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Marie Vieux Chauvet's World-Gothic: Commodity Frontiers, "Cheap Natures" and the Monstrous-Feminine

Marie Vieux-Chauvet's *Amour, Colère, Folie* (1968) is a Gothic triptych that relentlessly depicts gendered violence in a context of racialized class hierarchies and despotic terror. Suppressed for decades by her family, it was re-released only in 2005 (Spear 2015; Kruidenier Tolliver 2012). The present chapter focuses on the first novel, *Amour,* narrated by a *bourgeoise,* named Claire Clamont, who is in many ways a classic Gothic "madwoman": she cradles a doll in her room, fantasizes about being her brother-in-law's wife, plots the killing of her sister and stabs a cat to practice murder. Unlike other Gothic heroines, she is not physically imprisoned; nonetheless, as the darkest-skinned daughter of a light-skinned family of coffee plantation owners Claire is contained and restricted by class aspirations, gendered social norms, and by "colorism" which "permeates all dimensions of social life" (Charles 72). While she evolves throughout the novel through her solidarity with the women raped by the commandant Calédu, she is in many ways an anti-heroine and an unreliable narrator, who has internalized patriarchal and racist structures. This is highlighted by the format of the confessional diary in which Claire reveals thoughts that clash with her outward behavior and highlight her own ingrained biases. Claire is thus both a victim of, but also compliant agent within, a violent social order.

While cutting in its depiction of the mulatto middle class, of the *noiriste* regime of François Duvalier and the new black middle class, Chauvet's critique is not focused on Haitian society in isolation. Engaging with a number of familiar motifs and characters of Haitian literature since the US Occupation (1915-34) (such as the French and American foreigners and amorous allegories of nationhood), *Amour*'s Gothic aesthetics are explicitly "worldly" in locating their critique within the capitalist world-system during the age of US imperialism, thus offering "the larger geopolitical context for the rise of extreme race nationalisms on the island of Hispaniola" (Kaussen 152). I am here particularly interested in the ways in which Chauvet links the Gothic monstrous-feminine and brutal sexual violence against women to questions of ecology within this world-systemic context.[1] The monstrous-feminine is brought into direct relation with the export of raw materials, dominated by the American capitalist Mr. Long, and thus also with the concomitant environmental degradation

[1]Creed defines the monstrous-feminine as follows: "As with all other stereotypes of the feminine, from virgin to whore, she is defined in terms of her sexuality. The phrase "monstrous-feminine" emphasizes the importance of gender in the construction of her monstrosity" (3).

on the "commodity frontier."[2] Arguably, this aspect of her aesthetics has far-reaching implications, given that globally "women are the ones most affected by ... natural disasters due to social roles, discrimination and poverty" (Gaard 180).

Environmental degradation has been a recurrent concern throughout twentieth century Haitian literature. As Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert shows, Chauvet contributed to this tradition from a highly informed perspective, as her novel *Fonds de nègres* (1960) reveals her thorough understanding of issues surrounding deforestation, global extractivism and topsoil erosion. The novel was her "cri d'alarme" ["cry of alarm"] upon discovering "the agricultural problems that explain the peasants frightful misery and their root in the fast growing pace of deforestation in the district and the nation" (Paravisini-Gebert "All misfortune," 74-5). This understanding also visibly underpins Chauvet's approach to Gothic aesthetic in *Amour*. Chauvet's representation of Claire draws on, and complicates, a specifically Haitian version of the Gothic monstrous-feminine, that is, the tradition of tales of female zombification, rendered all the more poignant within a context of extreme gendered and sexual violence under François Duvalier (1957-71). While it is true that *Amour* offers little in terms of a redemptive vision and presents us with an ending that is ambivalent in its revolutionary potential, it is through Chauvet's insistent focus on the ecology of the racialized monstrous-feminine that she exaggerates, and ultimately rejects, the social atomization and structural marginalization of women epitomized by female zombie tales. Refusing "to collapse her female character's violations with metaphoric rapes of the nation" in the manner of the aesthetic of important male writers, including Jacques Roumain and Jacques Stephen Alexis (Chancy 309), she arguably seeks to re-visiblize the systemic links between gendered sexual violence, the exploitation of natural resources and unpaid or "cheapened" work (whether performed by women in the domestic sphere or the newly disowned peasant class).

Haitian World-Gothic and "Cheap Natures"

My reading of Marie Chauvet's text is undergirded by a heterodox approach to the Gothic. I understand the Gothic *mode* and Gothic *effects*, rather than only the Gothic *genre*, as a particularly compelling instance of "world-literature" that registers in form and content the processes shaping the capitalist world-system (Deckard et al).[3] Approaching the Gothic mode from this perspective, I propose to think of it expansively - temporally, geographically and

[2]Derived from the world-system's concept of the "commodity chain" (the chain of production and extraction processes that result in the final commodity), the commodity frontier is the "locus [within the commodity chain] where extraction geographically expands" (Conde and Walter 71).

[3]I take the Gothic mode to function "more as an adjective describing certain aspects of the texts, rather than a discrete category into which these works unerringly fit" (Hillard 689). The Gothic mode "is typically concerned with extreme states, such as violence and pain, fear and anxiety, sexual aggression and perversion" (690).

formally. This allows us to embed familiar definitions that link the Gothic *genre* to the Industrial and French revolutions within a larger, world-systemic context.[4] Indeed, as Persephone Braham has shown, monstrous imaginaries have become strongly linked with the Americas during the conquest period (17). This monstrous proliferation can be linked to the gradual emergence of the world-system through the horrors of genocide, the slave trade and plantation slavery, and through the extraction of raw materials from the Americas (see also Sheller). The term "world-gothic" thus indicates a historical and theoretical positioning that differs from that underlying competing terms, such as for instance the "globalgothic," which focuses on a more contemporary period. According to Botting and Edwards in their theorization of the globalgothic, the contemporary world order is characterized by multi-directionality and the erosion of nation-states: "transnational capitalism," they write, "for so long associated with Western or US imperialism, respects no national borders in its pursuit of profits and markets" (13). The world-gothic, on the other hand, is based on a longer view of "globalization": capitalism is a world-system and characterized by the locking together of different regions into relations of increasing inequality. This inequality was profoundly shaped by European and American colonialism/imperialism. Its newest wave is "globalization," "the acceleration and deepening of old imperial processes under a neoliberal regime" (Fatton 24).

Further, this article builds on recent ecocritical work that has yoked literary criticism to Jason W. Moore's theorization of capitalism as a world-ecology, that is, as a systemically patterned way of organizing nature on a global scale (Deckard "Editorial"; Niblett "World-Economy"; Oloff; Deckard "Uncanny States"; Niblett and Campbell). From a world-ecology perspective, the processes shaping the capitalist world-system involve not only the *exploitation* of labor-power, but also the *appropriation* of the unpaid (and cheapened) work and energy of human and extra-human natures, or "Cheap Natures" (Moore). Critiques of capitalism have often focused on production and the substance of "value" [socially necessary labor time], and have tended to ignore the more expansive relations of reproduction and thus arguably impede an understanding of the workings of capitalism as world-ecology. Indeed, as Moore emphasizes, "the relations necessary to accumulate abstract social labor are - *necessarily* - more expansive, in scale, scope, speed, and intensity. ... [capitalism] must ceaselessly search for, and find ways to produce, Cheap Natures: a rising stream of low-cost food, labor-power, energy, and raw materials to the factory gates" (53). These "Cheap Natures" - whether gendered and racialized labor or environmental resources - are

[4] I here build on the important collection of essays in *EcoGothic* (Hughes and Smith). Sharae Deckard's chapter, in particular, seeks to push beyond national traditions and diffusionist accounts of the Gothic tradition.

appropriated under capitalism in ways that are fundamentally unequal, violent and oriented towards profit. Capitalism thus vampirically feeds on unpaid and undervalued labor, on gendered and racialized bodies and on extra-human natural resources. In this context, I want to argue that Marie Vieux Chauvet's novel helps us to highlight the ways in which the Gothic mode registers, and is animated by, not only the processes of exploitation but also those of appropriation. More importantly, she focuses on how to think them together within a larger framework. To express this in a more Gothic vocabulary, one might say that she highlights the ecology of, and links between, the zombified dispossessed peasant class (arriving in Port-au-Prince towards the end of the novel) and the zombified bourgeois woman-of-the-house.

Amour deliberately evokes the horizon of the "world-system," most strongly felt in Haiti through the US occupation and the lasting legacy of economic imperialism, embodied in the novel by American Mr. Long, who is backed locally by Calédu and who, after having bought up the Clamont coffee plantations, concentrates on the export of logwood. As noted above, *Amour* emphasizes the ways in which both the late thirties and the Duvalier régime are still shaped by the US Occupation, which had created a highly militarized society and cemented Haiti's position as a resource extraction zone, forced to provide "cheap" extra-human resources and migrant labor-power. Reinforcing global patterns of neocolonial class relations, the ruling elites under Duvalier continued to rely on foreign capital, siphoning off large sums to sustain their personal privilege (Dupuy 32). One must here further highlight that the environmental and gendered legacies of the Occupation were devastating and long-lived. As Myriam Chancy has emphasized, militarization and poverty are constitutively linked with gendered and sexual violence (318). Further, both are environment-making processes. Despite the environmental devastation wrought by colonialism, in the early 1920s "over sixty percent [of Haiti] was still covered by forests. By 1945, following the American Occupation (a period of intensified lumber exportation), this number had been reduced to twenty-one percent; ten years later, the number was eight to nine percent" (Paravisini-Gebert "All Misfortune," 79-80).

To return to the question of the Gothic mode, it is well known that it was during the period of the late 1920s and 1930s, coinciding with the US Occupation, that the figure of the zombie - both the laboring zombie and the female zombie rendered compliant by a *bokor* - gained global visibility through the transition into the US imaginary. This transition occurred through travel literature such as William Seabrook's *Magic Island* (1929) and films, including the first zombie film *White Zombie* (Halperin, 1932). Within these texts, the zombie tended to cater to the expression of racialized and racist imperial anxieties as well as serving to "justify"

US "interventions" through paternalist rhetoric. From a world-ecology perspective, I would argue that the internationalization of these Gothic narratives was driven by the socio-ecological crisis of "new imperialism" that was felt in many different locations (Hollemann 1). While creating environmental degradation and dispossessing peasants in Haiti, US imperialism had also created devastating consequences within the United States: the socio-ecological disaster of the Dust Bowl was the product of the drive for "white territorial control," of the forceful displacing of indigenous communities and their agricultural practices, and of a push towards an agriculture based around crops for export (Hollemann 8). It is noteworthy that displaced migrant workers and devastated landscapes emerged as figures in both Haitian and US literature from the mid-late thirties onwards. So I would argue that while the US zombie texts do not feature explicit environmental degradation, they nevertheless register in displaced form the alienation between the workers and the lands they work on (Oloff). Indeed, in that sense, the ecology of the laboring zombie is fairly self-evident, while that of the female zombie is less immediately apparent, as it appears mediated by the imperial-masculine order.

In this context, the most important aspect of *Amour*, then, is Chauvet's insistent linking of the Gothic mode (and of the monstrous-feminine as we will see later), to what one might call "commodity frontiers."[5] In *Amour*, the American ship and Mr. Long are evoked frequently as environment-degrading forces:

> Le bateau indifférent transporte le bois empilé sur le quai. Le commerce de ce côté est florissant. M. Long, rouge comme un coq, dirige lui-même les opérations. Les paysans ont des faces de chiens battus. Ils tendent la main vers la paye en rechignant et regardent au loin, les montagnes dévastées. De larges plaques blanches s'étendent sur elles comme une lèpre. Des rochers immenses pointent à leurs flancs comme des tombes. (69).
>
> [The indifferent ship loads the wood piled high on the pier. Business on that end is booming. M. Long, red as a rooster, manages the operation himself. The peasants have faces like whipped dogs. They sulk and hold out their hands for their payment as they look away into the distance at the devastated hillside. Huge white

[5] Kaussen offers an excellent analysis of Chauvet's debunking of Long's "liberal" speech on the peasants' supposed free will, which contrasts with Claire's evocations of the screams from the nearby prison - the real "cost" of the regime that enables Long's extractivism (173).

> patches have spread on the mountain like leprosy. Immense rocks stick out of its sides like gravestones.] (46)

US extractivism results in very visible socio-ecological degradation, described here and elsewhere through imagery that is Gothic and anthropomorphic. Human and extra-human natures are intertwined, as Claire's imagery makes abundantly clear: the "hécatombe" [slaughter] of cut trees results in diseased mountains looking like cemeteries (182), in mudslides, in degraded hillsides and destroyed livelihoods, and thus also in the creation of an army of cheap surplus labor to be sent to the Dominican Republic. On the "commodity frontier," then, the brutality of extractivism and primitive accumulation is nakedly apparent, as is the link to human impoverishment and misery. The Gothic here thus serves to de-fetishize commodity production, global class relations, as well as, arguably, the symbolic enclosure of women within the private sphere. This becomes visible in the contrasting of Claire's atomization (within the "private" sphere, as well as within her own subjectivity in the form of her claustrophobic diary) and a context of resource extraction. Chauvet's text often shifts quite abruptly from Claire's descriptions of "external" extractivism to her "internal" obsessions.

In order to highlight the specificity of Chauvet's approach to Gothic aesthetics, we might here compare her employment of the Gothic mode to Jacques Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée* [*Masters of the Dew*] (1944), which equally employed Gothic imagery to capture the increasingly visible devastation of the Haitian landscape. Indeed, in *Gouverneurs*, an obsession with death is prominent from the first line: "Nous mourrons tous..." (13) ["We are all going to die..." (23)]. This anxiety is linked to the devastation of the hills, which are "parcouru[s] de ravinements étincelants; les érosions ont mis à nu de longues coulées de roches: elles ont saigné la terre jusqu'à l'os" (15) ["traversed by shining gullies where erosion had undressed long strata of rock and bled the earth to the bone" (24)]. When the messianic hero Manuel, a former sugar-cane worker, first approaches his home on his return from Cuba, the tone is similarly bleak, as the landscape is dominated by emaciated cattle and ominous flocks of crows that "à son approche, s'enfuyaient dans un noir remous, avec des croassements interminables" (29), [flew away at his approach in a dark whirl of interminable caws (36)] adding to a sense of doom and eco-apocalypse. What is striking in the novels by both Roumain and Chauvet is that the Gothic mode, when employed in relation to environmental degradation in Haiti, is not primarily animated by repression - a mechanism often seen as driving Gothic fear through the haunting secret that needs to be decoded. While concerned

with "extreme states, such as violence and pain, fear and anxiety," caused by the breakdown of community and environmental disaster, the Gothic mode is here only "weakly transcoded" (Hillard 690; Shapiro 215).

However, repression does become a major concern in *Amour* in relation to gender and unpaid work. As is well known, Roumain's text metaphorically conflates women and the land, offering a vision of the revitalization, or indeed figurative de-zombification, of community and the land through the finding of water thanks to the messianic sacrifice of Manuel. Symbolically, the revitalization of the land is mirrored by Annaise's pregnancy with Manuel's child. Patriarchal dichotomies are here employed to render different ecological regimes: a negatively connoted ex-prostitute is associated with an exploitative approach to land and labor, whereas the young virgin Annaise, who will give birth to the martyred hero's child, is linked to ecological recovery.[6] Chauvet rejects these dualisms, which replicate uncritically the association of "women" with the "natural" realm and the sphere of social and biological reproduction. They also paradoxically make gendered work appear as "one step removed from immediate impact on nature," "mediated through a particular form of production" (Merchant 5). Chauvet's approach, I argue, renders visible the gendered violence of a system that routinely devalues both gendered unpaid work and the work/energy provided by extra-human natures. Indeed, unpaid gendered work, while invisibilized through the apparent mediation of reproduction through production, feeds into "commodity chains" and is arguably even "more crucial to capital than waged labor" (Clelland 82). This repression of women's work is possible because a key feature of capitalism, according to Roswitha Scholz, is value dissociation: "a core of female-determined reproductive activities and the affects, characteristics, and attitudes (emotionality, sensuality, and female or motherly caring) ... are dissociated from value and abstract labor" (127). One might say that a world-ecological version of dissociation theory might be that it is "Cheap Natures" - unpaid work and energy - that are dissociated from "value and abstract labor."[7]

What does this mean for Gothic representations in this context? Representations of exploited labor in the racialized figure of the zombie, visibilizing the reduction of a person to a body that sells hours of its time, are only one particular Gothic (or zombie) effect. But the female zombies - female characters zombified by a male character who wants to control their bodies and desires - are not "workers" in the sense of the laboring proletariat. Instead, they

[6]This association between prostitution and an ecology based on extractivism also underlies Jacques Stephen Alexis's *L'espace d'un cillement* (1959), in which a de-sensitised, one might say zombified, female prostitute to American marines is re-sensitised by a male Cuban mechanic/labour strike organiser.

[7]A list of "affects, characteristics and attitudes" from that perspective would begin to look a lot like Val Plumwood's "master model" of modernity (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature.* London: Routledge, 1993).

register the gendered experience of capitalist processes of accumulation: the larger relations of reproduction largely carried out by women and identified with the "natural" realm of biological and social reproduction.

"Greening" the Zombified Woman-of-the-House

The feminine-monstrous in *Amour*, as embodied by Claire, draws on various Gothic tropes that are the product of a masculinist capitalist world-system, in which gendered violence is the interpersonal manifestation of structural violence. Claire presents herself as an aged virgin harboring countless repressed desires shaped by a racialized patriarchal society and only inadequately met by cradling a doll, looking at pornographic postcards, and fantasizing about her French white brother-in-law. As mentioned above, Claire's narrative also echoes tales around female zombification, in which a woman's "'tit bon ange" - or "the component of the soul, where personality, character, and volition reside" - is stolen by a powerful *bokor* to make the woman compliant to a rejected male suitor (Paravisini-Gebert "Woman Possessed," 38). According to Paravisini-Gebert, the "master tale" of female zombification for most early twentieth century accounts recounts "the death in October 1909 of Marie M., a young upper-class woman" (40). Marie was presumed interred but found alive five years after her supposed burial, "wild, unkempt, demented, and [having] born three children" (40). This basic tale was re-imagined by literary writers, including Jacques Stephen Alexis in "Chronique d'un faux amour" (1960), in which the light-skinned protagonist is transformed into a zombie during her wedding night and shut away in a convent in France. While *Amour* does not offer a tale of literal zombification and imprisonment (via poisoning and burial), Claire nevertheless presents herself as figuratively zombified: she describes herself as a "corps sans âme" (97) [soulless body (66)] and her inner life as one of emptiness, noting that there is a "[v]ide en moi." (96) [an emptiness within me. (65)]. Experiencing a lack of agency and an alienation from her own body, she offers the following image: "Je suis enfouie dans la dernière couche terrestre, à la fois morte et vivante. Non, morte, vraiment morte. Une sorte d'automate. Je n'ai plus d'âme. Est-ce ça le désespoir?" (96) [I lie beneath the last geological layer, at once dead and alive. No, dead, truly dead. A kind of automaton. I no longer have a soul. Is this what despair is? (65)]. Caught between death and life, seemingly at a remove from the public sphere of action, Claire evokes all of the component parts of zombie tales, including the (in this case figurative) burial.

One here needs to emphasize that literary representations of figurative female zombification were often inscribed within the same paradigms that conflate women and the

land/culture/nation. One might here think of Jacques Stephen Alexis's sex-worker in *L'Espace d'un cillement* (1960), who makes a living by satisfying the desires of US marines and is "re-sensitized" through physical and emotional intimacy with a Cuban mechanic/labor activist. It is thus notable that Chauvet introduces significant changes to the version offered in popular tales as well as those offered in literary texts by her male compatriots: not only is Claire's zombification presented within its wider socio-ecological context (of which it is a product), but it also refuses several of the narrative component parts, such as the romance plot and the fetishization of the racialized white/light-skinned female body. What I want to argue here is that Marie Vieux Chauvet's more complex tale offered in *Amour* enjoins us firstly to reflect on the ecology of the tradition of female "monsters" and "virgins" (why do Gothic and zombie effects proliferate with the American occupation and its legacy?), and secondly to engage critically with some of the patriarchal paradigms underlying tales of female and collective de-zombification.

Arguably, female zombification highlights, through the monstrous, the atomization of women within a patriarchal-capitalist world-order, relying on a series of symbolic and structural enclosures that fragment the gendered individual; production is separated from reproduction, occluding any possible link or alliance between the exploited zombie-worker (who, in zombie representations, is also sometimes female but not primarily defined through his/her gender) and the bourgeois zombie-housewife (or indeed, between the zombie-housewives themselves). Let us here consider "Chronique d'un faux amour" (1960), in which Jacques Stephen Alexis offered the perspective of a female zombie: the unnamed narrator tells us of her fate of being locked up in the convent, where she feels profoundly alienated from her surroundings and struggles to makes sense of the world around her. The difference between the laboring zombie and the female zombie, who was formerly part of the ruling elite, becomes abundantly clear in the following passage, in which the unnamed narrator contemplates a clock:

> Sur la table, depuis des années, la pendule précipitée égrène son interminable kyrielle de petits cailloux, - je les crois blancs -; blanches, ces secondes qui cognent l'une après l'une, puis roulent contre mes tempes. Voilà dix ans que j'attends ma première nuit d'amour, la nuit qui me réveillera et m'amènera au jour, la nuit qui m'arrachera à l'hinterland équivoque, incolore où je végète ...(103)

> It has been years that, on the table, the hasty clock chimes its interminable stream of little pebbles, - I believe them to be white -; white are these seconds that knock, one after the other, then roll against my temples. I have waited ten years for my first night of love, the night that will awaken me and will lead me to the day, the night that will tear me from the ambiguous and colorless hinterland where I vegetate [..] (my translation).

While the laboring zombie, a being reduced to bodily labor, produces "value", which is defined through "socially necessary" labor time, the female light-skinned zombie's time is wasted and figured as fundamentally unproductive, as she is suspended between life and death and trapped in between the relational states of virgin and wife. As is well known, the "revolution" heralded by the clock, and thus the production of abstract measurable time, has been linked to the development of industrial capitalism - hence the significance of the clock visualizing here a waste of time.

Further, we may note that the "whiteness" of the metaphorical pebbles is heavily overdetermined and links to the symbolism of a patriarchal racialized imaginary (evoked elsewhere through the white dress and the whiteness/lightness of her skin). As Kaiama Glover astutely remarks, the nameless female zombie in Alexis's tale is no straightforward victim of society, but rather inscribed in a racialized social hierarchy of which she was herself partially an agent: "It becomes apparent that Alexis' narrator was in fact both transformed into an actual zombie on her wedding day and revealed as a metaphorical zombie by her first obligatory contact with a member of the peasantry" (109). Indeed, the female zombie is quite "happy to affirm an equivalence ... between African genealogy and monstrosity" (Asibong 2010, 198). While "Chronique" does not place this tale of female zombification explicitly within a larger world-ecological context (as does Chauvet), it certainly highlights the racist intertwining of discourses on "nature" and "race" through the narrator's reaction to the black and créole-speaking uncle of her husband-to-be, who she views as "gorilla" (136). If zombification tales thrive on the alienation of the disenfranchised mass of the population from the land, and on the alienation of women from the realm of production, then it must be emphasized that modern racism is the product of one such rift in socio-ecological metabolism. It was "capitalist colonialism that formulated the dualism that placed human beings outside nature and that reproduced the difference between humans and non-humans as inferiority" (Mukherjee 55).

In Chauvet's story, the tale of female zombification is further complicated, refusing to fall into narrative patterns that revolve around the white female body (a narrative which had

become popular in the US cinematic context, through its embedding in racialized narratives of empire that catered to imperial fears of "contagion," displacing the atrocities of colonization). That the monstrous-feminine hinges on repression produced by gendered and classed "atomization" within the private sphere is highlighted by Claire herself: to others, Claire, who has learned to repress her instincts, is the epitome of the woman-of-the-house, who guards the family's honor through her virtuousness, narrowly defined through her refusal of sexual relations. But Claire of course knows that "[l]a pureté n'existe pas" (21) [there is no such thing as purity (10)], admitting that she sometimes feels she is a monster (78/53). Further, the racialization of the monstrous-feminine in the zombie tales is highlighted and problematized throughout: Claire, whose name means "light," has darker skin than the rest of her family and has internalized colorism/racism, instilled in her by her father through physical punishment. This manifests itself not only in her treatment of others and her sexual desires but also in self-abnegation and madness (see Lee-Keller).

Adding to these more complicated dynamics of gender and race/color is the fact that the Gothic "secret" that haunts the text is her key role in the massacre of the workers on her parents' coffee plantation. The zombie Claire, as is highlighted in the text, occupies a social position that is upheld by the surplus value that had been brutally extracted from severely underpaid peasant-tenants, unable to even afford their daily food. After her parents' untimely deaths following her father's failed resistance to US imperial ambition, Claire struggles to retain authority over the coffee plantations "because of the things she is not: male and white" (Paravisini-Gebert "Marie Vieux Chauvet" 75). Unable to extricate herself from the social logic of the role she inhabits, she proceeds to ally herself with foreign capital (embodied by Mr. Long), fixing coffee prices at a rate that undercuts the coffee prices of the region. The retribution by those she had undercut is swift, as the peasant-tenants on her plantation are brutally killed. As becomes clear through these flashbacks, her "zombification" takes place within a larger world-systemic context; it is, as Martin Munro puts it, "linked to the temporal, in so far as the soul, as it is understood in the novel, is intimately connected to Claire's past, to the familial and societal events that have rendered her soulless, as she puts it" (50). It is strongly embedded within the context of Haiti as a resource extraction zone, and the functioning of the ruling middle class as mediating between foreign interests, world market prices, and a super-exploited peasant class.

Much has been made of the opposition between white Frenchman Jean Luze (who is the conscious object of her desires) and the black Haitian Calédu (who she unconsciously desires). While I do not have enough space here to go into much detail, I want to focus on a

particular element of that set-up: both male characters are part of a ruling elite that are implicated in resource extractivism. Jean Luze works for Mr. Long in an administrative role (which he gradually begins to reject because of the obvious corruption and mistreatment of the peasants), while Calédu uses military force and sexual violence to support Mr. Long's logging export business. While Claire consciously wants to identify with Jean Luze (despite the fact that his criticism of Mr. Long fails to translate into action), Calédu's assertion that he and Claire are similar because they both have "des morts sur la conscience" (73) [killing on our conscience (49)] clearly profoundly disturbs and haunts her. Indeed, a full-blown episode of madness, evoking several familiar tropes of the monstrous-feminine, occurs just after her observation of Calédu's brutalities from the safety of the supposedly removed space of the bourgeois "private sphere":

> Ce matin, Calédu a matraqué quelques paysans. Il est en rage. J'ai assisté à toute la scène derrière les persiennes de ma fenêtre. D'autres yeux épiaient aussi dans le voisinage. Je voyais remuer les rideaux sous des mains frémissantes, luire des regards à travers d'autres persiennes; j'entendais chuchoter à droite, à gauche et parmi ces chuchotements s'élèvent à intervalles presque réguliers les jurons de Calédu, les cris de protestation, de douleurs, des paysans: ils s'étaient mis en grève pour réclamer de M. Long un prix plus élevé pour leur bois. En réponse, M. Long avait fait débarquer du bateau en rade depuis deux heures, une scie électrique que le commandant forçait les paysans a transporter eux-mêmes. L'abattage des arbres se faisait trop lentement à la hache et M. Long était pressé d'acheter au prix qu'il avait lui-même fixé, tout le bois de montagne. L'un des paysans continuait malgré les coups a parler:
>
> - Ne cédez pas! hurlait-il, tenez bon, et si je meurs n'oubliez pas qu'il vous faut à jamais rester solidaires.
>
> On le transporta mourant à la prison...
>
> Je serre ma poupée contre moi. Seule dans l'obscurité, je contemple la lune et m'essaye à sourire. Les désirs s'évanouissent. Je me sens comme purifiée. J'entends sonner les heures à l'horloge de l'église. ...Mes rides s'accentuent et mes traits se fanent. Ce sera bientôt la vieillesse. Ah! vivre, vivre avant qu'il soit trop tard! (106-107).

> [This morning, Calédu bludgeoned several peasants. He's furious. I watched the whole scene from behind my shutters. Other eyes in the neighborhood were spying too. I saw curtains moved by trembling hands, eyes glowing behind other blinds; I heard whispering to the right, to the left, and piercing the whispering almost at regular intervals, Calédu's swearing, the peasants' cries of pain and protests: they went on strike against M. Long to demand a better price for their wood. In response M. Long unloaded an electric saw from the boat docked in the harbor for the past two hours, and the commandant made the peasants haul it themselves. It was taking too much time to chop the trees down with axes, and M. Long was in a hurry to buy all of the mountain wood at the price he had fixed. One of the peasants kept talking despite the blows:
> "Don't give in!" he yelled. "Hang on, and if I did, don't forget you must stick together."
> He was taken to prison dying ...
> I clutch my doll against my chest. Alone in the dark, I gaze at the moon and attempt a smile. Desire is fading. I feel purified. I hear the church clock chime an hour. ... My wrinkles deepen and my features wilt. Old age is coming soon. Oh, I want to live, to live before it's too late! (73)]

Claire's seamless turn to the monstrous-feminine Gothic after the description of the brutalities that accompany primitive accumulation on the commodity frontier suggests that the Gothic mode is partly animated by her recognition of the repression (of exploitation) at stake in her social position. She seems to recognize, in other words, that while Calédu pushes violence to unseen extremes, he is also part of the same system of oppression that she is implicated in. Further, we also see something else at work here: the possibility of communal expression of resistance and collectivity (a utopian dream which still imaginable in Roumain's literary universe) is here nearly stomped into oblivion by the methods employed by Calédu (and, by implication, anti-Communist Duvalier) (see also Niblett *The Caribbean Novel* 83). These methods involve militarized violence, rape and an alliance with US capital.

Indeed, the question of solidarity, and specifically female solidarity, is fragile in *Amour*, a fact driven home by a number of female doubles for Claire, who are inscribed in racialized class hierarchies: one might here mention Claire's white-skinned sister Felicia, who marries the white Frenchman Jean Luce (who all three sisters in the novel desire but who on first seeing Claire mistakes her for the maid); or the domestic servant Augustine, who Claire

was forbidden to become friends with as a child. With both friendships/relationships forestalled or impeded due to racial and patriarchal dynamics, Augustine becomes one of the most marginalized and silenced characters in Claire's narrative, while Felicia dominates many of Claire's obsessive fantasies. Claire is thus unable to form meaningful relations with these characters, but she begins to show public solidarity with the women of her own class raped and violated by Calédu, whose suffering reflects the increase of gendered sexual violence in an increasingly militarized society (Chancy 316). In this context, the ambivalent ending in which Claire stabs Calédu to death during an uprising of the disenfranchised former peasants is invested with much significance. The ending seems to proffer the possibility of aligning the gendered interests of the abused bourgeois women and the uprising of the dispossessed former peasants - albeit in a somewhat muted and ambivalent way, as Claire's killing of Calédu "is hardly treated as heroic [..] The only action possible has become participation in the violence around her" (Dalleo 139). Part of that pessimism may also derive from the fact that while the uprising was explicitly directed against M. Long, the latter (and the imperial order he represents) is seemingly left untouched (protected as he is by a machine gun), while the rest of society is in a state of violent chaos.

Over two decades ago, Paravisini-Gebert excellently summed up Marie Chauvet's text as follows: "Chauvet's central metaphor for the historical process ... is rape, that of women by men in power and that of Haiti by repressive violent forces" ("Marie Vieux Chauvet," 75). It is this central metaphor, and Chauvet's exploration of the aesthetic and world-historical implications, that transform *Amour* into a key text for thinking through the ecology of the world-gothic and, more specifically, the monstrous-feminine. This chapter sought to focus on Chauvet's representation of the relation between the (systemic, symbolic and physical) violence against women and the violence of an increasingly unequal world-system that develops through the downgrading and exploitation of natural resources (a process seen in its most brutal force in what Fatton calls the "outer periphery"). On the one hand, the link between environmental and masculinist violence has of course been quite explicit since the conquest period: one only needs to recall the countless depictions of nature-as-woman and woman-as-nature, which have accompanied colonization. Or, to take a twentieth century example, one might think of the feminization of Haiti in imperialist discourse born from, and ideologically re-enforcing, the Occupation. However, the possible links between resource extraction and gendered violence are simultaneously structurally occluded, since gendered female labor is assigned to the realm of (social and biological) reproduction, seemingly "one

step removed from immediate impact on nature" (Merchant 5). The "private realm" is thus conceptually subordinated to the masculinized realm of "work." Relating this contradictory dynamic to a classic Gothic example that has found much resonance in the Caribbean, we might say that this is why Jane Eyre finds it impossible to understand her relation to Bertha Mason, the Creole Caribbean "madwoman" in the attic, who registers the horrors of the plantation (including extreme gendered violence). The plantation order is, also, of course, the source of Mr. Rochester's wealth. It is this "mediation," and the repression that underpins it, that animates the monstrous-feminine in Chauvet's text. "Madwomen" like Claire are "monstrous" in the term's etymological sense: as products of, and at least partially agents within, a brutally gendered and racialized capitalist world-ecology, in which much work by women and racialized workers of both sexes is either unpaid or undervalued, they "reveal" and "portend" systemic tendencies.

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