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Maps of Memory and the Sea in Dionne Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon*

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In “The Sea is History” (1979), Derek Walcott writes that “tribal memory” has been “locked up” by the sea (25). Dionne Brand’s *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (1999), without repudiating Walcott’s monumental claim, conversely explores how her protagonist Bola locks up the sea, only physically at first in her eyes, but later in her memory. While examining the interplay of water/ocean/sea with collective history and individual memory in Brand’s narrative, this essay considers the evolution of these concerns in her novel, *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996), and her collection of essays, *Bread Out of Stone: Recollections, Sex, Recognitions, Race, Dreaming, Politics* (1994). I also address select critical responses to Brand’s work using the filter of her philosophical perspectives evident in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* and crafted into her own voice in *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2001). I weave a thread through these works connecting her self-scrutiny and treatment of memory to the areas she carves out in Caribbean literature and calls “Nowhere” and the “Door of No Return.” Brand consistently acknowledges the gaps within the past and their lingering traumatic phantoms, and in *At the Full and the Change of the Moon*, she fashions characters that question their ancestry but are able, however infrequently, to transcend present despair in order to focus on the future of the Black Diaspora.

In “Dionne Brand: Writing the Margins,” Charlotte Sturgess notes that, “[t]he eternal ‘detour’ of Caribbean writing ... leads back through a self which is in a state of permanent flux” (205). This fluidity becomes more apparent in the work of an author who is able to mold her characters as extensions of her many selves. However, there is always a base, a physical, biological and cultural description that is fundamental when compared to all other selves. Brand offers her own foundational depiction in *Bread Out of Stone*: “I am a woman, Black and lesbian; the evidence of this is inescapable and interesting” (20). However, these three classifications of self create problems in light of the historical oppression and abuse of women, the racial targeting and marginalizing of black women and the exclusion of non-heterosexual behavior from socially acceptable practices. Brand temporarily privileges her identification as African over classifications as a woman or a lesbian when she emphasizes the necessity to “fight every day for our humanity ... redeem it every day” (23). She then links this struggle to her female perspective when she adds, “And I live that memory as a woman” (23). She continues, “there is always something more to be written, something more important ... [t]here is always something that must be remembered, something that must be weighed” (23). Despite Brand’s primary self-affiliation at any given moment, she acknowledges her incompleteness, her inherent “permanent flux:”

Travelling is a constant state. You do not leave things behind or take them with you, everything is always moving; you are not the centre of your own movement ... everything changes your direction. We were born thinking of travelling back. It is our singular preoccupation, we think of nothing else. I am convinced. We are continually uncomfortable where we are. We do not sleep easily, not without

dreaming of travelling back. This must be the code written on the lining of my brain, go back, go back, like a fever, a pandemic scourging the Diaspora. (58-59)

This anxiety that Brand expresses is perhaps best summed up by Sturgess as “the effort of the ‘not forgetting,’ the necessity of a confrontation between past and present” (202).

In *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, Brand treats Bola’s memory as a vessel housing something that must be remembered, but her memory of Culebra Bay also signifies that some things simply cannot be remembered; some things are utterly forgotten. For those things, “not forgetting” is unattainable. In Bola’s case (I will refer to the original Bola as Bola, and Eula’s child with the same name will be young Bola), her life is consumed by her memory of “the place where (she) will *end up*, where she will discover the sea and the rock out in the sea” (35; emphasis mine). Brand plays with words here to signal that in the narrative Bola will both physically and mentally arrive at this place. She treats the relationship between sea and memory as reciprocal. Walcott writes, “the sea has locked up tribal memory,” and in a similar vein, in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, Marie Ursule notices that her daughter Bola seems to have locked up the sea within her self: “Marie Ursule had seen in her child’s eyes, the sea, and a journey to be made that melts the body” (44). The vast possibilities of Bola’s future conflict with Marie Ursule’s devastated soul and thus their paths must diverge. As a result, Bola is left with few memories of her mother and no knowledge of Marie Ursule’s past; the lineage cannot be traced farther back than Trinidad and Culebra Bay.

The fact that Marie Ursule sees such promise in her daughter’s eyes, that she is able to see any promise, is an undeniable sign of hope but one that acknowledges the pain and suffering bound up with hope. In a passage envisioning the future of the Black Diaspora, or Bola’s Diaspora, Brand writes:

There in the sea, in the middle of Bola’s eyes, Marie Ursule saw skyscrapers and trains and machines and streets, she saw winters and summers and leaves falling in muddy roadways and on pavements ... Her heart came like water in her hand and her face splintered in faces of coming faces, and she knew that if it was the future she was looking at, then she was keeping this crazy child from it if she took her along. (45)

Brand’s muddy roadways relate back to her use of the road or path as a metaphor for an inner search for self in *In Another Place, Not Here*. However, in this instance in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, roadways primarily suggest her recognition that Bola can and must have an “outer” future and that intergenerational learning occurs as frequently as the intergenerational exchange of longing. In *Bread Out of Stone*, Brand recalls, “In my mama’s mouth I saw the struggle for small things” (21). She clearly implies that mothers and daughters, parents and children, are renewing sources of enlightenment and inspiration to one another; first, in *Bread*

Out of Stone, she learns from her mother about the history of struggle orally, and then, in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, Brand's Marie Ursule as mother learns of the future and a rehabilitated sense of perseverance from her daughter Bola. Brand states, "I think that Marie Ursule's act released the imagination or the way one could imagine the future ... both horrific and freeing in some kind of way. It releases the other characters into their own imagination" (qtd. in Sanders and Walcott 22). This dichotomy of death and life, of slavery and freedom, of hopelessness and imagination, renders Culebra Bay as both an end and a beginning; because Bola contains all these images in her eyes, her relationship to the sea and consequently to time (past/present/future) provides her with a sense of power and agency. This is demonstrated in Brand's account of Bola's response to Marie Ursule when she asks the girl to refrain from repeating her name: "'Oui, Marie Ursule,' the child said, stopping the sea" (*At the Full* 45).

This bond between Bola and the sea does not only exist in her youth, though. As previously mentioned, Bola "ends up" at Culebra Bay in her memory and is forever unable to shake this image of her personal past from her present. In the chapter "Tamarindus Indica," an older grandmother Bola, "who had lived in two centuries, was living somewhere else already, though every once in a while she would catch the voices from where her body was and laugh" (*At the Full* 82). This fluid traveling from past to present and the inevitability of dwelling in her past at Culebra Bay is accentuated in the lines:

When she heard [the voice in her present] she was down by the water many years ago. The man-o'-war birds were coming in to signal to her that a ship was coming, or a whale ... she ran, hitting the sea in a splash, she ran to her rock and stood there blowing and blowing to tell the whales, to hitch a ride, to warn them of their coming death, to talk to them with her own air through the shell, calculating that they knew the sound of the air, they understood the language of water which she needed to know. (82)

Brand clarifies the experience further: "She lived now in the best of places, where everything happened at the same time. Her days were full of all her living, everything she had done and seen and heard, all her children and her childhood" (83). Even though everything is happening at the same time, Brand emphasizes that, "in all of it the present was small and just a part" (83).

The lasting physical evidence of Bola's dominant memory is the picture she draws of Culebra Bay. Bola's great-granddaughter Eula is mesmerized by the picture and questions why "[t]here is no one in the drawing but the rock, the ocean, the far shore and man-o'-war birds in the air. She had so many children, so many lovers, so much life, I wondered why this is all she drew" (254). If Brand's position is that, "we were born thinking of travelling back ... we think of nothing else," then Eula's question is answered: Bola cannot travel back any farther than she can remember, and her memory is consumed by Culebra Bay, her rock and Marie Ursule (*Bread* 58). In an interview Brand observes that, "Slavery has so devastated Marie Ursule, that she cannot imagine anything else ... so she sends her daughter to the only place she knows" (Abbas 20).

During the same interview, Brand stresses, “You find yourself in a world of forgetting. And your project—well, mine at any rate—is remembering” (19). In *At the Full and Change of the Moon* this idea is realized in the line, “Marie Ursule—who was a woman with little else to give but this ocean” (*At the Full* 294-95). So, ultimately, Marie Ursule is unable to leave Bola with anything but a memory of the sea and of herself as images of longing and loss.

Undoubtedly, this lingering pain experienced by Bola as a child is endured each sunrise and sunset, each tidal shift and sea change. This is true for all the members of the Diaspora chronicled in the book as well: Private Sones, Cordelia Rojas, Priest and Eula, Adrian and Maya Dovett, and young Bola. The feeling of longing and loss passed down from Marie Ursule to Bola is also passed down to them and their children. Meredith Gadsby views this intergenerational ache as related to the Diaspora’s myriad associations of “sucking salt” (153). She writes, “In my conception, ‘sucking salt’ becomes more than the act of overcoming hardship. It is as well a strategy for preparing oneself for impending hardship, often in an environment marked by constant upheaval, transition, and economic adversity” (Gadsby 153). “Sucking salt” is metaphorically what all the living members of the Diaspora experience and their lives and memories are tattooed by it. If one views the sea as being given by Marie Ursule and “locked up” by Bola, then it can also be assumed that Bola is “sucking salt.” Young Bola’s own memory of the sea directly connects the Diaspora with “sucking salt:”

So I licked the sand because maybe this was my mother’s way of taking me to the sea. I licked the sand and I smelled the sea in it. It was salty and I saw our mother walking on the beach where, she said, her father, the boy, was born. I didn’t eat all the sand, I saved some for our mother and my sisters who never went to the sea either. (*At the Full* 284)

Young Bola’s recollections imply that, although her relatives never physically visit the sea, its salty sand is provided to them by another Bola.

Brand’s “project of remembering” and “unforgetting” is unremitting. In the process of “sucking salt” one perseveres and also comes to understand that in the Middle Passage, “buried memories of the transit across that space prevent a full embrace of [the sea’s] expanses” (Garvey 488). In regard to achieving selfhood “in the face of history being excavated,” Garvey notes “Brand often suggests that such a project may reveal the difficulties of (re)establishing any such unified notion of selfhood” (488). Nonetheless, encountering the vastness of the sea on one’s quest for selfhood is essential to self-discovery, as “Brand repeatedly suggests that one cannot remain land-locked on either side of the Atlantic but must engage with the ocean itself in all its metonymic complexity and contradiction” (491). During this engagement, this struggle, Garvey contends that, “unforgetting” in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, “offer[s] a way both to remember the pain and in remembering also to reconstitute the lost line” (500). However, in using Culebra Bay as the site of Bola’s memory, and the place of Marie Ursule’s captivity and torture, Brand repeatedly intimates the impossibility of reconstituting the lost line; the lost line is

just that, lost, and unable to be reconstituted without the bias of subjectivity tainting prospective collective memories of lost history. In this sense, Garvey's conclusions appear overly optimistic despite the fact that they recognize suffering and loss. Hopefulness is not absent from *At the Full and Change of the Moon* but Eula's desire proves that the novel only offers part of the lost line. Eula laments:

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* ... One line like the one in your palm with all the places where something happened and is remembered. 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. (246-47; emphasis mine)

Eula acknowledges that awareness of her ancestral history is limiting, and she then covets a place like Culebra Bay for herself:

I want a village and a seashore and a rock out in the ocean and the certainty that when the moon is in full the sea will rise and for that whole time I will be watching what all my ancestry have watched for, for all ages. (247)

Perhaps unbeknownst to her, Eula desires exactly what her great-grandmother Bola has left with her, and what she and Dear Mama have left with young Bola: the image of Culebra Bay and the representative longing of the Diaspora as a result of displacement. Despite the fact that Bola occupies this space for a century, Bola's seashore and rock and ocean belong to everyone. Brand confirms this claim when she observes, "[w]e inherit everything that exists" (Abbas 19).

Comprehensive inheritance includes major fractures, and as Brand is "unforgetting" she remains preoccupied with the question, "[H]ow is it possible to 'unforget' trauma?" (Johnson par. 1). Following Geoffrey Hartman's thoughts on trauma, Erica Johnson appropriately applies trauma theory to read *At the Full and Change of the Moon* using a foundational assumption that, "trauma evades memory in individual experience: trauma is 'registered rather than experienced. It seems to have bypassed perception and the consciousness, and falls directly into the psyche'" (qtd. in par.1). She explores how "the trauma of slavery, and Marie Ursule's endurance of traumatic events in particular, haunt and shape the lives of her descendents" (par. 1). Using Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's concept of the "phantom" as a haunting that is not transmitted "from the individual's own life experiences but from someone else's psychic conflicts, traumas or secrets," Johnson posits that Kamena bestows his phantoms on Bola at Culebra Bay (par. 2). Johnson argues that, "In Kamena's case, as in the case of the narrative as a whole, memory is replaced by the dynamic of haunting, and if Kamena is to arrive at his desired destination, he needs not to remember, but to become a ghost—the ghost of Kamena" (par. 15). Since Kamena once inhabits Terre Bouillante, the Maroon settlement, but subsequently loses his way and never returns, eternally "circling himself" and "starved with remembering," to become

a ghost could theoretically transplant him to his intended destination (*At the Full* 33, 60). However, as Johnson argues, before Kamena makes his final departure from the narrative he tells Bola, “Hold this for me” (60), signifying that his trauma, like that of Marie Ursule, now belongs to Bola. Kamena’s psychic conflict is Marie Ursule’s and it is also Bola’s.

Brand also grappled with the impression of intergenerational haunting in *Bread Out of Stone*: “Most likely that is the task of our generation: to look and to weep, to be taken hold of by them, to be used in our flesh to encounter their silence” (55-56). The holes left in Bola and her Diaspora’s ancestral history are certainly capable of haunting anyone, and despite the copious attempts to “unforget” there will always be questions provoking questions that are unanswerable and thus capable of consuming succeeding generations.

Beryl Gilroy observed that one of challenges of authorship is that “each momentary shift of the head changes the view of the world as we would wish to describe it” (145). In the 1999 interview with Nuzhat Abbas where Brand states that her “project is remembering,” she echoes the awareness of multiple and changing perceptions to which Gilroy refers by asserting that in her own representation of people’s experiences she “didn’t want to make anything certain,” but rather stay true to the concept of the fluid self (20). Therefore, it is unsurprising that in an interview less than a year later, Brand modifies her literary mission: “I’m more interested in the interior life. Because I think that’s a much more fertile place. If I can be said to have a project, then it is to explore the interior life” (Sanders and Walcott 25). In *Bread Out of Stone*, Brand connects individual interiority to collective experience in the following statement, “The Atlantic, yawning blue out of my window on the Playas del Este and beyond the bridge, pulls my eyes away from the oral histories and into its own memory” (*Bread Out of Stone* 20-21). Brand ostensibly cannot escape from her quest for self-understanding and her point of departure always relates back to the sea of memory.

Paul Gilroy prefaces the text of *The Black Atlantic* (1993) with a passage from Nietzsche to establish the idea that assumptions of what constitutes “reality” do change:

... as for “realities,” we do not believe that they will last. The ice that still supports people today has become very thin; the wind that brings the thaw is blowing; we ourselves who are homeless constitute a force that breaks open ice and other all too thin “realities.” (qtd. in Gilroy 1)

If societal standards rest on unstable ground and will inevitably be revolutionized, then individual perspectives, especially of the “homeless,” are propelled into an even more fluid state. In *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, Eula demonstrates such a paradoxical shift in emotion (a shift in self) in her letter to Dear Mama when she abruptly changes her perspective regarding “unforgetting:”

I think we forget who we were. Nothing is changing, it is just that we are forgetting. All the centuries past may be one long sleep. We are either put to sleep

or we choose to sleep. Nothing is changing, we are just forgetting. I am forgetting you, but it is work, forgetting. (234-35)

She continues:

No, I am exaggerating. I do not forget you at all. It's just that I am too lazy to go through all the emotions it involves. I will never forget you. How could I when only an airmail letter lying on the floor reminds me of you. (235)

As Eula exemplifies, the fluid self undergoes painstaking endeavors when navigating memory in order to arrive at self-knowledge. Paul Gilroy coalesces the restless modern times with the viewpoints of its inhabitants across all areas of the Atlantic, in turn “develop(ing) the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective” (15). Gilroy’s cosmopolitan view of the Atlantic helps situate members of the Diaspora as intersection points for the thread of an awakening modern consciousness that not only recognizes but also realizes the importance of questioning self, of probing self, of locating oneself in the world.

Gilroy’s framing of the Atlantic as a binding experience that opens the doors to self-discovery ties into Paget Henry’s discussion of Afro-Caribbean philosophy in *Caliban’s Reason* (2000). Afro-Caribbean philosophy, Henry argues, “has been carefully embedded in the practices of nonphilosophical discourse” such as Caribbean literature (xi). Unquestionably, “many of the original features of (Caribbean) philosophical and other discursive practices have been shaped by the colonial problematics and contours of (Caribbean) cultural history” which centers on the Atlantic and the Middle Passage (3). Henry identifies three typical characteristics of Afro-Caribbean philosophy including “a highly politicized formation” that is a result of “embeddedness in the social and political problems of Caribbean societies” (7). The connection of society and philosophy, contends Henry, becomes more evident when looking at Afro-Caribbean philosophical works, “making it clear that both world constitution and the production of arguments are important features” (7). Likewise, *At the Full and Change of the Moon* employs both concern for “world constitution” and “the production of arguments.” Brand’s corpus of characters represents the substantial spread of the Diaspora, or world constitution, while the individual chapters are expressed, or argued, from the subjective viewpoints of Bola, Eula, Adrian, and so on, echoing the importance of each particular perspective within the constituted world.

Henry redirects his concern to the “unforgetting” of African traditions within these newly established worlds across the Atlantic. He writes:

The stories of African origin narratives are about the creative agency of this unmanifested spiritual world, the real hero and sustainer of creation. Although the created and uncreated worlds constituted a unity, the African ego imposed the

binary markings of its linguistic capabilities on the difference between the spiritual and material or created worlds. Not surprisingly spirit was positively marked in relation to nonspirit and so came to represent a higher and more desirable order of existence. (25)

This binary opposition of the spiritual and the material is also prevalent in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, but both worlds are quite complex in Brand's narrative, especially when factoring in the trauma associated with memory. Throughout the story Marie Ursule and Bola both exist as material beings and as spirits, but the former's destination remains death while the latter's is a life consumed by memory and trauma. The relation of spirit and materiality, no longer simply a binary, becomes multifarious when integrated with "the Platonic binary between the world of being and that of becoming" (Henry 25). Expanding on Plato's foundation, Brand develops a binary subset of the state of being where Marie Ursule and Bola both exist in the spiritual or uncreated world as well as the material human world. A difference lies in the fact that Marie Ursule's living state is not one of becoming, as she is confounded to the point of unavoidable death, and thus she remains in a *material state of negative being*. However, the Diaspora that will nonetheless spawn from Bola signifies the unborn spirits in her eyes, her *material state of positive being*. Her duality as spirit-controller of the sea and as human allows her to take the leap from *positive being* to a state of becoming. Bola certainly embodies this eternal state of becoming as an old woman rocking back and forth in the physical space occupied by her chair as well as throughout the mental space consumed by her memory. Bola's state of becoming then unites with her state of being as she proceeds to rock in her chair as a ghost able to collapse boundaries of time and existence (*At the Full* 85).

Brand not only reconfigures philosophical classifications of existence in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, she also constructs her own symbolic spaces occupied by Caribbean literature and Afro-Caribbean philosophy throughout *In Another Place, Not Here* and *A Map to the Door of No Return*. As Brand's protagonist Elizete wanders intrapersonally with a feeling of unbelonging and of becoming she reflects that, "Nobody here can remember when they wasn't here" but that that with the passing of time, there comes "no need to remember" (*In Another Place* 8). Reflecting upon her earlier attempts to runaway to escape her circumstance, Elizete considers that, "I suppose I didn't have nowhere in mind except not here" (9). Elizete experiences the longing of the Diaspora but she is unable to locate herself in the world without confusion. Elizete cannot avoid remembering her mother and attempting to "unforget" her ancestral origins:

She say when the great-great-great-ma come here she was grieving bad for where she come from. And when she done calculate the heart of this place, that it could not yield to her grief, she decided that this place was not nowhere and is so she call it. Nowhere. She say nothing here have no name. She never name none of her children, nor the man she had was to sleep with and she never answer to the name that they give she which was Adela. (18)

Besides the obvious evolution of this mother as a character who does not name her children into the figure of Bola, Brand's *Nowhere* becomes *Everywhere* related to Caribbean history in slavery's wake. *Nowhere* is only definable in relation to the *Somewhere* that it is not; and where *Somewhere* does not exist, where it cannot exist, is in the minds of those who have registered the trauma of slavery and its subsequent displacements. Members of this Diaspora are excluded from calling a specific *Somewhere* a definitive home.

Great-great-great-ma Adela's quest for selfhood and a home are analogous to her journey as Brand describes her descendant's retelling of the story:

... the road was not only solid ground but water too, and so long it take ... So long she had time to balance the oceans and measure how much mouthful she would have to swallow to get back but when she reach and find she-self locked in on all sides and not by nothing human, she drop, she call it *Nowhere* and begin to forget by forgetting the road ... (21)

In essence, the path comprised of both water and land, like the site of Culebra Bay that haunts Bola, notably stems from crossing the Atlantic and thus perpetually searching for one's true home and lineage. Each time Adela arrives at a point where she believes she is arriving *Somewhere*, she recognizes that it remains *Nowhere* and accordingly attempts to forget her wanderings. However, the personal roads that one navigates in the mind are not worth forgetting even if they lead to *Nowhere*. By forgetting the road, the physical path, Adela strives to forget, or repress, her personal experiences but she cannot elude the feeling of loss and of longing that is also inexorably experienced by Elizete, her mother, and other members of the Black Diaspora.

In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand attributes the feeling of loss and of longing to "a rupture in history, a rupture in the quality of being" (5). Thus, at a young age Brand understood that those of the Diaspora "were not from the place where we lived and we could not remember where we were from or who we were" (5). These ideas pervade Caribbean literature, but Brand takes her philosophical approach to Caribbean selfhood to a unique place that she created, both for herself and for others on a similar quest. Brand writes:

Having no name to call on was having no past; having no past pointed to the fissure between the past and the present. That fissure is represented in the *Door of No Return*: that place where our ancestors departed one world for another; the *Old World* for the *New*. The place where all names were forgotten and all beginnings recast. (5)

She continues, "I am interested in exploring this creation place—the *Door of No Return*," which is something she had been doing but without the inclusion of the specific concept of the *Door of No Return* (6). Brand acknowledges that, "These things I knew before I knew they had something to do with the *Door of No Return* and the sea. I knew that everyone here was unhappy and haunted in some way" (11). Brand's recognition of the collective haunting, the phantoms

lingering from ancestral past in the present, again attests to an interconnectedness with Henry's philosophical principles that are invested in both "world constitution" of the Diaspora and in the "production of arguments," or self-expression. She emphasizes the power of both factors in her conception of the Door of No Return:

The door signifies the historical moment which colours all moments in the Diaspora. It accounts for the way we observe and are observed by people ... The door exists as an absence. A thing in fact which we do not know about, a place we do not know. Yet it exists as the ground we walk. Every gesture our body makes somehow gestures toward this door. What interests me primarily is probing the Door of No Return as consciousness. The door casts a haunting spell on personal and collective consciousness in the Diaspora. (24-25)

This simultaneous "absence" and looming presence of the Door of No Return is undeniable in both Brand's "arguments" and the world in which they are produced; her exploration of the Door's consequences are evident in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* but before she directly refers to the Door. Before Bola's consumption of Culebra Bay, Brand writes, "the two old nuns are standing in the doorway. They are waiting in the place where Bola will end up, where she will discover the sea and the rock out in the sea" (35). However, Brand identifies a doorway through which Bola will pass before arriving at her destination at Culebra Bay, from which her memory and her search for self will never return. She is eternally entrenched in this world, her Nowhere, at Culebra Bay, and there is no return to Marie Ursule or to the place of her ancestral origins, which Brand never attempts to name. Bola is stuck in her memory and she can remember no farther back, and Brand uses the last section of the book to "[follow] her journey from shore to sea to rock and back, a safe passage that not so much replays the Middle Passage as it replaces it" (Garvey 500). This route by Bola is her haunting, though, from which she receives no deliverance from an eternity of interior exploration.

Brand elaborates on the role of haunting, interiority and selfhood amongst the Diaspora when probing the Door of No Return:

Black experience in any modern city or town in America is a haunting. One enters a room and history follows; one enters a room and history precedes. History is already seated in the chair in the empty room when one arrives ... Where one can be observed is relative to that history. All human effort seems to emanate from this door. How do I know this? Only by self-observation, only by looking. Only by feeling. Only by being a part, sitting in the room with history. (*No Return* 25)

The use of one's own senses and emotions in navigating through the Door of No Return and into the empty room where history awaits and fashions self is crucial; the trauma of slavery must therefore be filtered through one's personal feelings and from the collective, in order to fully understand the implications of the Door. Brand also notes that "[g]etting to the Door of No

Return needs no physical apparatus except the mind; the body is the prison" (45). She advances the notion that the Door exists in one's mind by equating vision with interior examination, but does not exclude the possibility of recognizing when others are also passing through the Door, into Nowhere. She writes, "The door is not on this map. The door is on my retina" (89). The duality of vision, able to look both within oneself and outside oneself, undoubtedly assists Brand's complex construction of the Door of No Return as a reflection of her self, thus triggering other members of the Diaspora to also identify the Door within their experiences, collapsing past and present with individual and collective perspectives.

Brand underscores the necessity of self-exploration no matter what the destination. She writes, "When you embark on a journey, you have already arrived" (*No Return* 115). In *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, Kamena undergoes a seemingly pointless journey to "Nowhere," but Brand insists, "his search is his destination" (Abbas 20). Similarly, in *A Map to the Door of No Return*, referring to both Kamena's journey and Bola's Diaspora, Brand again writes, "The journey is the destination" (*No Return* 203). With these comments, Brand suggests that the search for one's ancestral history cannot be completed and the destination is thus an empty room. If one has no tangible endpoint, then the search becomes all that exists, and although often dissatisfying and heartbreaking, the search is a fundamental and indispensable aspect of life: "After the Door of No Return, a map was only a set of impossibilities, a set of changing locations" (224). She concludes: "A map, then, is only a life of conversations about a forgotten list of irretrievable selves" (224).

Dionne Brand's profound treatment of memory, the sea, subjectivity and collective experience is an elaborate interaction of features that have shaped Caribbean identity for centuries. Bola is unable to forget Marie Ursule and her time at Culebra Bay, unendingly trapped in the present between the unforgettable past and the unfathomable future, while passing down this condition of loss and longing to her descendants. Brand's conception of "Nowhere" in *In Another Place, Not Here* precedes her creation of Bola's Diaspora and her model of the Door of No Return. Brand's contributions to Afro-Caribbean philosophy are as a result incontrovertibly rich and complex navigations of a space that demands more attention as a vital feature of world constitution and self-construction in modern Caribbean societies.

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