power available in public expression and community formation. The public celebrations of Korea’s victory “are reclamations of the city’s space by marginalized groups and demonstrations of longing and

dissent” (Smyth, “Being” 282). This reclamation of the streets and the celebration that extends beyond national identities suggest “possibility” (Brand, *What* 210). Oku proclaims that he likes “it when shit is all messed up like this” (210); and, indeed, the muddying of simplistic national affiliations and the power to transform connection in the public space of the city streets suggest that hope and possibility are contingent upon the messiness or fluidity of connections in community.

While several of the instances of public transformation of space seem, though created in collaboration, to be spontaneous and accidental and therefore not deliberately constructed, Jackie’s imaginative re-drawing of her community is a purposeful and active alteration of space. The absence of beauty in Alexandra Park is figured as directly affecting the community who inhabits it; however, Jackie rejects the limitations of the space by re-designing it in her mind. The narrator wonders,

Would it have killed them to splash a little colour on the buildings? Yes, it may have cost a little more in the first place to make the ceilings a little higher, the hallways a little less narrow, but in the last place think of the perspective: the general outlook might have been worth it. The sense of space might have triggered lighter emotions, less depressing thoughts, a sense of well-being. God, hope! (262)

While the city neglected to do any of these things, Jackie nevertheless finds a way to transform the space into the generative beauty that is absent: “If the city didn’t have the good grace to plant a shrub or two, she would cultivate it with her own trees and flowers. And so she did. In her mind” (265). Jackie actively re-imagines the space to fit what she needs from it. Though this action remains imaginative, her ability to transform space through fantasy contrasts with the loss of fantasy and imagination suffered by her parents

after the closing of the Paramount. While Johansen notes that a purely imaginative transformation cannot “provide a moment of real emancipation” (60), the contrast with her parents does suggest that Jackie has a means of agency – however fragile – that her parents did not. Moreover, while Jackie’s re-designed streets exist only in her mind, Johansen argues that the artwork of the graffiti crew “bring[s] that vision to life” (60).

What Jackie does on an individual basis, the crew does to the physical city. The graffiti crew figure as uneasy members of the city. They are both “shadowy and present,” hovering in border-crossing spaces with “[t]heir legs straddling walls and bridge girders and subway caverns, spray-painting their emblems of duality, their dangerous dreams” (Brand, *What* 134-35). The crew members are, furthermore, figured politically as “critical presences, unnoticed until they felt like being noticed” (134). They transform city space by making their presences known and claiming the space as their own. Near the end of the novel, Tuyen returns to her apartment to see that the graffiti crew has painted the scenes that “Carla had talked about, the places where Angela Chiarelli dreamed of going” (302). On the wall of the alley, “there was a flowering jungle, lianas wrapped around the CN Tower, elephants drinking by the lake, pelicans perched on the fire escapes” (302). The crew paints Jackie’s imagined vegetation and Carla’s mother’s hoped for escape on the walls of the city and merges those visions with the city itself. While Angela had dreamed of escaping to those places, the second-generation characters dream of transforming and, in fact, do transform their present homes into generative community home-spaces. Through the art of the graffiti crew, the imaginative transformations and the provisional moments of community connection are made visible and material in the streets of Toronto.

Indeed, for the second-generation characters of the novel the entire city becomes space filled with the potential for active transformation. Nowhere is the characters’

transformation of city-space more evident than in their re-drawing of centre and margin. By literally mapping the spaces the characters inhabit and travel through, Brosseau and Tavares demonstrate how Tuyen, Carla, Oku and Jackie reject the ethnic neighbourhood divisions of their parents and traverse the invisible borders of the city. Most pointedly, however, Brosseau and Tavares map how the areas covered by the characters overlap in a re-drawn downtown centre. While Brydon argues that the characters create “a fragile sense of community, but at the expense of remaining on the margins of the society in which they live” (“A Place” 9), Brosseau and Tavares argue that the novel shifts the centre of the city to what would be understood conventionally as the margins. As they literally map the paths of the characters, the areas each character travels overlap in a centre that reaches out towards the diverse neighbourhoods each travels. Brosseau and Tavares conclude their argument by noting that the centring of Brand’s characters in the city reverses the centre-periphery dichotomy that many critics see established by official multiculturalism. M. NourbeSe Philip, for example, declares that “[a]t its most basic, multiculturalism describes a configuration of power at the centre of which are the two cultures recognized by the constitution of Canada – the French and the English – and around which circumnavigate the lesser satellite cultures” (*Frontiers* 181). Brosseau and Tavares argue that, in *What We All Long For*, the racial minority characters occupy the centre of the city and the novel while white Toronto remains on the periphery of geography and narrative (95). The characters, rather than remaining on the margins, dispense with the white corporate centre and re-figure the city on their own axis.

The novel’s attention to their ability to claim city space as a site of agency, however, does not ignore the limitations of the spaces they inhabit. Characters are still impeded by borders, and Tuyen, Carla, Oku and Jackie experience varying degrees of

alienation and power within Toronto. Indeed, Oku's experience of travelling the city – especially in contrast to Tuyen's observation of generative plurality and Carla's revitalizing navigation by bicycle – signals the racialized borders that restrict these characters. The city thus is also “a distressing space for him, a space where he, as a Black male, is preyed upon” (McKibbin 515). Early in the novel, Oku proclaims that he “can get jacked up any night by the cops just for walking in the wrong place” (Brand, *What* 46). In the neighbourhood where he still lives with his parents, Oku establishes the “persona of the cool poet – so that he wouldn't have to get involved in the ordinary and brutal shit waiting for men like him in the city. They were in prison, although the bars were invisible” (166). Similarly, Oku demonstrates the racialized difference of movement through the city when he compares himself to Jackie's German lover, Reiner: “Reiner did not, could not possibly see the city as a prison. More, Reiner must see it as his place” (176). Oku concludes by remarking that this is “the difference between being white and being black, in control or out of control” (177). Molly McKibbin notes that “Reiner is comfortable in the city – a city that is not his birthplace, because his family immigrated [sic] from Germany, but one into which he seems to fit because of his White skin” (516). McKibbin argues that Brand demonstrates how being read as racial others affects the characters' movement in the city and their ability to create their own spaces. She notes that, in contrast to Tuyen and Carla (whom the opening of the novel suggests may be read as “Italian, southern” [3] rather than “phenotypically black” [106]), “Jackie and Oku are unmistakable Black,” thus suggesting “that despite Toronto's cultural diversity, Blackness is the least ‘normal,’ the least ‘at home’ in the Canadian city” (McKibbin 518). Certainly, Brand is attentive to the ways that her characters' negotiations of space differ, and her attention to the heightened borders restricting Oku, in particular, demonstrate her concern with the way that racism persists

even for characters who refuse boundaries. While Oku must face the invisible borders of racism when he navigates the city, the threat and discomfort of the space may not preclude his ability to declare it as home since home has always inspired some level of discomfort. If home no longer signifies conventional understandings of comfort or strict borders, the shifting fluidity of the space and the ability to connect within it may mark the territory as an uneasy home-space. The dangers Oku faces in navigating the streets, however, grounds the potential power of transformation by reiterating the potential risk found in these fluid spaces.

“more comfortable with the discomfort”

The narrator declares that the second-generation characters are “borderless” (Brand, *What* 213), and Brosseau and Tavares’ maps demonstrate their ability to move throughout the city in ways that contrast with the isolated communities of their parents. Certainly, these characters are the most actively engaged in the creation of home-spaces of any of Brand’s characters. They have power in the city (and nation) in ways that are impossible for their parents and for the characters of Brand’s previous novels. The city is both source and site of their transformations. In her consideration of the differences between the first- and second-generation characters’ encounters with public space, Johansen argues that “[f]or all these first-generation characters, the public sphere is denied them because they are not *of* this place and, thus, separate from the dominant life of the city” (55). Indeed, in a telling passage on the ways that Tuyen and Binh serve as translators between their parents and the city, the narrator aligns Cam and Tuan with the city as parental figures. Cam and Tuan have great hopes for their children because of their status as Canadian-born, “as if their umbilical cords were also attached to this mothering city” (Brand, *What* 67). As translators, Tuyen

and Binh attain a certain amount of power over those parents (biological and surrogate) for whom they translate: “And perhaps Binh and especially Tuyen became not only smarter than their biological parents but smarter than the surrogate city” (68). Indeed, the characters’ ability to transform the city is contingent upon their ability to see it as their space. They need not, of course, feel comfortable in all its spaces because home is never a fully comforting or secure space for these characters. Their ability to see instability as generative and to have the power to assert their voices and their presences, however, hinges on their claim to the space. Essential to their claim to the space is their identification as Torontonians and their simultaneous rejection of “regular Canadian life” (47).

Part of what empowers Tuyen, Carla, Oku and Jackie to reject and create home-spaces is their place within the city and thus the nation. Toronto is their home to dismantle and rebuild in ways that it never was for their parents and that it is not for Quy. Indeed, Brand’s continued attention to bodies that move illegally across borders, to those without homes to leave, and to those who have their homes taken from them undermines any attempt to adopt homelessness, migration, or border-crossing as metaphorical tropes that ignore the terms’ material realities. Indeed, in discussing the second-generation characters’ mobility as a strategy to avoid co-optation or involuntary reterritorialization, Dobson is careful to distinguish between movement that is chosen and that which is imposed: “While movement remains a valuable asset to Brand’s protagonists in *What We All Long For*, it is important to note the ways in which it is a motion that they largely control and elect, not one that derives from enforced migrations or otherwise” (102-03). Both Quy and the first-generation characters also bring to mind Timothy Brennan’s “Cosmo-Theory,” in which he cautions against using a rejection of dangerous nationalisms to herald cosmopolitanism while blindly ignoring the materiality of borders and both the positive and negative effects

of the nation-state. That is, the state can offer protection and legitimacy even as, as Brand notes throughout her work, it can imprison its citizens through systemic heterosexism, racism, and sexism. In *Black Like Who*, Walcott asks, “what is at stake in this postmodern, transglobal world, when some aspects of the nation-state remain firmly in place for the unruly, resistant citizens located on the inside/outside axis of a given nation?” (19). In *What We All Long For*, Brand resists utopian fantasies of cosmopolitan global citizenship by demonstrating the ways that borders within and around nations persist to exclude and restrict her characters. Simultaneously, however, Brand’s presentation of a community that gains agency through identification with the city and nation even as it actively critiques the state also counters easy dismissals of the nation-state.

As in her earlier work, the ability to reject received homes and create new spaces greatly depends upon the agency afforded characters within home-space. If one is so threatened by the outside world that one must retreat to whatever safety static home-spaces can offer or if one never has a home to leave in the first place, instability becomes paralyzing and destructive rather than agency-enabling. Where agency exists for the border-crossing Quy, or for Priest in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, it exists only through the wilful rejection of all home-spaces – no matter how temporary or self-conscious – and similarly through a rejection of all human connection. Indeed, Brand attributes remarkable power to these characters, but one lands literally homeless eating garbage in the street and the other lies bleeding, presumably to his death, at the novel’s close. Part of what Brand suggests with these characters is the material danger of border-crossing and literal and metaphorical homelessness. As always, she is attuned to the difference between the theoretically empowering and the materially destructive.

However, *What We All Long For* marks a significant shift in her vision of the agency and empowerment possible in such a deterritorialized and deterritorializing politics. Indeed, the novel – while remaining attentive to the dangers and retaining her sense of the material risk of rejecting or being denied home – nevertheless seems to be hopeful about the possibilities of creating home-spaces that might enable connection and negotiation, preserve difference, and recoup the once unsettling danger of uneasiness as a marker of the space’s provisionality. The uneasy home-spaces the characters create harness the instability of homes (the city) and suggest an inherent discomfort with static home-spaces (their parents’) that signals the manufactured nature of all home-spaces. Comfort and stability are to be rejected because, as Brand states in her interview with Butling, they are always artificial. Uneasiness becomes the source and marker of instability that undermines any inclination to fall into the stasis that paralyzes the home-spaces of their parents. Brand demonstrates how to become “more comfortable with the discomfort” by redeeming that discomfort in the form of uneasiness and applying it as a signal of the type of fluid, multiple home-spaces that might combat both the restrictions of and the desire for conventional homes.

WORKS CITED

1. Primary Sources

Brand, Dionne. *At the Full and Change of the Moon*. New York: Grove Press, 1999.

---. *In Another Place, Not Here*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1997.

---. *A Map to the Door of No Return*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2001.

---. *What We All Long For*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005.

2. Secondary Sources

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*.
New York: Routledge, 1995.

Behdad, Ali. "Global Disjunctures, Diasporic Differences, and the New World (Dis-
Order)." *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. Ed. Henry Schwarz and Sangetta
Ray. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2000. 396-409.

Bhabha, Homi K. "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern
Nation." *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994. 139-70.

---. Introduction. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994. 1-18.

Brand, Dionne. "At the Full and Change of CanLit: An Interview with Dionne Brand." By
Leslie Sanders and Rinaldo Walcott. *Canadian Woman Studies* 20.2 (2000): 22-26.

---. "Bathurst." *Bread Out of Stone: Recollections Sex Recognitions Race Dreaming
Politics*. Toronto: Coach House Press, 1994. 67-81.

---. "Dionne Brand on Struggle and Community, Possibility and Poetry." Interview with
Pauline Butling. *Poets Talk*. Ed. Pauline Butling and Susan Rudy. Edmonton:
University of Alberta Press, 2005. 63-87.

---. Interview with Paulo da Costa. 2001. Mar. 15 2008. 50 pars.

<<http://www.paulodacosta.com/dionne.htm>>

---. "Opening the Door: An Interview with Dionne Brand." By Maya Mavjee. *Read*

Magazine 28 Mar. 2003. Feb. 18 2009.

<<http://www.randomhouse.ca/readmag/page28.htm>>

Brennan, Timothy. "Cosmo-Theory." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100.3 (2001): 659-91.

Brosseau, Marc, and David Tavares. "Écrire la ville multiculturelle: la polyphonie

torontoise excentrée de Dionne Brand." *Études canadiennes* 64 (2008) : 79-97.

Brydon, Diana. "Canadian Writers Negotiating Home Within Global Imaginaries." 2007. 1-

11. Centre for Globalization and Cultural Studies. Feb. 2 2008.

<<http://myuminfo.umanitoba.ca/Documents/1169/Negotiating%20Home.pdf>>

---. "'A Place on the Map of the World': Locating Hope in Shani Mootoo's *He Drown She*

in the Sea and Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*." 2007. 1-11. Centre for

Globalization and Cultural Studies. Feb. 2 2008.

<<http://myuminfo.umanitoba.ca/Documents/838/LocatingHope.pdf>>

Chariandy, David. "'The Fiction of Belonging': On Second-Generation Black Writing in

Canada." *Callaloo* 30.3 (2007): 818-29.

---. Review of *What We All Long For*. *New Dawn: The Journal of Black Canadian Studies*

1.1 (2006): 103-109. Feb. 10 2008. <<http://aries.oise.utoronto.ca/dawn/journal/>>

Davies, Carol Boyce. *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*. New

York: Routledge, 1994.

Day, Richard J.F. *Multiculturalism and the History of Canadian Diversity*. Toronto:

University of Toronto Press, 2000.

- Dobson, Kit. "‘Struggle Work’: Global and Urban Citizenship in Dionne Brand’s *What We All Long For*." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 31.2 (2006): 88-104.
- Garvey, Johanna X. K. "‘The Place She Miss’: Exile, Memory, and Resistance in Dionne Brand’s Fiction." *Callaloo* 26.2 (2003): 486-503.
- George, Rosemary Marangoly. *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Gilroy, Paul. "It’s a Family Affair." *Black Popular Culture*. Ed. Gina Dent. Seattle: Bay Press, 1992. 303-16.
- Goldman, Marlene. "Mapping the Door of No Return: Deterritorialization and the Work of Dionne Brand." *Canadian Literature* 182 (2004): 13-28.
- Gunew, Sneja. *Haunted Nations: The Colonial Dimensions of Multiculturalisms*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Huebener, Paul. "‘No Moon to Speak of’: Identity and Place in Dionne Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*." *Callaloo* 30.2 (2007): 615-25.
- Huggan, Graham. *Territorial Disputes: Maps and Mapping Strategies in Contemporary Canadian and Australian Fiction*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994.
- Johansen, Emily. "‘Streets are the dwelling place of the collective’: Public Space and Cosmopolitan Citizenship in Dionne Brand’s *What We All Long For*." *Canadian Literature* 196 (2008): 48-63.
- Johnson, Erica L. "Unforgetting Trauma: Dionne Brand’s Haunted Histories." *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal* 2.1 (2004): 24 par. 16 Feb. 2008.
 <http://scholar.library.miami.edu/anthurium/volume_2/issue_1/johnson-unforgetting.htm>

- Joseph, Maia. "Wondering into Country: Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return*." *Canadian Literature* 193 (2007): 75-92.
- Kamboureli, Smaro. *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Kaplan, Caren. "Deterritorializations: The Rewriting of Home and Exile in Western Feminist Discourse." *Cultural Critique* 6 (1987): 187-98.
- Luft, Joanna. "Elizete and Verlia go to Toronto: Caribbean Immigrant Sensibilities at 'Home' and Overseas in Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 77 (2002): 26-49.
- Mackey, Eva. *The House of Difference*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Martin, Bidy, and Chandra Mohanty. "What's Home Got to Do With It?" *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. 85-105.
- McCallum, Pamela, and Christian Olbey. "Written in the Scars: History, Genre, and Materiality in Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 68 (Summer 1999): 159-81.
- McKibbin, Molly Littlewood. "The Possibilities of Home: Negotiating City Spaces in Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*." *Journal of Black Studies* 38.3 (2008): 502-18.
- McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.
- Mezei, Kathy. "Domestic Space and the Idea of Home in Auto/biographical Practices." *Tracing the Autobiographical*. Ed. Marlene Kadar, Linda Warley, Jeanne Perreault, and Susanna Egan. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005. 81-95.

- Mohanty, Chandra. "Genealogies of Community, Home, and Nation." *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. 124-36.
- Moynagh, Marlene. "The Melancholic Structure of Memory in Dionne Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon*." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 43 (2008): 57-76.
- Philip, M. NourbeSe. "Dis Place – The Space Between." *A Genealogy of Resistance*. Toronto: Mercury Press, 1997. 74-112.
- . *Frontiers: Essays and Writings on Racism and Culture*. Stratford, ON: The Mercury Press, 1992.
- . *A Genealogy of Resistance*. Toronto: Mercury Press, 1997.
- Pratt, Minni Bruce. "Identity: Skin Blood Heart." *Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism*. Elly Bulkin, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Barbara Smith. New York: Long Haul Press, 1984. 11-63.
- Quigley, Ellen. "Picking the Deadlock of Legitimacy: Dionne Brand's 'noise like the world cracking.'" *Canadian Literature* 186 (2005): 48-69.
- Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Saul, Joanne. "'In the Middle of Becoming': Dionne Brand's Historical Vision." *Canadian Woman Studies* 23.2 (2004): 59-63.
- Sealy, David. "'Canadianizing Blackness': Resisting the Political." *Rude: Contemporary Black Canadian Cultural Criticism*. Ed. Rinaldo Walcott. Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2000. 87-108.
- Smyth, Heather. "'The Being Together of Strangers': Dionne Brand's Politics of Difference and the Limits of Multicultural Discourse." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 33.1 (2008): 272-90.

- . "Sexual Citizenship and Caribbean-Canadian Fiction: Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* and Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*." *Ariel* 30.2 (1999): 141-60.
- Thomas, Joan. Review of *At the Full and Change of the Moon*. *The Globe and Mail* 17 Apr. 1999: D8.
- Tillet, Salamishah. Review of *At the Full and Change of the Moon*. *Callaloo* 26.3 (2003): 913-17.
- Walcott, Rinaldo. *Black Like Who?* Toronto: Insomniac Press, 1997.
- . Introduction. *Rude: Contemporary Black Canadian Cultural Criticism*. Ed. Rinaldo Walcott. Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2000. 7-10.
- . "Rhetorics of Blackness, Rhetorics of Belonging: The Politics of Representation in Black Canadian Expressive Culture." *Canadian Review of American Studies* 29.2 (1999): 1-24.
- . "'Who is She and What is She to You?': Mary Ann Shadd Cary and the (Im)possibility of Black/Canadian Studies." *Rude: Contemporary Black Canadian Cultural Criticism*. Ed. Rinaldo Walcott. Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2000. 27-47.
- Zackodnik, Teresa. "'I Am Blackening in My Way': Identity and place in Dionne Brand's *No Language is Neutral*." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 57 (1995): 194-211.