

DECOLONIZING THE CARIBBEAN BORDERLANDS: THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION
IN CONTEMPORARY LATINA/O CULTURAL PRODUCTION

John D. Ribó

A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English and Comparative Literature.

Chapel Hill
2015

Approved by:

María DeGuzmán

Dominique Fisher

Juan Carlos González Espitia

Tanya Shields

Ariana Vigil

©2015
John D. Ribó
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

John D. Ribó: Decolonizing the Caribbean Borderlands:
The Haitian Revolution in Contemporary Latina/o Cultural Production
(Under the direction of María DeGuzmán)

In the last two decades scholars across a number of disciplines have demonstrated that the Haitian Revolution shapes our contemporary world in fundamental ways. Re-inscribing the events of Saint-Domingue between 1791-1804 into world history, philosophy, political science, and critical race, ethnic, literary, and cultural studies radically alters understandings of the early Atlantic world, of the age of revolutions, and of the origins of some of the most foundational ideas and ideals of contemporary globalized society such as freedom, equality, and human rights. Yet few scholars in Latina/o Studies have sought to trace the importance of Haiti and the Haitian Revolution in contemporary Latina/o cultural production. By bringing border thinking generated on the US-Mexico border into dialogue with scholarship on the silencing of Haiti and the Haitian Revolution, this dissertation un-silences the Caribbean borderlands exploring coloniality's layered, fractal frontiers that connect Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the United States in order to bridge borders, unsettle entrenched nationalisms, and radically reorient the maps and timelines of contemporary hemispheric studies of the Americas.

“Para los que ya no están, para los que están, y los que vienen.”

René Pérez Joglar

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge some of the people who have helped me on the long path to completing this dissertation. A whole community including my teachers, my professors, my colleagues, my committee members, my director, my family, my friends, and my partner got me here. Thank you.

Though it seems like forever ago, two of my teachers from Lake Highlands High School in Dallas, Texas taught me invaluable lessons I remember to this day. Mr. Patton showed me that being kind and enjoying life, company, and conversation are perhaps the first steps towards learning from literature and from other human beings. Dr. Buchanan taught me that sometimes the oddest, most easily overlooked facts reveal illuminating insights about the past.

At the University of Texas at Austin, I had many wonderful professors who encouraged, inspired, and guided me. Dr. Barbara Goff showed me the common thread of human tragedy running from Sophocles to Athol Fugard, from Euripides to Wole Soyinka. Dr. Elizabeth Hedrick opened my eyes to the revelatory and deceptive power of re-fashioning oneself through autobiographical writing. Dr. Elizabeth Richmond-Garza introduced me to post-colonial studies, modeled what it means to infuse scholarship and teaching with the wonderful idiosyncrasies of one's unique personality, and demonstrated that the gothic and other popular genres constitute rich fields for academic investigation. Dr. Thomas Vessely provided me with a dynamic model for scholarship connecting history, literature, science, religion, and philosophy. Dr. Vance Holloway introduced me to the twentieth century vanguard movements supplying me with an academic outlet for my youthful rebelliousness. Finally Dr. Virginia Higginbotham directed my

undergraduate honors thesis patiently and steadily guiding me with good will, kindness, and humor through English translations of French and Spanish Surrealist poetry.

One of the key factors for me in deciding to attend the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill was the camaraderie I observed amongst graduate students and faculty on my campus visit. From that very first time I came to Chapel Hill, my friend Michael Rulon welcomed me with his characteristic warmth and sarcastic humor. Jonathan Risner also served as an important touchstone for me during our time together in graduate school; our numerous conversations over the years helped me think more clearly as a comparatist working at the intersections of Latina/o and Latin American Studies. Gale Greenlee and Becka Garonzick founded the Literature of the Americas Working Group, which connected me with other wonderful graduate students like Sarah Workman, María Obando, Rachel Norman, and Susan Thananopavarn, all of whom are undertaking exciting research that deploys novel, hemispheric approaches to ethnic and critical race studies in literature. The Literature of the Americas working group read early drafts of portions of this dissertation and provided important feedback that honed my arguments and advanced my thinking. Sarah Workman and Dr. María DeGuzmán established the Hispano-, Latin American-, Latina/o-Jewish Cultural Production Working Group, which connects graduate students and faculty from UNC-Chapel Hill, Wake Forest University, and Duke University. The Latina/o-Jewish Working Group also read portions of this dissertation in its early stages and provided crucial advice that improved my work. I am especially indebted to the insightful suggestions that Dr. Rosa Perelmuter, Dr. Ariana Vigil, and Dr. Jessica Boon generously provided.

Moving to North Carolina gave me a crash course in the diverse and dynamic range of Latina/o experiences in the New South; and my work as graduate assistant to UNC's Program in

Latina/o Studies under the direction of Dr. María DeGuzmán plugged me into a network of leaders transforming the university and the community to reflect North Carolina's changing demographics. Professor Mario Marzan from UNC's Art Department invited me to co-curate with him the first Latina/o group art exhibit in North Carolina. Ron Bilbao organized undergraduate students to call for the establishment of the first Latina/o Center at UNC. Executive Vice Provost Ron Strauss gave me the opportunity to pitch to Provost Bernadette Gray-Little the center that Ron Bilbao envisioned and that a committee of dedicated faculty, staff, and students developed into the proposal for the Carolina Latina/o Collaborative (CLC). Provost Grey-Little approved the proposal, and I was lucky enough to work with the CLC's Assistant Director Jossell Pérez, its Undergraduate Assistant Ron Bilbao, Associate Professor of Journalism Paul Cuadros, Dr. DeGuzmán, and a staff of undergraduate students to launch the CLC and run its daily operations in its first years. Amongst the many wonderful students who worked with me there, Theresa Flores and Natalie Borrego in particular went above and beyond to make the CLC a success. I am very thankful for these opportunities I have been given, proud of the work we accomplished together, and happy to have been a part of this Latina/o community.

At UNC-Chapel Hill, I have been privileged to learn from so many professors. Dr. Glynis Cowell, Dr. Hannelore Jarausch, and Dr. Jordynn Jack taught me to teach. Dr. Diane Leonard showed me how to make the library my own. In addition to giving achingly beautiful lectures, Dr. Eric Downing taught me how to take research from an idea, to an abstract, to a conference paper. Dr. Stuart Day encouraged me to attend my first conference, helped me at each step of the process, and even rounded up a crowd of scholars for the audience. Dr. Martine Antle gave me my first opportunity to teach film and languages across the curriculum. Dr. Sandy Darity and Dr.

Jay García introduced me to the work of Paul Gilroy and to the man himself. Dr. Lawrence Grossberg gave me his wonderfully personal take on the history, ethics, and practice of Cultural Studies. Dr. Oswaldo Estrada taught me how to write a book review and how to lead a working group. Dr. Matthew Taylor and Dr. Megan Matchinske guided me successfully through the labyrinthine process of the academic job market, performing admirably in complicated roles equal parts cheerleader, strategist, therapist, and editor. Dr. Ruth Salvaggio generously shared her time to discuss poetry, music, the Caribbean, and New Orleans. And Dr. Ashley Lucas shone with positivity unequalled in my experience, imparting a lasting lesson on the power of optimism, creativity, and solidarity.

Dr. Antonio Viego at Duke University gave me my first opportunity to study Cuban-American literature at a university; the experience was transformative. His course began a process of critical self-analysis and introspection that has validated and elucidated my lived experience and empowered my scholarship ever since. Dr. Viego also provided the central idea for my MA thesis and introduced me to the rich possibilities for teaching and scholarship in Latina/o Studies and beyond.

I have also enjoyed the opportunity to assist professors teaching courses at UNC-Chapel Hill, each of whom have offered unique models for teaching literature, film, and culture in engaging, exciting ways. Dr. Jessica Wolfe brought classic epic alive through masterful, sweeping storytelling. With humor, candor, and insight Dr. Todd Taylor unpacked the rhetoric and artifice of popular cinema. Dr. Gregg Flaxman challenged students to follow an ambitious intellectual route connecting Europe, Africa, and the Americas through legends of cannibalism and the folds of the Baroque. Dr. Rick Warner and Dr. Sam Amago brought the *cineclub* to the university expanding not only the canon of Comparative Literature but also the limitations of the

typical classroom in response to the increasingly visual nature of contemporary popular cultural production.

I would like to offer special thanks to the members of my dissertation committee who have been essential to this project and to whom I am greatly indebted. Dr. Tanya Shields provided encouragement and support at key moments in the long process of defending my prospectus, starting my research, and finishing my dissertation. Dr. Ariana Vigil came into my committee late in the game but had long before already provided key reading recommendations and moral support at campus talks and conference presentations. Dr. Vigil, I couldn't have done this without you! Before I even began my Ph.D., Dr. Dominique Fisher made two key suggestions that sowed the seeds for this project. First, she recommended that I read Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past*, and, second, that I take a course with Dr. María DeGuzmán. Dr. Fisher's guidance has been fundamental. Dr. Juan Carlos González Espitia has been a personal role model since the first course I took with him. I admire his passionate engagement with literature, critical theory, and history; his energetic and innovative techniques for making knowledge vital to students right here, right now; and perhaps most of all his deeply sensitive, caring, and patient relationship with all of the people around him, no matter their rank or position. Thanks to all of my committee members. I can only hope to return your many favors to my future students.

Finally, I would like to thank my director, Dr. María DeGuzmán, whose teaching, scholarship, and mentorship has most strongly defined my experience in graduate school. Dr. DeGuzmán guided me through numerous professional, scholarly, administrative, and personal challenges with wisdom, sensitivity, and grace and provided me opportunities too numerous to list. As a scholar, she is insightful and expansive; as an artist, she is contemplative, daring, and

playful; as a mentor, she is patient, supportive, and caring; and as a leader, she is principled and selfless. Her work ethic in all things professional and personal is unmatched in my experience. It would certainly be intimidating to have such a person as an advisor if Dr. DeGuzmán were not so kind, gentle, and fun. Working with Dr. DeGuzmán has been a privilege that I think I will only fully understand and appreciate with the passing years. I suspect only with the benefit of hindsight will I realize just how influential she has been in my intellectual development as I try to emulate her example wherever my path takes me. Thank you so much for everything, Dr. D.

My family's particular history motivates this project. As I grew up in the 1980s and 1990s, we were something of an oddity, the only Cuban-Dominican-American family in our Dallas, Texas suburb Lake Highlands or any of the surrounding areas for all we knew. We were so rare, in fact, that I did not meet another Cuban American or Dominican American my own age who wasn't my sister or my cousin until I was almost done with college. In this not altogether unpleasant isolation, in this absence of a community reflecting my family's cultures, we were often illegible to others. I remember, for example, a friend in junior high joking that I must wear Ayatollah pajamas to sleep when he learned my father was Cuban. Clearly he couldn't distinguish Cuba from Iran. More importantly, I often felt illegible to myself, which started a lifelong obsession with narratives, cultures, and histories, because my family's stories were clues to the mystery of this illegibility—compelling yet always incomplete, interesting enough to keep me searching for answers, but never decisive. Bored with my hometown, constantly dreaming of escaping to anywhere that was elsewhere, I relished how our stories connected me to Tampa, to Havana, to Santo Domingo, and beyond, to places from where I imagined our family, food, customs, and cultures might have come, and to places where I thought I might perhaps one day “return.”

Yet how could I “return” to these places if I had never been to them in the first place? How could I feel attached to places I had never known? And how could my identity be so invested in things so foreign to my lived experience? I had learned, without realizing it, the lessons of diaspora, unknowingly inheriting my own particular, idiosyncratic iterations on what my family had already lost and gained in migration: affective, imaginary attachments to distant places and people; the difficulties and joys of never quite fitting in here, there, or anywhere else; and inherited traumas transmitted across generations both in stories and in silences. I thank my family—my grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, sisters, and cousins—for sharing our stories; they instilled a curiosity in me that underwrites this project and my academic career more generally. I hope my family can understand my attempts to retell our stories and to interpret our silences here and elsewhere. I know that I will never put the puzzle pieces of our family’s past back together again. The task is impossible. Too many of our stories are lost. There’s no lid to the box showing the complete image, only fragmented visions and versions. But I’ll share what I can, not because our family’s stories are exceptional, but rather because they are so common, and these common stories so often go untold.

Some of our family’s stories are lost because we’ve lost the storytellers. In the years that it has taken me to write this dissertation my three remaining grandparents, Angelina Somines Ribó, Luis Santiago Ribó, and Leda Pichardo Mejías, passed away. My brother-in-law Michael Brandon Jurado also tragically died long before his time. My Abuelos connected me to Cuba, Grandma Leda to the Dominican Republic, and Michael to El Paso/Juarez. Abuelos, hermano, I thank each of you for the immeasurable contributions you made to my life. I carry each of you with me every day. I would like to share some of your stories and some of my memories of you here.

My grandparents Angelina and Luis Ribó were the first generation of my father's family born in Cuba of Spanish immigrants from Catalonia, Galicia, and Asturias. As Castro came to power, my Abuela convinced my Abuelo to send their children—my father, Luis, and my uncle, Angel—alone to the US as part of Operation Pedro Pan. The story goes that Abuela let Abuelo know that she and the kids were leaving Cuba and that he could join them. He did. At around the same time she discovered she had an operable brain tumor but postponed surgery indefinitely so she would be able to leave for the US whenever the opportunity to rejoin her sons arose. Though the tumor was eventually removed successfully in Florida, the stroke it caused left my grandmother partially paralyzed for the rest of her life.

Despite her physical limitations, Abuela was a strong, sharp woman with a stronger, sharper tongue; she had little patience for niceties or nostalgia. She never learned much English and loved to make comments like, “¡Qué gorda estás! [You're so fat!]” or, “¡Mira! La más guapa de mis nietas. [Look! The prettiest of my granddaughters!]” By the time I spoke Spanish in college, I realized we avoided translating these comments to try to side-step awkward inter-linguistic spats, but her tongue's reputation already preceded her. Even still, Abuela wasn't all vinegar and bile; at times she could be mischievously funny and disarmingly tender. I remember once at the end of her life when I visited her shortly before her death, she mistook me for my father, called out to a nonexistent waiter for a Cuban coffee, “un cafecito, bien dulce como te gusta,” very sweet like my dad might have once liked it, and began describing in detail the beautiful facades of the buildings of downtown Havana that she saw in her mind's eye while pointing towards the stark, blank walls of her room of the Texas retirement home. It was the only time I heard her talk about the city where she was born and the island she had left almost fifty years earlier.

My Abuelo, Luis Santiago Ribó, never stopped talking about Cuba. He wrote for a Cuban-American newsletter, spoke regularly on local, public-access radio shows, and founded an anti-Castro, anti-communist community organization called Casa Cuba in Tampa, Florida. Abuelo wanted my sisters, my cousins, and me to remain connected to an island we've never known. He gave me t-shirts with Cuban flags and my first collection of José Martí's poetry; today, years after his death his map of Cuba still hangs framed on my living room wall, and his bust of Martí still stands on my bookshelf. He was a charming, funny man who made a huge impression on me. After my grandfather's funeral, I was expected to speak alongside my father and my uncle to the aging Tampeños of Casa Cuba, but what could I say? What did a Dallas-born, gringo-accented outsider have to add? Most of my knowledge of Cuba is academic, so I spoke, like an academic, about the history of Cuban Americans in Ybor City and about how this community had contributed to the efforts of Martí and Cuba's other revolutionaries. It went over well. A good piece of advice for struggling, wannabe Cuban Americans put on the spot to speak to an older Cuban-American public: when in doubt, praise Martí, *la patria*, and your audience in that order.

But in my speech I also wanted to validate the Cuban-American community in Tampa not only as an exile community, not only as a layover for some eternally postponed mythical return to a post-Castro, post-communist Cuba that I'm not sure that I, much less my grandfather's much older friends, will ever see. I wanted to insist that the Cuban Americans of Ybor and West Tampa are an important American community, in both national and hemispheric senses, a community both of the United States and of "Nuestra América." I imagine some in the audience at Casa Cuba thought that I was taking up their cause as the next generation, born in exile but nevertheless true to Casa Cuba's mission of toppling Fidel and returning to Cuba, but for me it's

not so clear. I hope to travel some day to Cuba, but without ever having been and with no family left on the island, there will never be a return for me. The country that exists today has so little to do with the Cuba my grandfather gave me, the Cuba of his memory, of his imagination, and of his dreams, the Cuba of Casa Cuba and of his community in Ybor City and West Tampa. The sad irony for me is that my grandfather's funeral was perhaps the first and most likely the last time I might feel Cuban in a collective sense beyond the intimacy of my family's holiday gatherings. As we ended the gathering at Casa Cuba I couldn't even sing *la Bayamesa*, the Cuban national anthem. I didn't know the words or the tune, but the people there accepted me as one of their own because that day I was with them to bury their friend, my grandfather.

As fraught and tenuous as my sense of Cuban-American belonging might be, my father's Cuban heritage has overshadowed my mother's Dominican heritage both in our family's narratives and my own identity for as long as I can remember. This situation I believe stems from the complex interplay of circumstances that shaped my maternal grandmother's migration to the US from the DR. Leda Mejías, née Pichardo Sarda, or Grandma Leda as my sisters and I call her, was something of a pioneer of the US Dominican diaspora. At the end of World War II, she left the Dominican Republic young, alone, and decades before larger waves of Dominicans began migrating to the US. She ultimately settled in Tampa, one of the oldest and largest Cuban-American enclaves outside of South Florida. Her first husband, my grandfather George Campbell, was Anglo; her second husband, Oscar Mejías, was Cuban. Despite being married twice, she bore the lion's share of responsibilities for raising four children alone with little money. She had only limited contact with and minimal support from her well-heeled family back in Santo Domingo and practically no local Dominican community to rely on in Tampa. Given these circumstances, I can understand that my grandmother prioritized practical concerns over

cultivating her family's Dominican roots and that she and her children ultimately assimilated into Tampa's communities, Cuban, Latina/o, and otherwise as best they could. But really, I'll never know. Though I can ask my mother and aunts for their perspectives, I'll never have my Grandma Leda's account of her own experience upon her arrival to the US.

By the time of my first memories of my Grandma Leda, she was already my sweet little grandmother who ran a public elementary school cafeteria in Tampa, lived with and cared for her mentally ill son, and doted on me and her other grandchildren whenever she got the chance. But in her day, she told me, she had been a real handful. There was the story about how as a little girl she had stabbed her family's distinguished guest in the thigh with her fork during a fancy dinner in Santo Domingo because she didn't like dressing up and didn't like him. And there was the story of how she liked to climb her family's trees in their yard to throw rotten fruit down on the passing pedestrians below. Most important for me, there was the time she eloped to Baltimore to marry my grandfather, George Campbell, a US World War II veteran and D-Day survivor. Though my grandpa had previously been her older sister's pen pal, Grandma Leda took over the epistolary baton when her sister became engaged to a Dominican. One day my grandfather, a rebel in his own right who against his family's wishes had lied about his age to enlist in the US Armed Forces, finally came to Santo Domingo to call on my grandma. Despite her family's objections, Grandma Leda left Santo Domingo to marry my grandfather and live in the US. The Campbells, my grandfather's family in Baltimore, apparently weren't too excited about the new Dominican branch of the family tree, so my grandparents moved from Baltimore to Tampa for warmer and more welcoming climes. When my grandfather's mental illness finally became too much, Grandma Leda raised my mother and her three siblings first alone in public housing near Ybor City and later with her second husband Oscar in a modest house in West Tampa.

Grandma Leda very rarely spoke to me of the Dominican Republic. After the first early symptoms of her Alzheimer's manifested, after she had refused to care for my uncle any longer and had undergone a dramatic transformation from the sweet grandmother I knew as a boy to the often bitter, confused shell of her former self living with my parents in Dallas, I once asked her about a period when part of our family in Santo Domingo had lived outside the city walls. The anecdote fascinated me, but when I asked her about it, she replied, "Sí, algunos de nuestros antepasados vivían fuera de la capital, y normalmente no había problema, pero cuando venía la guerra, querían entrar en la ciudad para protegerse pero no podían... [Yes, some of our ancestors lived outside of the capital, and normally there was no problem, but when the war came, they wanted to enter the city to protect themselves, but they couldn't...]." When I insisted, she couldn't explain why our family had lived outside Santo Domingo's walls or which wars she spoke of. I imagine some combination of class, ethnicity, race, or religion must have played a part in their exclusion, but beyond that suspicion I can't be certain. Was that branch of my family poor? Were they of Jewish, Arab, Roma, or African descent? Why were they left outside the city's walls? The wars she spoke of might have been the Haitian occupations of the Spanish-speaking portion of Hispaniola or the war that eventually gave the DR its independence from Haiti, but again I cannot be sure. In any case, this branch of our family living outside Santo Domingo's walls eventually married into the affluent, established family that owned property close to the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo downtown, overcoming through matrimony whatever barrier had previously made them quite literally outsiders, a story not altogether unlike that of my Dominican grandmother marrying my American grandfather and moving from Santo Domingo to Baltimore and eventually to Tampa.

Grandma Leda disappeared long before her body ever let her go. While at first

Alzheimer's slowly chipped away at her memory, it quickly robbed her of her personality, most notably her kindness, optimism, and sense of humor that had survived innumerable hardships—the cruelties of migration, the struggles of a single, working-class mom, and the responsibilities of caring for her mentally ill husband and then her mentally ill son. After she began having difficulties recognizing us and finding her words in English or in Spanish, I found it so heartbreaking to visit her that I stopped going altogether. I'm still not even sure how I feel about that decision. Perhaps just numb. Eventually Grandma Leda who fed her community's children in order to feed her own passed away as her body forgot to swallow and eventually to breathe. My Grandma Leda's losses, even before her illness and death, inspired the turn towards the Dominican Republic, and by extension Haiti, in my work. Now that she's gone, my desire to linger in her lost memories, to recuperate elements of her past grows even stronger. Grandma Leda's legacy for me may not have been a strong sense Dominican identity; I can only hope I've inherited some of her tenacity, bravery, and resilience.

I remember meeting my brother-in-law Michael Brandon Jurado on my return from studying abroad. He and my sister had begun dating while I was gone for the academic year. Things had quickly become serious between them. I have to admit driving to his house to meet him late at night on the gigantic, dark Texas highway, that I was skeptical. First, even though I'm the baby of my family, I'm still a protective brother, and my sister Aimee and I grew up only a year apart in school. She's my oldest, best friend. Second, he was a veteran who'd fought in Desert Storm, and at the time my authority issues and prejudices made me fear he'd be a hard-nosed authoritarian, a muscle-bound jock, a bully, or worse. And third, he lived in a suburb about an hour north of Dallas in what I considered at the time the middle of nowhere, the teetering edge of civilization, where you might just fall off into Oklahoma.

Meeting Michael not only allayed my fears, it exposed my prejudices. He was kind, funny, gentle, smart, and obviously crazy for my sister; most importantly he and my sister were so happy together. Michael was from El Paso, though he also had family in Juarez. He'd worked with communications and technology in the Army, been based in Germany for several years, and been deployed to Iraq during the first Gulf War. At the end of his service, he had bought the house where I went to meet him and in which my sister, niece, and nephew still live in Plano. He had rented rooms to his brother and a variety of their friends as they were discharged from the armed services; they all leveraged their advanced training from the military to get work in the tech boom of the late 1990s as cellular communications and the internet began to transform our world. By the time I was coming to meet him, Michael's brother had passed away in a car accident, and his friends had moved on to their own homes elsewhere. My sister had begun bringing her things over to decorate the place, but it still had that distinct bachelor pad feel that would fade over the years as Michael and Aimee got married and had kids.

That first time I met Michael was the summer before my senior year of college. Nine months later, he helped me move out of my Austin rental house the day after my college graduation, and welcomed me to live in his home for the summer as I prepared to teach English in France the next year. I ended up teaching in France two years, returning to UT Austin for another, and finally heading off to graduate school at UNC-Chapel Hill, staying with Michael and Aimee in what became their home together between each of these transitions, four summers in total. Michael quickly became the closest thing to a brother I've known. He got me work in the summers; taught me how to build and repair computers; install, run, and repair home audio, visual, and security systems; and made me watch hours of sports with him. I enjoyed his company, so most of the time I didn't even mind the sports, except baseball. I could never for the

life of me pretend to enjoy baseball on television—just another way I am a bad Cuban Dominican American I guess.

Years later, after Michael and Aimee had been married almost a decade, after the birth of their beautiful children, I learned Michael had been arrested for possession of a controlled substance as he and his family were leaving Dallas for vacation. Like the rest of my family, first and foremost Aimee, I was shocked. I knew he had a problematic relationship with alcohol and had stopped drinking for periods of time but had never given it up for good. I knew he carried a lot inside of him from his youth in El Paso, his time in the Army, and his deployment to Iraq. He'd shared some of his experiences with me, and I knew there was more he'd never shared; he had told me as much. I never realized though that Michael was taking controlled substances, much less that he used them enough to be arrested in such circumstances. As my sister Aimee began to piece together the extent of his addiction, she decided to organize an intervention to try to get him help. I wrote a letter from North Carolina like many others who couldn't be there. The rest of the family met with him and a counselor to ask that he enter rehabilitation because we loved him and were scared for his safety. He agreed, not immediately, but eventually to seek help. It wasn't easy but his wife and children, his immediate family, and his in-laws all supported Michael because we loved him.

Michael had finished rehab and was living in a halfway house in the Texas hill country outside of San Antonio the last time I saw him. He had told Aimee he wanted to help others overcome addiction, and they were preparing to restart their life together as a family in Central Texas where Michael felt he could get a clean break and a fresh start. Our family organized a vacation close to where he was living so we could all catch up and could show him our support. I didn't get to talk to Michael much while we were there. Aimee and his kids soaked up all his

attention, which was only right since they were living several hours apart and clearly all missed one another. A little over a month later, my mother called me in the late morning to tell me Michael had died. He'd relapsed, overdosed, and passed in his sleep. My sister and her two best friends drove to the hill country to recover his things and make arrangements for his remains. School was starting, but I flew to Dallas; there was a lot to do, and my sister needed me. Suffice it to say, it was a difficult week. It's awful how we treat people who've lost loved ones—all the legal hoops to jump through, the logistical obstacles to overcome, and the exorbitant costs involved. But thankfully several people did show us kindness and compassion at key moments. Aimee has written eloquently about her experiences dealing with Michael's death, and I hope someday a larger audience will be able to read her funny and infuriating account of how the wife of a veteran finally gave her dead husband a decent farewell despite terrible circumstances.

These, the stories of my dead, are fundamental to my dissertation; they animate and underwrite my research. They are in many ways typical Latina/o experiences. The lives of my dead connect the US to the Americas and beyond through migrations from Cuba and from the DR to Tampa, and from Juarez to El Paso to Germany to Iraq and back. Their struggles speak to the challenges Latina/os face often in disproportionate numbers. Mourning, celebrating, and reflecting on the lives of my grandparents and brother-in-law while writing my dissertation helped me sketch cognitive maps and affective networks that connect Caribbean Latina/o experiences and Chicana/o experiences, the DR-Haiti and the US-Mexico borders. My family lives these connections not as theory but as quotidian reality, in ways often banal but at times also illuminating. Yet my family's stories are also common, and in their commonality, universal. All human beings sooner or later face hardship, illness, loss, and mortality, though some more than others. I never dealt with the death of a family member until these four—Abuela, Abuelo,

Grandma Leda, and Michael—all died in a little over a year. Michael, Grandma Leda, and Abuelo died in three months, one each month, one month, one life, one after another. My family went from one funeral to the next. The devastating experience made me reevaluate everything. I suspect it deepened my empathy for others, for which I hope I am a better person and in a way am almost grateful, but sometimes I still can't help but feel like a part of me died with them.

In the wake of these losses, my family leaned on one another. Thankfully my mom and dad provided us a solid foundation. They have always given my sisters and me the stability, safety, and opportunities I can only imagine they lacked in their own youth. Thank you Mom and Dad for your support, your love, and your sacrifice. I love you both so dearly and appreciate everything you have done for me. Since my earliest childhood memories, my three sisters trained me, whether I liked it or not, to be a feminist, and I would not have it any other way. My sisters are like the stars, they orient my world and give it sense: Cheryl, the eternally curious, always fashionable oldest sister who I always imagine as Molly Ringwald in some John Hughes version of our life, Julie the star athlete turned star physical therapist turned star wife and mother whose determination and accomplishments humble me, and Aimee, the deadly curl, little miss sunshine, the most charming and sneakiest of us all who knows me and makes me laugh like no other on earth. Thank you big sisters. I love you so much!

Old friends from former lives have stuck with me across oceans and continents, through thick and thin: Taylor and David, Aymeric, and DKD. Thank you. Living far from my biological family in Texas, I developed a surrogate one here in Chapel Hill that disperses farther and wider as graduate school ends and new stages in all of our lives begin. Thank you Marta, Elise, Pablo, Erin, Zack, Helen, Anna, Kate, George, and Bobby for every conversation, for every meal, and

for every laugh. Spread your love all the places you go. And Meagan, my Meagan who has saved me over and over again with your smile, your laughter, and your love, thank you for believing in me; I believe in you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	xxvi
INTRODUCTION	1
Endnotes.....	24
CHAPTER 1: BORDER CROSSINGS: THINKING HAITIAN AND LATINA/O STUDIES TOGETHER	28
Introduction.....	29
Part 1: Un-silencing the Past.....	37
Success? The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804)	39
The Past’s Silences	44
The Failure of Enlightenment: <i>The Black Jacobins</i> and <i>Silencing The Past</i>	50
Back to the Future: Recuperating the Haitian Revolution, Revising Western Thought.....	58
Part 2: Knowledge from the (Caribbean) Borderlands	60
The Personal and Imaginative in Haitian Studies.....	61
“The Decolonial Imaginary”	67
Decolonial Imaginaries	70
Endnotes.....	80
CHAPTER 2: DAYS OF FUTURES PAST: FRACTAL FRONTIERS OF POST-APOCALYPTIC HISPANIOLAN SPACE-TIME	85
Introduction.....	87
Forgetting and Remembering the Silences of the Hispaniolan Borderlands	90

Journeys Across Post-Apocalyptic Hispaniolan Space Time	99
Social/Unnatural Disasters.....	101
“Hispaniola Conspiracy”: Un-silencing the Parsley Massacre.....	105
Anti-Haitianism in US Scholarship on the Dominican Republic	115
The Post-Apocalyptic Present in <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i>	120
Un-silencing Hispaniola’s Past in Search of Decolonial Love.....	135
Endnotes.....	137
CHAPTER 3: LEGACIES OF THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION IN THE CARIBBEAN BORDERLANDS.....	142
Part 1: Cuba.....	142
Cuba and Haiti: Common Memories of Underdevelopment	144
Counterfeits and Counterrevolutionaries in Achy Obejas’s <i>Ruins</i>	156
Part 2: Puerto Rico	167
Pan-American Puerto Rican Border Crossings.....	170
“Encancaranublado” by Ana Lydia Vega.....	174
Part 3: The Dominican Republic.....	185
“Many of us have Haiti in our blood”	187
Decolonial Love in “Da Pa’ Lo Do” by Rita Indiana y Los Misterios.....	190
Endnotes.....	193
CODA	196
At the Crossroads: Memorials, Memories, and Loss.....	197

“This Future Sucks”	205
McCorkle Place, Crossroads of the Americas	210
McCorkle Place’s Deafening Silence	213
The Real “Silent Sam”	214
Unsung Founders	221
Hurston Hall.....	226
Imagined Crossroads of the Caribbean Borderlands	229
Under Erzulie, <i>Sounds of the South</i>	240
Endnotes.....	246
REFERENCES	248

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure I.1 – Six iterations of the Cantor ternary set.....	16
Figure 2.1 – <i>Planet of the Apes</i> Lunchbox.....	130
Figure 3.1 – Sign at Central Playa Grande.	169
Figure 4.1 – This Future Sucks.	205
Figure 4.2 – This Future Sucks, Painted Over.....	210
Figure 4.3 – Northwest Entrance.....	214
Figure 4.4 – Campus Map.....	215
Figure 4.5 – Confederate Monument.....	216
Figure 4.6 – Unsung Founders Memorial.....	224
Figure 4.7 – Hurston Hall.....	227
Figure 4.8 – <i>Sinter Method: Dive and Reappear no.1.</i> by Mario Marzan.....	233
Figure 4.9 – <i>A Handle on the Past</i> by Izel Vargas.....	236
Figure 4.10 – Sacred Heart of Jesus Statue.....	238

INTRODUCTION

Two borders run through *Decolonizing the Caribbean Borderlands* like twin wounds: the US-Mexican border and the Dominican-Haitian border. Both cleave and both bind. The former dis/connects the United States and las Américas, the latter the Hispanophone Caribbean and Haiti. The US-Mexico border delineates the edge of US empire, marking the hinterlands to the south from which the metropole draws cheap labor; the Haitian-Dominican frontier, like a fractal, recreates the same dynamic, only on its own scale, in its own specificity, further down the chain of a global economic hierarchy but built on the same inequalities inherent in capitalism. At the US-Mexico border and the Dominican-Haitian border—each forged in its own particular history of violence—spaces and temporalities clash as the contentious relations and conflicting narratives of the neighboring nations meet.

Yet despite violent histories and ongoing conflicts, despite all that divides humanity at its frontiers, these borders are also places of knowledge, places of creation. At the end of the twentieth century border thinking that queer Chicana poet, theorist, and activist Gloria Anzaldúa and others generated from the US-Mexico border revolutionized the humanities and social sciences worldwide.¹ Today writers, artists, and intellectuals find similarly treacherous but nevertheless fecund ground along the Haitian-Dominican border. The US-Mexico and Dominican-Haitian borders echo one another and evoke still other borders, borders beyond borders, or mountains beyond mountains as the Haitian proverb goes. In these echoes and evocations, in the people who carry these borders with them, the frontiers between Mexico and

the US, between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, refract and tessellate across time and space, repeat and replicate with difference across the Caribbean, the Americas, and the world.

Like the borderlands long overlooked that now reveal so much, the echoes of the long-silenced Haitian Revolution resound deafeningly to power these pages. Haiti's revolutionaries dynamited the early Atlantic world laying bare the injustices that underpinned the economies, cultures, and societies that emerged from unprecedented European expansion into Africa, the Americas, and Asia. Silenced, ignored, disavowed, denigrated, Haiti's revolutionary legacies return today as scholars across numerous fields in the humanities un-silence the Haitian Revolution and demonstrate that the events that occurred in Saint-Domingue between 1791-1804 shape our contemporary world in fundamental ways previously ignored and actively obfuscated. Re-inscribing Haiti into history, philosophy, political science, and literary and cultural studies radically alters understandings of the early Atlantic world, of the age of revolutions, and of the origins of some of the most fundamental ideas and ideals of contemporary globalized society such as freedom, equality, and human rights.²

Few scholars in Latina/o Studies, however, have sought to unpack the importance of Haiti and the Haitian Revolution in contemporary Latina/o cultural production, a surprising fact considering that Dominican and Haitian communities in the US have rapidly increased in the last three decades and continue to grow, that these demographic trends are transforming relations between Haitians, Dominicans, and other Latina/os in diaspora and on the islands, and that individuals from Dominican and Haitian diasporic communities in the US, notably Julia Alvarez, Edwidge Danticat, and Junot Diaz, have emerged as cultural, intellectual, and political leaders on both national and international stages.

This dissertation aims to fill this gap in Latina/o Studies, to catalyze conversations about the importance of Haiti and the Haitian Revolution in Caribbean Latina/o production, and to explore how re-inscribing Haiti and its revolutionary legacies into Latina/o Studies transforms the kinds of knowledge Latina/o Studies produces, expands the cultural, geographical, and thematic borders of Latina/o Studies, and advances the critical and theoretical power of what many consider to be Latina/o Studies' most important theoretical contribution to date: border thinking. My research thus provides a new paradigm for thinking Haitian and Latina/o Studies together, one that leverages decolonial epistemologies forged on the US-Mexico border to un-silence the Haitian Revolution in the Latina/o Caribbean today. In doing so *Decolonizing the Caribbean Borderlands* bridges borders, unsettles entrenched nationalisms, and radically reorients the cognitive, affective, and disciplinary maps and timelines of hemispheric studies of the Americas.

As Dominican novelist Junot Díaz describes it, Christopher Columbus hit Santo Domingo, "Ground Zero of the New World," like the atomic bomb unleashing in the genocide of the Americas' indigenous peoples and the enslavement of millions of Africans "*Fukú Americanus*," a curse that like fallout permeates and poisons the New World in silence. Perhaps no nation has suffered worse under this silence than the Dominican Republic's island neighbor Haiti.³ Thus while the Haitian Revolution structures this project's basic premises and poses some of its most fundamental questions, Haiti and its history often only have a spectral presence in the Latina/o cultural production analyzed in the pages that follow.

This spectral presence may be imagined like an explosion in the atmosphere that never touches ground zero but whose blast nevertheless leaves a pattern in the aftermath, or like a black hole never directly observable that nevertheless shapes an entire galaxy. The Haitian

Revolution and its fallout warp the spaces and temporalities in which Caribbean Latina/o artists, writers, and intellectuals create culture today. The art, music, and literatures of the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and their diasporas discussed in the following chapters often only ever make brief, illusory allusions to Haiti and its revolutionary legacies. Haiti, Haitians, and Haitian history often appear only fleetingly, in coded descriptions of settings or in off-handed comments by a secondary character. Yet when all these clues are gathered, tagged, and sorted, patterns emerge that indicate that the failure to understand and to come to terms with Haiti's history has distorted the Caribbean, the Americas, and the world in the service of US and European-centered hegemonic hierarchies underwritten by white supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity.

Similar to related silences that obfuscate race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and (dis)ability, the silencing of Haiti forms a fundamental layer in the palimpsest of erasures that is world history since the global colonial encounter in the Americas at the turn of the sixteenth century. Haiti's spectral presence in the culture of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean today despite Haiti's geographical proximity to the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Puerto Rico is itself part of this pattern, part of this distortion, the direct result of the effective campaign since the turn of the nineteenth century to silence Haiti in the wake of the Haitian Revolution in order to repress the spread of slave revolts across the Americas and to expand slavery and the status quo of an Atlantic economy addicted to the stolen labor of enslaved human beings.⁴

The Hispaniolan frontier—the longest in the Caribbean and the only terrestrial border between Haiti and the Hispanophone Caribbean—binds Haiti and the DR through intimately intertwined cultures, shared traumatic histories, and evolving relations in diaspora and on the island. As Gloria Anzaldúa gave voice to the US-Mexico borderlands at the close of the

twentieth century, Dominican artists un-silence the Haitian-Dominican border today at the beginning of the twenty-first. The chapters of this dissertation therefore emanate from Hispaniola and from the Haitian-Dominican borderlands spreading concentrically from the DR, to Cuba, and finally to Puerto Rico. Though the DR and Haiti offer the most direct connection between Haiti and the Hispanophone Caribbean, and therefore between Haitian and Latina/o Studies, the borders connecting Haiti and the Hispanophone Caribbean are like Russian dolls: borders upon borders upon borders... On one level there are the borders connecting Haiti to the DR, to Cuba, and to Puerto Rico; on another there are the borders connecting Haiti's diaspora to the diasporas of the DR, of Cuba, and of Puerto Rico; finally there are the borders within these layered borders—class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and disability, to name but a few.

My dissertation argues that this complex, chaotic, amorphous morass of borders upon borders upon borders connecting Haiti, the Hispanophone Caribbean, and their diasporas is fractal in nature, and that these layers of borders are self-similar, each unique on its own particular scale, but nevertheless fundamentally similar both to one another and to the overall structure they form together.⁵ The German Romance Languages and Comparative Literature scholar Ottmar Ette argues eloquently that the paradox of the length of an island's coastline—finite and well-defined at first glance yet indeterminate and infinitely long when closely studied—used by Polish mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot to illustrate the power of his discovery, the fractal, mirrors the paradox of the Caribbean island as a relatively small, singular, contained space that nevertheless fragments and splinters off into infinity through its many outbound connections and internal divisions.⁶ This fractal model provides this dissertation the means to connect the layered borders between Haiti, the DR, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and their

diasporas without losing sight of the intricate historical, cultural, political, and economic complexities of each.

If at the heart of a fractal a simple, repetitive process creates the self-similarity observed both in the overall structure and at any scale of that structure, then coloniality defines the self-similarity of these fractal borders, these repeating frontiers tessellating across the Caribbean and its diasporas. In their article “Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world-system,” social scientists Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein coined the term coloniality to describe the hierarchical power relations established between metropolises and colonies at the turn of the sixteenth century. Quijano and Wallerstein argue that ethnicity and race originate in the hierarchical power structures of coloniality, and that far from undoing these hierarchies or righting the wrongs of the colonial encounter, the nationalist revolutions of independence in the Americas beginning at the turn of the nineteenth century only “became ever more clearly the movements of the White settler population, frightened by the spectres of Black ex-slave republics as in Haiti or rural Native American claims to upsetting the ethnic hierarchy, as in the Túpac Amaru rebellion.”⁷ For Quijano and Wallerstein, the silencing of Haiti then constitutes one of the major foundational events of coloniality.

Yet not all scholars understand coloniality simply as the repressive, hierarchical power structure of the world system. Colombian-American anthropologist Arturo Escobar offers a complementary definition to Quijano and Wallerstein’s describing coloniality as:

...those subaltern knowledges and cultural practices world-wide that modernity itself shunned, suppressed made invisible and disqualified. Understood as “coloniality,” this other side has existed side by side with modernity since the conquest of America; it is this same coloniality of being, knowledge and power that today’s US-led empire attempts to silence and contain; the same coloniality that asserts itself at the borders of the modern/colonial world system...⁸

While Quijano and Wallerstein imagine coloniality from the top down, Escobar imagines coloniality from the bottom up as resistant cultures, practices, and epistemologies of the silenced. I understand coloniality as the tension and interplay between these two definitions. Alive to this tension and interplay between the repressive and liberatory possibilities of coloniality, each chapter un-silences one set of layered borders in the complex fractal of borders connecting Haiti, the DR, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the US. Taken together as a whole, the chapters form a hemispheric decolonial project that un-silences the Haitian Revolution in the Hispanophone Caribbean and its US diasporas.

Multilayered, interconnected fractal frontiers of the Caribbean borderlands converge on Hispaniola as a crossroads of coloniality in the Antilles and the Americas. Hewing closely to Anzaldúa's conceptualization of the border as open wound or as "thin edge of barbwire," these borders ever-present in contemporary Dominican cultural production evoke violent histories of Hispaniola that Dominicans and Haitians share in common.⁹ While national frontiers separate and link the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and their diasporas, categories such as class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and ability operate as borders within borders connecting and disconnecting, depending on how they are conceived, individuals and communities within and across nations and diasporas. Through the lens of decolonial thinking, the multilayered, fractal frontiers of Hispaniola become a complex, rich borderlands, an interstitial space where boundaries blur and the common histories and cultures that Dominicans and Haitians share emerge. According to the logic of coloniality, however, nation, class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and ability divide and hierarchize humanity, marginalizing and minoritizing people along multiple axes simultaneously, creating groups of human beings with diminished rights, representation, and life chances, what Gloria Anzaldúa describes as "el mundo zurdo," the left-

handed world, or what Franz Fanon describes as “les damnés de la terre,” the wretched of the earth.¹⁰

These hierarchized stratifications of Hispaniola and its diasporas today are the byproducts of the colonial encounter of the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia that began at the turn of the sixteenth century. As Latina/o Studies scholar María DeGuzmán puts it:

The social structures and identity formations of the Caribbean islands have been shaped not only by colonialism but also by coloniality. Following the work of Peruvian historical social scientist Aníbal Quijano, coloniality is what continues to structure epistemology and ontology in the wake of colonialism, even after colonialism may be said to be officially over, as in post-independence societies. According to Quijano, the social orders of the Americas are not only marked but thoroughly structured by coloniality—ethno-racial distinctions and hierarchies being one of its characteristic features.¹¹

While recognizing the specificity and variations between different regions of the Caribbean, DeGuzmán describes common qualities the islands share as “crucibles of coloniality,” as “places of oppressive typecasting, branding, violent plantation-system punishment of any difference perceived to challenge a racialized, patriarchal class-stratification” (70). Yet for DeGuzmán the islands are also spaces of decolonial defiance, defiance “that resists, disorders, and re-configures the slavery-and-indentured-servant-based status quo of the colonial order” (70). DeGuzmán thus describes how coloniality and decolonial resistance—legacies of the region’s colonial history—coexist in the Caribbean in conflicts that repeat with difference across the islands of the Antilles like microcosmic iterations of the macrocosm, fractal recurrences of a larger pattern, or “crucibles within the larger crucible of the Americas” (70).

World-systems theory understands coloniality and decolonial resistance to be the result of colonial expansion of European hegemony into Africa, the Americas, and Asia and thus global phenomena that hierarchically structure international politics, economics, and cultures not only in the Caribbean and the Americas, but in the Global North and the Global South more widely.

Unsurprisingly world-systems theorists conceive border thinking to be a global phenomenon as well. In *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (2000), for example, Walter Mignolo briefly compares W.E.B. Du Bois's "double consciousness," Richard Wright's "double vision," Gloria Anzaldúa's "new mestiza consciousness," Héctor Calderón's and José David Saldívar's "borderlands of theory," and Subcomandante Marcos's "double translation," all as examples of border thinking.¹² From these concepts, Mignolo identifies "the key configuration of border thinking: *thinking from dichotomous concepts rather than ordering the world in dichotomies*" (85, Mignolo's emphasis). Though Mignolo here specifically writes of dichotomies, based on the analysis of Dominican cultural production in the pages that follow, I would add that border thinking offers possibilities of thinking simultaneously from multiple and not only binary concepts. In any case, Mignolo understands border thinking to be an important tool of decolonial resistance to coloniality's globally pervasive yet locally instantiated ethno-racial, patriarchal, and heteronormative socioeconomic hierarchies that DeGuzmán describes in the Caribbean.

While Mignolo connects diverse sources of border thinking from Third World feminism of queer Chicana intellectuals such as Anzaldúa and Moraga to African American, Latin American, and other Latina/o cultural production, drawing important parallels between different "borders (interiors and exteriors) of the modern/colonial world system," Mignolo's global vision of border thinking draws criticism from some Latina/o Studies scholars. Frances Negrón-Muntaner finds the erasure of gender in Mignolo's treatment of Anzaldúa problematic.¹³ Moreover Mignolo's de-emphasis of Anzaldúa's contributions to border thinking—he mentions her work only a handful of times in *Local Histories/Global Designs*—suggests his estimation of the importance of Anzaldúa's contributions to border thinking to be at odds with that of scholars

of Latina/o Studies. In the interview titled “Latino Cultural Studies” included in Juan Poblete’s collection *Critical Latin American and Latino Studies* (2003), Frances R. Aparicio, for example, describes the articulation of the border subject by Anzaldúa as Latina/o Studies most important contribution to academe to date.¹⁴ While agreeing with Aparicio’s assertion of the importance of Anzaldúa’s border subject, Antonio Viego raises questions about appropriations of Chicana/o theory by Latina/o Studies and other disciplines even further afield citing articles by Yvonne Yarbrow-Bejerano and Marcus Embry that underline the danger of abstracting the site-specific, embodied experiences embedded in Anzaldúa’s theory in exporting her ideas to different contexts.¹⁵

Despite the dangers of appropriation and abstraction, strong precedents of border thinking in Dominican intellectual history as well as the creative potential of border thinking in the contemporary Dominican context makes “smuggling Anzaldúa’s work into the Caribbean hinterland” well worth running these risks.¹⁶ Major historical figures of Dominican letters have already imagined the DR, Hispaniola, and the Caribbean as frontier borderlands in ways consonant with Anzaldúa’s border thinking. In *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro: El Caribe, frontera imperial* (1981), the writer and first democratically elected president of the Dominican Republic Juan Bosch describes the Caribbean as an imperial frontier writing that

El Caribe está entre los lugares de la tierra que han sido destinados por su posición geográfica y su naturaleza privilegiada para ser fronteras de dos o más imperios. Ese destino lo ha hecho objeto de la codicia de los poderes más grandes de Occidente y teatro de la violencia desatada entre ellos.

The Caribbean is amongst the places on earth that have been destined because of their geographical position and their natural resources to be frontiers of two or more empires. This destiny has made it the object of the greed of the greatest powers of the Occident and the theater of violence unleashed between them.¹⁷

Bosch describes the Caribbean's islands as a maritime border between the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean Sea and as a land bridge connecting North and South America and characterizes Dominican qua Caribbean history as five tragic centuries of imperial rule from the landing of Christopher Columbus on Hispaniola in 1493 to the US Marine's 1965 occupation of the Dominican Republic after Bosch's removal from the Dominican presidency in a 1963 military coup d'état (19-20). In a description evocative of coloniality, Bosch explains that the long history of imperial dominance of the Caribbean borderlands has converted the region into an "amasijo de razas," a mixture of races brought to the islands as indentured servants and as slaves from Europe, the Yucatan, Africa, and Asia, and argues that the questionable, repressive measures put into place to dominate these subordinated classes has rendered the Caribbean a place of perpetual revolt, instability, and underdevelopment (11).

The Dominican poet and intellectual Pedro Mir also writes extensively about the history of Hispaniola as frontier. One of his longest historical studies, *Tres leyendas de colores: Ensayo de interpretación de las tres primeras revoluciones del Nuevo Mundo* (1969) investigates three revolts that took place at the turn of sixteenth century on Hispaniola, arguing that the rebellion of Spanish colonists led by colonial administrator Francisco Roldán in 1497, the indigenous revolt led by the Taíno cacique Enriquillo between 1519-1533, and the revolt of enslaved Wolof warriors from Senegal in 1522 constitute three foundational historical events that established the administrative structures and legal system that underwrote the socioeconomic and cultural inequalities at the heart of the diverse ethno-racial roots of the Caribbean and Latin America. Possible confusions with the black legend of Spanish colonization in the Americas notwithstanding, Mir describes these three revolts as white, Indian, and black legends that together form "...la gran leyenda latinoamericana, gran síntesis final del infinito amasijo de

complejos económicos, psicológicos, y sociales de toda laya, que decora la entrada de estos países situados al sur del Río Grande [the great Latin American legend, the great and final synthesis of the infinite mixture of economic, psychological, and social systems of all kinds, that adorn the emergence of the nations situated south of the Rio Grande].”¹⁸ While Mir is well aware of the “engaño” of myths, the deception at the heart of all legends, he nevertheless concludes the book arguing that facing the belligerent power of the US, the “Coloso del Norte,” the peoples of the Caribbean and Latin America will by necessity be forced to make the myth of Latin American unity through ethno-racial diversity a reality (285-286).¹⁹

Addressing what scholars today call coloniality through the lens of pan-Caribbean and pan-Latin American rhetorics, Bosch and Mir imagine Hispaniola as a geographical, historical, economic, political, cultural, and ethno-racial crossroads of the Caribbean borderlands. While Bosch’s *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro* focuses on the Caribbean as frontier and Mir’s *Tres leyendas* explores Hispaniola’s history as a source of pan-Latin American solidarity, both provide clear historical precedents of border thinking in Dominican cultural production. Yet these works can only help advance a theorization of the Hispaniolan borderlands in contemporary Dominican culture so far because although both Bosch and Mir lived many years in diaspora as political exiles in Cuba, these particular works predate the development of diaspora as critical framework in the cultural production of the Caribbean as well as the rapid population growth of the Dominican and Haitian diasporas in the US since the 1990s. In these texts neither Bosch nor Mir imagine a future such as the present today in which Hispaniola’s borderlands extend so clearly both across the Dominican-Haitian border as well as from the island to the US and back.²⁰ Diaspora as concept and phenomenon is at the heart of articulations of the Hispaniolan borderlands in contemporary Dominican cultural production addressed in this

chapter. Understanding the Hispaniolan borderlands today therefore requires *un vaivén*, a back and forth or a give and take, between frameworks of borders and of diasporas, a bidirectional dynamic that potentially reconfigures the US-Mexico borderlands as diasporic and the Caribbean and its diasporas as borderlands.

Chicana historian Emma Pérez's chapter on Tejana women in *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (1999) explores precisely this transformative bidirectional dynamic between borderlands and diaspora by imagining the US-Mexico borderlands of Houston, Texas as a diasporic space in order to "elicit different questions concerning the identities of these" Tejanas.²¹ Pérez fuses the analytical frameworks of the border, immigration, and diaspora because "borders themselves move with populations on the go, taking with them cultural expressions thought to exist only on a distinct geographic border" (77). For Pérez, this combination of frameworks better addresses issues of assimilation, race, and gender because the term "immigrant" in the US historically has described "white, assimilable ethnicities" primarily of European descent, while diaspora "implement[s] a subjectivity sensitive to gender and race" (78). Continuing, Pérez writes that

A diasporic subjectivity may differ from "immigrant" in a number of ways. For one, race may not be so easily erased from diaspora. Diasporic subjectivity would not deny the culture of race, but instead would open a space where people of color—in this case, Chicanos/as—could negotiate a raced culture within many kinds of identities without racial erasure through assimilation, accommodation, adaptation, acculturation, or even resistance—all of which have been robbed of their decolonial oppositional subjectivity under the rubric of immigrant. (78)

While granting a rich range of possibilities, Pérez argues that diasporic subjectivities provide a decolonial alternative to assimilation. By retaining transnational connections and negotiating the racialized and racializing aspects of different cultures, diasporic subjectivities become pivotal to

Pérez's project as the "decolonial imaginary would call upon complex diasporic subjectivities that live the many differences," of nation, race, gender, space, and time simultaneously (78).

For Pérez, diaspora as a conceptual framework marks important shifts in understandings of identification and migration in the US-Mexico borderlands. Diaspora shifts models of identification from the singular and the national to the multiple and the transnational, complicating understandings of gender and race as diasporic subjects negotiate their embodied experiences of these socially constructed categories across two or more national cultures. Diaspora also shifts understandings of migration from a model of immigration as assimilation into hierarchies underwritten by coloniality to a model of diasporic subjectivity connected to complex transnational and transcultural networks. Pérez thus imagines non-linear spatial and temporal diasporic links connecting Tejanas both to Atzlán—the legendary ancestral home of the Aztec peoples—and to "a mythic past [that] entwines with a future where a decolonized imaginary has possibilities" (78). Shaped by forgetting as much as by memory, by myth as much as by "history always already encoding the present," diaspora for Pérez provides a socially constructed and constituted decolonial framework for the complex identifications and embodied experiences of Tejana women living in the US-Mexico borderlands (79). These manifold, non-linear connections across nation, race, gender, space, and time that Pérez describes in her diasporic reconfiguration of the US-Mexico borderlands parallel those of the Hispaniolan borderlands. The diasporic subjectivities in contemporary Dominican cultural production analyzed in this chapter also negotiate conflicting identifications of class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and ability across multiple national contexts.

Throughout this dissertation I conceptualize these complex negotiations of diasporic borderland subjectivities in contemporary Caribbean cultural production as fractals, a term

coined in 1975 by Mandelbrot, who identified and explained a number of mathematical sets and naturally occurring patterns that had been observed for centuries as one common phenomenon in *Les objets fractals: forme, hazard, et dimension* (1975), a volume Mandelbrot modified, augmented, translated into English, and republished in the US in 1977 with the help of IBM's Thomas J. Watson Research Center. In the work, Mandelbrot proposes the term fractal to describe naturally occurring "spatial patterns that are either irregular or fragmented to such an extreme degree" that Euclidean geometry does not properly describe them.²²

The turn to the fractal in the Caribbean context clearly evokes the Cuban writer Antonio Benítez-Rojo's celebrated volume *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (1992) in which Benítez-Rojo describes "the Plantation" as a human-made, socioeconomic structure that repeats violently and insidiously with difference across Caribbean space-time like a fractal. Benítez-Rojo writes that

...the Plantation proliferated in the Caribbean basin in a way that presented different features in each island, each stretch of coastline, each colonial bloc. Nevertheless—as Mintz would see—these differences, far from negating the existence of a pan-Caribbean society, make it possible in the way that a system of fractal equations or a galaxy is possible. The different sugar-producing machines, installed here and there through the centuries, can be seen also as a huge machine of machines in a state of continuous technological transformation. Its inexorable territory-claiming nature made it—makes it still—advance in length and depth through the natural lands, demolishing forests, sucking up rivers, displacing other crops, and exterminating the native plants and animals.²³

Benítez-Rojo imagines the Caribbean as a fractal space-time profoundly marked by the repetitious violence of the plantation—large-scale, technologically dependent, extractive agricultural operations powered by slave labor and destroying local flora, fauna, and waterways in order to cultivate agricultural staples for export to international commodity markets—as the decentered, recurring origin of Caribbean-ness across the Antilles.

Though Benítez-Rojo mentions fractals five times in *The Repeating Island*, he never fully or explicitly explains fractals themselves (11, 25, 72, 157, 314). Fractals achieve vertiginous complexity through the iterative repetition of an often simple, core transformation. For example, almost a century before Mandelbrot coined the term fractal, in 1883 the German mathematician Georg Cantor popularized the Cantor Set, a fractal mathematical set often visualized as the Cantor ternary set.



Figure 1.1: Six iterations of the Cantor ternary set

At each iteration of the Cantor ternary set the middle third of the segment is cut out and removed, creating a group of segments that are self-similar—each part of the pattern at different scales resembles the pattern as a whole. The Cantor ternary set, like all fractals, has the potential, at least mathematically, to continue infinitely on both increasingly larger and increasingly smaller scales while remaining infinitely self-similar at every scale and never varying from its core iterative transformation. Since fractals, like the Cantor ternary set, are iterative and self-similar, they are also rhizomatic in structure, having no origin and no center, and yet they can nevertheless be described by concise mathematical equations. Yet fractals are not restricted to abstract mathematical sets and are in fact rather common in nature. The structures of many organs such as lungs and circulatory systems, the topographies of waterways and coastlines, the shapes of hurricanes and galaxies, as well as the growth patterns of most plants and simple shellfish all display fractal qualities.

Fractals also recall the theoretical and aesthetic explorations of the Haitian Spiralists, writers Frankétienne, Jean-Claude Figiolé, and René Philoctète, who, as scholar of Haitian and Francophone literature Kaiama L. Glover describes, “began in 1965 to re-imagine their world—the world—as a spiral.”²⁴ Though never described explicitly in terms of fractals, most likely because these writers’ interest in the spiral predates the coining of the term by Mandelbrot, many of the symbols the Spiralists evoke in their work are in fact fractals that are intimately associated with Haiti’s revolutionary history. Glover writes that the spiral

is present in the bands of the hurricane winds that regularly ravage the island, and it makes up the structure of the conch shell, an object that functions symbolically to recall the rallying cries of Haiti’s revolutionaries. The spiral further signifies within an even more specifically local context: it is the form that decorates the entire length of the *poteau-mitan* (the wooden post that stands at the center of every Haitian vodou temple [*peristyle*] around which all ceremonies revolve) and, as such, is an integral element of Haiti’s most fundamental belief system. (viii)

The Haitian Spiralists understand the spiral to represent “a Haitian geo-cultural space” that troubles “the idea of time’s unfettered linear passage” marking “Haiti’s complicated past as integral to and explicitly implicated in its contemporary circumstances” and capturing the “delicate balance of centripetal and centrifugal forces” that create “tension between the insular and the global in their work” (viii-ix).

Borders and diasporas, the contact zones “between the insular and the global” in the Caribbean that connect the islands of the Antilles to one another as well as to the world beyond can also be conceptualized as fractals. Though often imagined as finite, quantifiable lines, borders are often literally fractals because they commonly follow the irregular curvature of rivers, mountains, coastlines, and other topographical features with fractal structures, which means that the finer the scale used to measure a border and the more the border’s curvature and complexity are taken into account, the longer the measured length of a border becomes. As a

concrete example of the fractal complexity of borders, comparative literature scholar Ottmar Ette cites disagreements between Spain and Portugal as well as Belgium and the Netherlands on the official lengths of the terrestrial borders these neighboring nations share.²⁵

Though less concretely linked to fractal phenomena, Paul Gilroy nevertheless describes various aspects of the African diaspora as fractal in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*.²⁶ While Gilroy, similarly to Antonio Benítez-Rojo, never clarifies his fractal conceptualization of diaspora explicitly, he does provide a footnote explaining that “fractal geometry” reimagines the relationship “between totality and infinity” in a manner analogous to the endless possibilities of agency in the African diaspora despite “restricted conditions.”²⁷ I understand this cryptic note to suggest that despite both inherent and imposed limitations of human possibility and the finite number of cultures, individuals, and sites connected in the black Atlantic, the fractal complexity of the African diaspora allows for seemingly infinite iterations of diasporic subjectivities and cultures that appear chaotic but nevertheless form part of a cohesive pattern of repeating, self-similar structures.

Finally, time in the Caribbean and the Americas more broadly can be understood as fractal. Whether one looks to the arrival of Spanish explorers that set off the massacre of the Americas’ indigenous peoples and in turn condemned millions of enslaved Africans to the Middle Passage, or to France’s aggressive development of plantation economies in western Hispaniola, which led to uncontrollably large populations of enslaved Africans in Saint-Domingue and thus set the stage for the utter decimation of thirteen years of total war during the Haitian Revolution, or finally to the misallocation of US federal funds in Louisiana that produced an insufficient system of levees in New Orleans that failed, flooding the city during Hurricane Katrina, the history of the Caribbean and of the Americas more broadly can be

understood as series of distinct yet interrelated and similarly structured catastrophes of coloniality that traumatically rupture space-time separating the world before and the world after as they repeat with difference across space and time. Because not all peoples of the Caribbean borderlands live these series of catastrophes and their aftermaths in the same way, these fractal, post-apocalyptic space-times present yet another layer of borders in contemporary Caribbean cultural production.

I understand these post-apocalyptic, fractal ruptures of Caribbean space-time to be analogous to concepts from Afrofuturism and Chicanafuturism developed in science fiction and Latina/o studies. In 1993, cultural critic and author Mark Dery coined the term Afrofuturism to describe cultural production of the African diaspora associated with science fiction that imagines the present as always already post-apocalyptic since, “African Americans, in a very real sense, are the descendants of alien abductees; they inhabit a sci-fi nightmare in which unseen but no less impassable force fields of intolerance frustrate their movements; official histories undo what has been done; and technology is too often brought to bear on black bodies.”²⁸ Science fiction scholar Mark Bould expands Dery’s formulation of the post-apocalyptic present of Afrofuturism in the introduction to the special edition of the journal *Science Fiction Studies* dedicated to Afrofuturism, arguing that before Dery ever coined the term Afrofuturism, critic Mark Sinker already

was outlining a specifically black sf in the pages of *The Wire* the year before. To many readers of *SFS*, Sinker’s pantheon of black sf—which included Samuel Delany and Octavia Butler, as well as Sun Ra, Public Enemy, John Coltrane, Anthony Braxton, Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter, Jimi Hendrix, Afrika Bambaataa, Ishmael Reed, and Earth Wind and Fire—might not sound much like the sf we know. But sf is “a point of cultural departure” for all of these writers and musicians, because “it allows for a series of worst-case futures—of hells-on-Earth and being in them—which are woven into every kind of everyday present reality” (“Loving the Alien”). The “central fact” of the black sf they produce “is an

acknowledgement that Apocalypse already happened," that, in Public Enemy's words, "Armageddon been in effect."²⁹

In 2004, Latina/o Studies scholar Catherine S. Ramírez borrowed the name and key tenets of Afrofuturism to coin the term Chicanafuturism for her analysis of the work of Marion C. Martinez, a Chicana artist from New Mexico who creates syncretized *santos* of the New Mexico borderlands—deities mixing indigenous Native American religious symbols with Catholic saints—from the discarded remains of computers salvaged from Los Alamos National Laboratory, the classified military facilities where much of the research towards the development of the world's first nuclear weapons took place. Ramírez argues that Martinez's Chicanafuturist art merges New Mexico's past, present, and future blending the state's "Indo-Hispanic traditions" with its historical role in the dawn of the nuclear age as well as "its current role as a repository for high-tech trash" today.³⁰ Afrofuturist and Chicanafuturist art such as that of Marion C. Martinez operates like a crossroads, bending the borders of space and time to blend the past, present, and future as well as the here and there of migration and diaspora in fractal frontiers of the post-apocalyptic diasporic borderlands of the Americas and the Caribbean.

Whether imagined in the repetition of the plantation across the islands of the Antilles, in the spirals of the hurricane, the conch, and the *poteau-mitan*, in the seemingly infinite lengths of borders and infinite iterations of diasporic border cultures and subjectivities, or in the long chain of apocalyptic catastrophes shaping the history of the Americas since the arrival of Spanish explorers to the region at the turn of the sixteenth century, the fractal is a particularly well-suited metaphor for the Caribbean. The fractal evokes patterns observable in the flora and fauna, the geography and topography, and the histories and cultures of the Antilles. The manner in which fractals generate complexity through repeating self-similar structures that propagate simultaneously across multiple sites and scales to create rich, layered, interconnected networks

resonates with the histories of colonialism, coloniality, and decolonial resistance that repeat across the various islands of the Caribbean and that give rise to diverse diasporic border cultures and subjectivities among the peoples of the Caribbean on the islands and abroad.

Though in the chapters that follow this hemispheric project of un-silencing Haiti and its revolutionary ideals to decolonize the Hispanophone Caribbean and its diasporas takes many different paths across the fractal frontiers of Caribbean space and time, my objects of analysis are firmly rooted in contemporary cultural production. The volumes of other scholars such as Sybille Fischer's *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolutions* (2004) and Sara E. Johnson's *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (2012) insightfully address the impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Caribbean and the Americas in the nineteenth century. My project, however, focuses on contemporary Latina/o cultural production to show how issues originating in the nineteenth century continue to affect the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and its diasporas today. Furthermore, because coloniality permeates contemporary life I seek remnants of Haiti's silenced legacies in a variety of types of cultural production analyzing a mixture of popular music, literature, visual culture, and the arts.

Finally, this project from inception to completion has been the product not only of years of research but also of my personal journey through graduate school in North Carolina as a Latino raised in Texas by Dominican and Cuban parents. My family, mentors, experiences, and travels have provided knowledge and inspiration that elucidated my scholarship in key ways. To honor this reality I have interspersed throughout this dissertation personal anecdotes set in italics that highlight how personal encounters have shaped me as a scholar and informed this project. I understand this turn to the anecdotal and the personal in my work as part of a decolonial

approach to scholarship that recognizes the subjective nature of all narratives, no matter how authoritative or objective they may appear, in order to empower marginalized people to engage and to explore their own subjective, embodied experiences as valid sources of knowledge and understanding and thus un-silence underrepresented histories in the academe and in dominant culture.

Chapter 1, “Border Crossings: Thinking Haitian and Latina/o Studies Together,” compares foundational texts from Haitian Studies—Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past* (1995) and Colin Dayan’s *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (1995)—and from Latina/o Studies—Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa’s edited volume *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981), Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), and Emma Pérez’s *Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (1999)—to demonstrate how these bodies of knowledge complement one another in ways previously unexplored. I argue that these foundational works of Haitian and Latina/o Studies propose transdisciplinary, genre-bending, decolonial approaches to giving voice to the silenced by embracing alternative archives and epistemologies.

Chapter 2, “Days Of Futures Past: Fractal Frontiers of Post-Apocalyptic Hispaniolan Space-Time,” explores how the work of three Dominican artists—musician George Lewis, Jr., performance artist David Pérez Karmadavis, and writer Junot Díaz—un-silences apocalyptic histories of Hispaniola and the Americas to reconnect the Dominican Republic and Haiti across colonialty’s multilayered, fractal frontiers as diasporic Hispaniolan borderlands. I argue that Lewis, Pérez, and Díaz form part of a generation of Dominican artists whose decolonial work un-silences legacies of the Haitian Revolution to reimagine the Dominican Republic as part of Hispaniola, the Caribbean borderlands, and the African diaspora.

Chapter 3, “Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Caribbean Borderlands” compares how Cuban-American writer Achy Obejas’s novel *Ruins* (2009), Puerto Rican writer Ana Lydia Vega’s short story “Encancaranublado” (1982), and Dominican-American writer Angie Cruz’s novel *Let It Rain Coffee* (2006) deploy images of Haiti and the Haitian Revolution to portray both the possibilities and the limits of trans-Caribbean solidarity in confronting the serious cultural, economic, and geopolitical challenges of the Caribbean and its diasporas today. The chapter closes with an analysis of the video for the song “Da Pa’ Lo Do,” by the Dominican group Rita Indiana Hernández y los Misterios as a modern myth of decolonial Caribbean love.

The dissertation finally closes with a coda that investigates specific sites in North Carolina such as Polk Place at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and the Hayti Heritage Center in Durham as crossroads of the Caribbean borderlands haunted by historical losses. I argue that these crossroads are fractal nodes of the Caribbean Borderlands, where routes connecting North Carolina, the US South, the Caribbean, the Americas, and the Global South converge.

ENDNOTES: INTRODUCTION

¹ In Juan Poblete's *Critical Latin American and Latino Studies* (2003) Frances Aparicio declares, "The appearance of the 'border subject,' ... the most important concept that Latin[a/]o studies has contributed to cultural studies in the United States, Europe, and Latin America" (13). Since the turn of the century, border thinking developed in the US in the 1980s has gone global, and today Gloria Anzaldúa's theorizations of the US-Mexico border from her famous *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) provide theoretical models for scholarship in the humanities and the social sciences worldwide. A global search on the library database WorldCat, for example, bears this out as *mestizaje*, a key term in the work of Anzaldúa, appears in thousands of articles and volumes published in multiple languages worldwide. For Anzaldúa the borderlands is a space defined by *mestizaje*—a unique term from Spanish without direct equivalent in English that is nevertheless akin to miscegenation, transculturation, or hybridization. *Mestizaje* is embodied by the new *mestizas*, "Chican[a/]os [who] no longer feel that [they] need to beg entrance, that [they] need always to make the first overture—to translate to Anglos, Mexicans and Latin[a/]os, apology blurring out of [their] mouths," (Anzaldúa 20).

² C.L.R. James famously positions Haiti's revolutionaries as avatars of the Enlightenment in the New World (1938). Laurent Dubois identifies Haiti as one of the birthplaces of human rights in his introduction to *Avengers of the New World* (2004). Nick Nesbitt addresses the issue in *Universal Emancipation* (2008) arguing that Haitians took enlightenment ideals to their logical and most radical conclusion: the universal emancipation and equality of all human beings.

³ Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, 1.

⁴ Numerous scholars document how the US, Europe, and Latin America marginalized Haiti politically and economically in the wake of Haiti's declaration of independence in 1804. The US, Great Britain, and France imposed trade embargoes on the newly independent nation that would last two decades and most nations refused to recognize Haiti diplomatically. France only officially recognized Haiti in 1825 and required that Haiti pay 150 million gold francs in indemnification for French planters' losses of slaves and other properties. Fearful of free, black Haitian diplomats visiting the US and slave revolts spreading to the US South, US Senator Robert V. Hayne of South Carolina said during debates on US foreign policy on Haiti in the 1820s that, "Our policy with regard to Haiti is plain. We never can acknowledge her independence," (Bender). Hayne's position took the day for almost half a century; the US officially recognized Haiti in 1862, a year into the US Civil War. Despite Haitian assistance to Simón Bolívar and the independence of former colonies in South America, Latin American nations also delayed official recognition of Haiti. Brazil was the first Latin American nation to send official envoys to Haiti in 1865, and Mexico established official relations with Haiti in 1934 (Baur 410). For details on the complicated interests that drove US foreign policy on Haiti in the nineteenth century see Tim Matthewson's "Jefferson and the Nonrecognition of Haiti" 22-48. For a global, comparative perspective on Haiti's isolation after independence see Arthur L.

Stinchcombe's, "Class Conflict and Diplomacy: Haitian Isolation in the 19th-Century World System," 1-24.

⁵ Polish mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot coined the term fractal in 1975 to describe geometric shapes composed of one repeating pattern. Because of the repetition inherent to the generation of fractals, the fractal is self-similar, meaning each of its parts on any scale is fundamentally similar in shape and structure to both other parts at other scales and to the fractal as an overall structure. Here is a simple example of a fractal: take an infinitely long line, halve it, then halve the halves, and so on *ad infinitum*. This simple operation creates a shape infinitely textured both as it grows larger and as it shrinks smaller. For more on fractals see Benoit Mandelbrot's *Fractals: Form, Chance, and Dimension* (1977).

⁶ Ette, Ottmar. "Islands, Borders and Vectors: The Fractal World of the Caribbean," 113-114.

⁷ Quijano, Aníbal and Immanuel Wallerstein. "Americanness as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world-system," 551.

⁸ Escobar, Arturo. "Beyond the Third World: Imperial Globality, Global Coloniality and Anti-Globalisation Social Movements," 210.

⁹ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 25, 35.

¹⁰ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 19. Anzaldúa, Gloria. "El Mundo Zurdo," 196. Fanon, Frantz. *Les damnés de la terre*.

¹¹ DeGuzmán, María. *Buenas Noches American Culture: Latina/o Aesthetics of Night*, 69-70; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

¹² Mignolo, Walter. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, 84; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

¹³ Mignolo, Walter. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, 84. Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. "Bridging Islands: Gloria Anzaldúa and the Caribbean," 276-277.

¹⁴ Aparicio, Frances R. "Latino Cultural Studies," 13.

¹⁵ Viego, Antonio. *Dead Subjects: Toward a Politics of Loss in Latino Studies*, 123-124. See Yarbrow-Bejarano "Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands/La frontera: Cultural Studies, 'Difference,' and the Non-Unitary Subject." and Embry, Marcus "Cholo angels in Guadalajara: The politics and poetics of Anzaldúa's borderlands/La Frontera."

¹⁶ Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. "Bridging Islands: Gloria Anzaldúa and the Caribbean," 273.

¹⁷ Bosch, Juan. *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro: El Caribe, Frontera Imperial*, 9; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this dissertation are my own.

¹⁸ Mir, Pedro. *Tres Leyendas de colores: Ensayo de interpretación de las tres primeras revoluciones del Nuevo Mundo*, 285; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

¹⁹ Though the volume problematically treats race as a scientific reality in extended discussions of phenotype among humans as markers of either evolutionary progress or antiquatedness, I would argue Mir nevertheless understands the problematic, constructed nature of Latin American myths, such as “la raza cósmica” developed by Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos, valorizing and idealizing the ethno-racial hybridity of mestizos as a source of Latin American unity. As I understand it, Mir, argues that these three revolts shaped Latin American colonial institutions, legal and bureaucratic, and set into motion repressive regimes of race that favored Spanish and *criollo* peoples as citizens.

²⁰ Since the 1990’s in the US the Haitian-American population has more than doubled and the Dominican-American population has almost quadrupled. For statistics on Haitian-American immigration see Nwosu and Batalova “Haitian Immigrants in the United States” and Camarota “Fact Sheet on Haitian Immigrants in the United States.” For statistics on Dominican-American immigration see Grieco “The Dominican Population in the United States: Growth and Distribution.”

²¹ Pérez, Emma. *The Decolonial Imaginary*, 77; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

²² Mandelbrot, Benoit. *Fractals: Form, Chance, and Dimension*, 1.

²³ Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, 72; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

²⁴ Glover, Kaiama L. *Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Postcolonial Canon*, viii; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

²⁵ Ette, Ottmar. “Islands, Borders, and Vectors: The Fractal World of the Caribbean,” 115.

²⁶ In *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Gilroy describes numerous diasporic phenomena as fractal. The black Atlantic itself along with the “patterns of cultural and political exchange and transformation,” international “trajectories” of music, “patterns of cultural and political affiliation,” and “communities of interpretation, needs, and solidarity” that make the black Atlantic, all have, for Gilroy, “a fractal form.” (4, 15, 76, 88, 122, 236).

²⁷ Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, 236-237.

²⁸ Dery, Mark. "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose," 736.

²⁹ Bould, Mark. "The Ships Landed Long Ago: Afrofuturism and Black SF," 181.

³⁰ Ramírez, Catherine S. "Deus ex Machina: Tradition, Technology, and the Chicanafuturist Art of Marion C. Martinez," 78.

CHAPTER 1: BORDER CROSSINGS THINKING HAITIAN AND LATINA/O STUDIES TOGETHER

At UNC-Chapel Hill I took a graduate course on Cultural Studies with Dr. Larry Grossberg. It was not a typical class. Dr. Grossberg had been a student of Stuart Hall's at the now defunct Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, England, one of the sites where Cultural Studies emerged as an academic discipline in the 1960s. In the class, Dr. Grossberg emulated the CCCS's pedagogical methods. Each week he assigned an impossible amount of dense reading, multiple volumes paired with multiple articles usually totaling three to four hundred pages. These readings, intentionally impossible for an individual to complete alone, forced students to meet weekly with fellow classmates in study groups to share the workload, splitting up the texts, compiling summaries, and comparing notes prior to each class. The arrangement was as onerous as it was successful in cultivating a certain esprit de corps amongst the study groups of graduate students from across different departments at the university.

*These study groups became the basic social unit for major assignments and class discussion, and Dr. Grossberg assumed a quasi-antagonistic role, somewhere between benevolent taskmaster and distant adjudicator, in addressing these groups. The situation lent class discussions an air of competitive debate uncommon in my experience at graduate school. One day, Dr. Grossberg asked us to evaluate one of that week's readings, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) by Dr. Grossberg's fellow CCCS alumnus Paul Gilroy. I felt an acute exasperation build as my classmates shared dispassionate and vague*

reflections on the text. Speaking out of turn, interrupting my classmates, I finally divulged my critique of Gilroy's book, that it conceives of the African diaspora as a transnational, connected collectivity, in theory, but despite a smattering of references to Edouard Glissant, only addresses the English-speaking Atlantic world in depth and ignores the African diaspora among the Hispanophone and Lusophone peoples of the Caribbean and the Americas. After I spoke, I was embarrassed. I had unintentionally outed myself as different and as deeply emotionally invested in a text to which most of my colleagues seemed indifferent. Something in the discussion, perhaps the tepid way the class reviewed issues of vital import to me, had touched a nerve. Dr. Grossberg nonplussed, almost amused by my vehemence, simply replied, "Well, John it looks like you've got your own book to write."

Introduction

Haitian anthropologist Michel Ralph Trouillot opens *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995) with a discussion of the phrase "Remember the Alamo" while queer Chicana historian, theorist, and novelist Emma Pérez concludes *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (1999) with reflections on the opposite admonishment, "Forget the Alamo," as spoken by the Latina character Pilar to her Anglo-American half-brother and lover Sam at the close of John Sayles' film *Lone Star* (1996).¹ Although Trouillot writes of remembering and Pérez of forgetting, both make the same point: the way the past is remembered—and forgotten—shapes the present and the future.

According to Trouillot, after the Mexican General Antonio López de Santa Anna's victory at the Alamo on 6 March 6 1836 over a small band of rebels seeking independence, the remaining Texian forces "doubly defeated" Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto on 21 April 1836 because Santa Anna not only "lost the battle of the day, but he also lost the battle he had

won at the Alamo.”² In punctuating their victory over Santa Anna at San Jacinto with cries of “Remember the Alamo!” the Texians—slave-owning, English-speaking immigrants to the Mexican state of Coahuila y Tejas—had not only captured the military leader of their enemy thus securing victory, independence, and the end of hostilities, they had rewritten the past; the defeat at the Alamo “was no longer the end point of the narrative but a necessary turn in the plot, the trial of the heroes, which, in turn, made final victory both inevitable and grandiose” (2) With the annexation of the Republic of Texas in 1846, this lore from the Texas Revolution (1835-1836) passed into the annals of US history only to resurface most famously in popular culture as *The Alamo*, a 1960 film starring John Wayne.

Filmed thirty-six years later, John Sayles’s *Lone Star* paints quite a different picture of the Alamo. Rather than a symbol of bravery in the face of impossible odds set in a patriotic war movie, the memory of the Alamo in *Lone Star* haunts a fictional Texas border town divided along ethnic lines by racism, secrets, and mistrust. In the film, the protagonists, the Latina Pilar and the Anglo-American Sam, whose parents had discouraged their high school courtship, fall in love again as adults only to discover, at the film’s end, that they are actually half-siblings. The borders between Latinidad and Anglo-American whiteness are a fiction silencing the past and the present, obscuring the love affair between the protagonists’ parents that makes them family. The film concludes with Pilar making the case for the couple to continue their relationship despite the revelation, pleading that Sam and she “Forget the Alamo.” Emma Pérez, born in El Campo, Texas remembers from her childhood her father making a similar argument for forgetting the Alamo and understands Pilar’s mandate as “reinscribing a colonial imaginary with a decolonial one,” as an opportunity “to remake their story, to transcend an inhibiting, treacherous past.”³

At least three versions of the siege of the Alamo are at play in Trouillot's and Pérez's texts. First there is the dominant, colonized version from Texas and US history exemplified by the slogan "Remember the Alamo" which figures the siege of the fort as a heroic battle for freedom fought against impossible odds. Anyone who grew up in Texas, such as Emma Pérez or myself, learns this version in Texas history classes required in secondary public education. This narrative remains quite literally the official, state-sanctioned history of these events in Texas.⁴ Second, there is Trouillot's critical analysis of the Texian battle cry that exposes the narrative power of history to transform a defeat into victory and recognizes Santa Anna's counter-narrative that coexists alongside the dominant Texian version. Finally, there is Pérez's rejection of this dominant, colonized history, an act that unlocks the potential to creatively imagine other decolonized histories that empower different understandings of the present and better visions for the future. The trajectory between these three versions of the history of the battle of the Alamo tracks the progression of this chapter from official, dominant historical narratives that silence Haiti and its revolutionary legacies, to critical reflections on how and why Haitian revolutionary history has been silenced, and finally on to creative decolonial strategies for un-silencing marginalized narratives in Haiti and elsewhere in the Caribbean borderlands.

Like Pérez's decolonial imaginary, this chapter endeavors "to remake a story, to transcend an inhibiting past," namely the silencing of the Haitian Revolution in the Hispanophone Caribbean and its diasporas. At the same time, this chapter also represents a first step, both in this dissertation and in my research beyond this project, towards articulating that linguistically and geographically expansive and inclusive understanding of the African diaspora in the Americas that I first imagined when discussing Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* in Dr. Grossberg's class years ago. To these ends, I open this chapter placing Trouillot's *Silencing the*

Past and Emma Pérez's *The Decolonial Imaginary* in dialogue to explore how these texts' respective treatments of the myth of the Alamo complement one another and offer points of contact between Haitian and Latina/o Studies. If Trouillot explains the narrative power of the Texian battle cry, then Pérez rejects its mandate to remember a particular version of history in order to imagine other decolonial possibilities. Through the Texians defeat of Santa Anna and their cries of "Remember the Alamo," Trouillot underlines how power privileges particular historical narratives and silences others, while in Pilar's plea to forget the Alamo, Pérez locates a "liberatory moment" when "the decolonial imaginary is enacted as hope, as love, transcending all that has come before, all that has been inherited only to damage daughters and sons who have fallen heir to a history of conquest, of colonization, of hatred between brown and white."⁵ As Trouillot underlines, "Remember the Alamo" exemplifies the well-worn idea that history is written by the victors, while Pérez's embrace of Pilar's "Forget the Alamo," rejects colonized histories that silence minoritized and marginalized voices.

This conversation about the history of the Alamo that I create by placing Trouillot and Pérez in dialogue parallels the general structure of this chapter. In the pages that follow I place scholarship on the silencing of the Haitian Revolution in dialogue with theory developed by queer Chicana feminists reclaiming silenced histories and empowering marginalized voices. I do this for two reasons. First, I am indebted to Trouillot and Pérez in particular and the critical conversations in which their scholarship participates more generally. Without decolonial historiographies developed by scholars like Trouillot and Pérez, this project would have been much more difficult if not impossible. Second, while scholarship on the Haitian Revolution has gained considerable traction since the mid-1990s, it is my opinion that much of this valuable work nevertheless remains unduly fettered by Eurocentric critical frameworks beholden to

Enlightenment thinking, a situation that brings to mind black queer poet and theorist Audre Lorde's rejoinder to white feminists that, "...the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change."⁶

What is more, bringing queer feminist Chicana theorists into conversation with recent scholarship of the Haitian Revolution provides decolonial tools particularly well suited for un-silencing the Haitian Revolution in Caribbean Latina/o cultural production. Though the Haitian Revolution and Haitian Studies remain fundamental to this project, this dissertation takes as its primary objects of study representations of the Haitian Revolution and Haitian-ness in Caribbean Latina/o cultural production, a body of work deeply informed by theoretical frameworks developed by queer Chicana feminists such as Emma Pérez, Cherríe Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa, and others. The turn to these Chicana theorists thus offers both a decolonial alternative to Enlightenment thinking as well as a body of theoretical and critical knowledge that deeply informs Caribbean Latina/o cultural production, and as a result is especially well suited for its analysis.

As a Cuban-Dominican-American scholar of Latina/o Studies who turns to the theory of queer Chicana feminists to explore Caribbean Latina/o cultural production, I am hardly alone. Many other Latina/o Studies scholars from the Caribbean and its diasporas have recognized the work of Anzaldúa and Moraga as fundamental to their own. In *Tacit Subjects: Belonging and Same-Sex Desire Among Dominican Immigrant Men* (2011), for example, Dominican-American scholar of American Studies Carlos Ulises Decena declares that "The lifelong struggles of Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga, among others, with critical feminist political scholarship and art exemplify, in broadest terms, the genealogy that informs the work of this study."⁷ Puerto Rican

writer and scholar Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, director of Latina/o Studies at University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, writes in *Queer Ricans: Cultures and Sexualities in the Diaspora* (2009) that “Puerto Rican queer studies share a strong link with other antihegemonic critical queer studies projects [...] which build on the indispensable work of U.S. Third World feminism, especially as articulated by the Chicana lesbians Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and Chela Sandoval.”⁸ With Hispaniola as their starting point for articulating a pedagogical model of interdisciplinary, transnational Caribbean studies called “Islands Beyond Borders,” Haitian-American scholars Cécile Accilien and Anne François suggest Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* as a reading that illustrates how language articulates to race in the Antilles.⁹ In short, scholars from across the Caribbean and its diasporas have embraced Third World feminism, border thinking, and decolonial frameworks developed by queer Chicana feminists like Anzaldúa, Moraga, Pérez, and others.

This strategic turn to the work of queer Chicana theorists to re-imagine the Caribbean as borderlands emerges from a growing body of scholarship. My inspiration to deploy Anzaldúa’s border thinking in the Caribbean initially came from a eulogy for Anzaldúa delivered in 2005 and published in 2006 by Frances Negrón-Muntaner, queer, Puerto Rican activist, filmmaker, and scholar of Latina/o Studies. While recognizing potential pitfalls of “smuggling Anzaldúa’s work into the Caribbean hinterland,” Negrón-Muntaner nevertheless contends that border thinking accomplishes three important things in Caribbean Latina/o cultural production:

to elaborate discourses that link Hispanic Caribbean groups to other Latinos, to question the centrality of the nation-state as a unit of analysis in conceptualizing contemporary Caribbean experience, and to valorize the in-between location of the diaspora as a resource rather than a hindrance to imagining amore inclusive national community.¹⁰

Extending Negrón-Muntaner's exploration of Anzaldúa's influence in the Caribbean, Puerto Rican scholar of Latina/o Studies Ramón E. Soto-Crespo in *Mainland Passage: The Cultural Anomaly of Puerto Rico* (2009) advocates re-conceptualizing Puerto Rico and its diaspora in the US as one connected borderlands.¹¹ Soto-Crespo, like Negrón-Muntaner, is nevertheless weary of simply importing wholesale into the complex Caribbean context Chicana theory derived from localized, embodied experiences of the long, diverse US-Mexico border and therefore seeks Caribbean texts that might be re-imagined as examples of border thinking of the Spanish-speaking Antilles. Not coincidentally, Soto-Crespo and Negrón-Muntaner identify three of the same texts: the Puerto Rican writer Antonio S. Pedreira's *Insularismo* (1934); *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro: El Caribe, frontera imperial* (1969) by Juan Bosch, Dominican intellectual and first democratically elected Dominican president ousted in a US-backed coup d'état; and finally the Cuban writer Jorge Mañach's *Teoría de la frontera* (1970).¹²

While the explorations of the Caribbean borderlands by Decena, La Fountain-Stokes, Accilien, François, Negrón-Muntaner, Soto-Crespo, and others inspire and influence my work, the Dominican-Haitian border is the backbone of this project, and the current state of Dominican-Haitian relations on Hispaniola makes border thinking a particularly necessary framework for reimagining not only the island of Hispaniola and its diasporas, but the roles of the Haitian Revolution, Haiti, and race in the Caribbean borderlands. After a brief détente in the wake of the Haitian earthquake in 2010, regressive nationalists in the Dominican Republic today consistently scapegoat Haitian immigrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent. Through a new draft of the Dominican constitution, which explicitly bans same-sex unions, and the *tribunal constitucional*, a special constitutional court called into session by the administration of current Dominican president Danilo Medina in 2013, the Dominican government retroactively stripped

citizenship from hundreds of thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent, citizens born in the DR as far back as 1929, rendering these Dominicans stateless refugees. Meanwhile, leaders from Dominican President Medina's party advocate the construction of a militarized border fence separating Haiti and the DR along these nations' shared terrestrial frontier, a wall inspired by projects along the US-Mexico border. As a result, tensions on both sides of the Dominican-Haitian border have escalated. Violent, xenophobic, nationalist marches have occurred both in Haiti and the DR, and a Haitian man has been found hanging from a tree in a public park in Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic on 4 February 2015. It is my contention that in Hispaniola's current context today, local efforts led by Dominicans and Haitians to think beyond the borders of entrenched nationalism, racism, and xenophobia that threatens the most vulnerable on the island can only be aided by decolonial thought and border thinking developed by queer Chicana feminists and smuggled back to the island via diaspora. In Hispaniola today border thinking and decolonial thought, whether of local or transnational provenance, are not just theoretical models of scholarly inquiry but empowering tools for understanding the world differently. Looking from the Dominican-Haitian border across the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and into diaspora, structurally analogous borders reinforced by inequalities rooted in nation, class, race, gender, sexuality, and ability divide Haitians, Dominicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans. Decolonizing the Caribbean borderlands requires imagining other possibilities, thinking beyond these borders.

With these considerations in mind, this chapter, titled "Border Crossings: Thinking Haitian and Latina/o Studies Together" consists of two primary sections of unequal length: "Un-Silencing the Past" and "Knowledge from the (Caribbean) Borderlands."¹³ The first section, "Un-Silencing the Past," reflects on legacies of the Haitian Revolution in current scholarship

today by addressing how the events that unfolded in Saint-Domingue between 1791-1804 have been figured as both a success and a failure, exploring how Haiti's revolutionary history has been silenced and can be un-silenced today, and finally critiquing the un-silencing and re-inscription of Haiti's revolutionary legacies into frameworks beholden to Enlightenment thinking that silenced the Haitian Revolution in the first place. "Knowledge from the (Caribbean) Borderlands" bridges the preoccupation with silence in Haitian and Latina/o Studies by examining the importance in both fields of decolonial alternatives to dominant canonical forms of Western knowledge and epistemology. I argue that the scholarship in Haitian and Latina/o Studies—work by Michel Rolph Trouillot, Colin Dayan, Emma Pérez, Cherríe Moraga, and Gloria Anzaldúa—that I find most inspiring and useful in this dissertation's project of un-silencing the Haitian Revolution in Caribbean Latina/o cultural production converges around a cluster of common questions, approaches, and practices. First, this scholarship identifies non-traditional archives such as personal anecdote, folklore, popular culture, and religion as alternatives to dominant, state-sanctioned historical narratives. Second, through these alternative archives, this scholarship imaginatively un-silences histories from below and frames these histories within decolonial epistemologies. Finally, this scholarship blurs disciplinary and generic borders, writing histories that read like memoirs, analyzing sacred rites as historiography, and fashioning theory as mellifluous poetry; in short, these intellectuals craft scholarship that resembles art, and art that resembles scholarship.

Part 1: Un-silencing the Past

With Haitian Jewish scholar of literature, religion, and law Colin Dayan's *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (1995) and Michel-Rolph-Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* an entire field of scholarship un-silencing the Haitian Revolution emerged in the mid-1990s, yet Latina/o Studies

has yet to see major volumes published on Haiti's relationship to the Dominican Republic, to the Hispanophone Caribbean, and to Latina/os in the US.¹⁴ Haiti's absence in Latina/o Studies and its spectral presence in Hispanophone Caribbean and Caribbean Latina/o cultural production more generally are part of larger hemispheric and global patterns. Indeed, perhaps the central problem in studies of the Haitian Revolution since the 1990s has been addressing the complex reasons why and ways how Haiti and Haiti's revolution have been silenced. While this silencing was certainly the direct result of systematic international efforts to isolate the newly founded nation and to keep its revolution from spreading, the unprecedented nature of the events that created Haiti also contributed to an archive plagued with lacunae that never captured the full story nor the full implications of the Haitian Revolution either in its primary or secondary sources. As much as the US, Europe, and Latin America silenced the Haitian Revolution for fear that slave revolts would spread, many scholars have convincingly argued this silencing was also the by-product of the limitations of dominant epistemologies of the era.

In *Silencing the Past* Michel-Rolph Trouillot famously argues that even as they occurred the events of the Haitian Revolution were inexplicable in European and Anglo-American societies blinded by the assumption that the enslaved were less than human. Despite glaring evidence to the contrary, despite Haiti itself, Trouillot argues it was unthinkable for those in power in the US, Europe, and Latin America that slaves in Saint-Domingue or elsewhere might assert their humanity and reclaim their rights through massive, strategic revolts, protracted warfare, and ideologically inspired revolution.¹⁵ In addition to overt efforts to marginalize and to silence Haiti and the limitations of dominant worldviews of the epoch, the illiteracy of the majority of Haiti's revolutionaries further contributed to the revolution's silencing.¹⁶ Certainly we have written accounts from Haiti's revolutionaries, most famously Toussaint Louverture, but

compared to archives available to historians studying revolutions elsewhere in Europe and the Americas, the archives in Haiti are limited.¹⁷

That is not to say, however, that these revolutionaries were either blank slates or one monolithic group; Haiti's revolutionaries were of course a diverse mix of African and Créole peoples that drew from a variety of religious, cultural, linguistic, and martial bodies of knowledge.¹⁸ Yet despite this ethnic, experiential, and cultural diversity amongst the enslaved people of Saint-Domingue, the fact remains that the majority of Haiti's revolutionaries could not record their own experiences of self-liberation, at least not in written European languages. Yet perhaps these histories have been recorded elsewhere; Colin Dayan, for example, argues that Vodou reenacts Haiti's "unreconstructible past—the responses of slaves to the terrors of slavery, to the colonists, to the New World."¹⁹ (xvii). Yet once again, Vodou as both sacred practice and victim of Christian vilification has its own long history marked by silences, so many of its stories recorded in ritual also have been lost to the traditional written archive, and this loss, this archival lack, is palpable and ever-present in contemporary studies of the Haitian Revolution and Haitian Studies more generally.

Success? The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804)

Though epistemological limitations of the epoch and the violently policed illiteracy of enslaved laborers in Saint-Domingue definitely contributed to the silencing of the Haitian Revolution, perhaps the most successful strategy for undermining and silencing the radical ideals at the heart of Haitian Revolution has been branding the revolution a failure. Most often this failure is framed economically. In the late eighteenth century, the French colony Saint-Domingue, "the Pearl of the Antilles," represented the pinnacle of profitability in the European powers' colonial expansion into the Americas; its plantations generated unforeseen wealth

through the production of agricultural commodities, principally sugar and coffee.²⁰ Yet less than two decades later, in 1804, after more than thirteen years of slave revolts, foreign invasions and occupations, insurgencies, internal conflicts, and revolution, Saint-Domingue was no more; in its ashes, quite literally, stood Haiti, the first independent nation of the Caribbean, founded on the abolition of slavery and named in honor of the indigenous Taino.

In direct response to the widespread denigration of the Haitian Revolution, to counter its branding as a failure, the statement that the Haitian Revolution is the only successful slave revolt in world history has become something of a truism repeated often by numerous scholars of Haiti and its revolution.²¹ The proofs of the revolt's success are the emancipation that the former slaves of Saint-Domingue won for themselves by defeating and expelling British, Spanish, and French armies, and Haiti itself, the only nation in the world born directly of slave revolt. Yet others still to this day contest the success of the Haitian Revolution pointing to the brutal violence and vast destruction wrought in the revolution's protracted conflict and the failings of the nation to which it gave independence.²² The grounds for this ongoing debate provide a salient example of the types of discursive, conceptual, and political interventions made in contemporary scholarly work on the Haitian Revolution and its aftermath. Nick Nesbitt stages his particular evaluation of the success of the Haitian Revolution writing that:

It was in Saint-Domingue, not Paris, that violence reached unimagined heights of brutality on both sides, that an entire society was literally reduced to ashes in the name of a single imperative: universal emancipation. In the face of this categorical imperative, nothing else mattered, not property, not happiness, nor any other good. Because of this total revolution, hundreds of thousands of Haitians avoided the vicious reprisals that fell upon the blacks in Guadeloupe when Napoleon reinstated slavery there in 1802. Moreover, this gain is quantifiable: they avoided forty-six years of enslavement (1802-1848). Who else but those concerned could judge what this progress was worth? The slaves of Saint-Domingue, who knew slavery first hand, decided for themselves that, faced with

its imminent reimposition, nothing else mattered, that they would never return to slavery.²³

This passage exemplifies the geographical, historiographical, temporal, and conceptual problematics of contemporary discussions of the Haitian Revolution. Nesbitt decenters the French Revolution, remaps the geography and rewrites the narrative of the age of revolutions, and places the era's most violent upheavals and the origins of the articulation and implementation of one of its most radical ideals, universal emancipation, in Haiti.

Unpacking the temporalities and concepts at play in Nesbitt's passage leads, however, to unanswerable questions that demonstrate the impossibility of objectivity in determining the success or failure of the Haitian Revolution. The evaluation of the success or failure of the Haitian Revolution serves as perhaps the perfect test case exposing the inherent fallacy of history as an objective science. In lieu of impartiality this discussion requires that its participants stake claims to values that fundamentally shape their intervention discursively, conceptually, and politically. In the last sentences, for example, Nesbitt argues, and I agree, that the former slaves of Haiti who fought in the Haitian Revolution to avoid returning to slavery are perhaps the only people with the moral authority to judge the outcome of their actions, the benefits of their sacrifices. These individuals of course are no longer alive and cannot weigh in on contemporary debates. Though Haiti's revolutionaries avoided the fate of those re-enslaved in Guadeloupe, and the liberty Haitians won can be counted at least in years, these facts and this quantity of time are knowable only today with the benefit of historical hindsight. More importantly perhaps, the valuation of liberty necessary to answer the impossible questions Nesbitt poses runs up against the dual problems of abstracting an ideal that has concrete historical consequences, on the one hand, and the impossibility of objectively measuring the value of an abstract ideal, on the other. Finally, the entire grounds for the discussion can be seen to turn on a series of impossible

hypotheticals evocative of the alternative histories of speculative fiction: What if Haiti's revolutionaries had never taken up arms and defeated the French army? What would the world look like today? Would it be better or worse off? Would slavery still have been abolished in the French colonies in 1848? Would the timeline of the abolition of slavery elsewhere have remained the same?

My analysis of the passage above, far from a critique of Nesbitt's contributions, rather illustrates the often-impossible questions contemporary academic production on the Haitian Revolution poses. Retelling the story of the Haitian Revolution, reevaluating and reinterpreting its legacies today often exposes the limits of our conceptual models, requires remapping geographies, rewriting historical timelines and genealogies, rethinking fundamental understandings of the world, and speculatively and imaginatively interrogating the past in the present with questions, that while perhaps impossible to answer with complete logical, moral, or empirical certitude, nevertheless have meaning. To a certain extent, any engagement with history will raise similarly thorny problems. In the case of the Haitian Revolution, however, the historical and contemporary interests at stake in silencing Haiti by deeming its revolution a failure are so enmeshed in coloniality and drill down so deeply to the root causes of global inequality and racism as to be unavoidable and undeniable.

German anthropologist Thomas Reinhardt illustrates in his article "200 Years of Forgetting: Hushing Up the Haitian Revolution" some of the many ways that the Haitian Revolution has been judged a failure and thus silenced over the last two centuries. For example, the military victory Haiti's army won against the most powerful nations of the day has all too often been chalked up to other factors than the capabilities, discipline, and determination of Haiti's revolutionaries. The Haitian's defeat of the French "is put down to the interference of

other European forces in the conflict and further explained by overemphasizing European losses through yellow fever and tropical climate. True, these authors concede, the European armies were defeated—not by a superior Black army, however.”²⁴ Europeans’ unwillingness and refusal to accept defeat to the Haitian army was not only historiographical, however, but also quite literal; though the French General Rochambeau negotiated an armistice with Haitian General Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the French surrendered to the English army at sea off the Haitian coast rather than surrender to the Haitian army that actually defeated them (252-253). Finally, Reinhardt insists that the Haitian Revolution has overwhelmingly been judged a failure only from European-US and not Haitian perspectives, writing:

According to Western standards, the revolution had been a failure. It had been a failure on the economic level, and it had been a failure on the political and social levels. No matter how much damage 13 years of civil war and the subsequent embargoes by France, Britain, and the United States had done to the local economy, the fact is that although French Saint-Domingue once was the richest colony the world had ever seen, the independent state of Haiti soon was to become the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. And freedom? Sure the country was now ruled by Black dictators. But does the absence of a White ruling class already qualify as freedom?

Dealing with the Haitian Revolution, the critical question for historiography usually was, Did it improve the living conditions of the people according to Western standards? And the verdict was almost unanimous: No, it didn't. Things changed, but they changed for the worse. This assessment is certainly true for large parts of the 20th century. The situation was, however, less clear in the years immediately following the revolution. The enormous death toll among the slaves, which required constant importation of Africans to keep the labor force at least to some extent stable, dropped down to a level that could be evened out by births. And compared to the living conditions of working class people in Europe, the Haitians were probably rather better off than many of their Western contemporaries (not to mention the slaves in the southern United States). (253).

While Reinhardt raises real critiques of Haiti’s track record in the wake of its revolution, Reinhardt also underlines the hypocrisy of European and US critiques of the quality of life in the newly independent nation when Europe and the US required the labor of workers, free and

enslaved, living in worse conditions than the newly liberated Haitians. He also elucidates just how much the US, Europe, and their client states needed the Haitian Revolution to fail to maintain the illusion of US and European superiority, which is unsurprising given these nation's deep investment in maintaining an Atlantic economy based at its most fundamental level on slave labor predicated on the lesser humanity of the enslaved. Nor has the US and Europe's desire to thwart the spread of Haiti's revolutionary ideals or the slave revolts they inspired ever been in question; the isolation of Haiti as Reinhardt and so many others have discussed was a well-documented matter of international policy openly discussed in London, Paris, and Washington throughout the nineteenth century.

Yet what Reinhardt rightly calls a problem of perspective can be stated even more clearly: the Haitian Revolution was necessarily a failure for Europe because, like the Texians at the Alamo, *Europe lost*. By the same token, the often-repeated idea that before the revolution Saint-Domingue was the richest colony in the world is true only from the slave-owners perspective; the massive wealth generated in Saint-Domingue only existed because slave-owners robbed the enslaved people creating that wealth of their labor and of their lives with a staggering efficiency under the most unconscionable conditions. Seen in these stark terms, debating the Haitian Revolution's success or failure seems an obscene yet a necessary exercise, because like the Texians who transformed the defeat at the Alamo into victory, the US, Europe, and their client states have shaped dominant historical narratives ever since Haitian independence, narratives that have transformed the victory of Haiti and the freedom Haitians won for themselves into failures as an explicit and implicit, conscious and unconscious strategy for silencing the Haitian Revolution.

The Past's Silences

...not all silences are equal... they cannot be addressed—or redressed—in the same manner. To put it differently, any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly.

– Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*²⁵

Intertwined silences of discursive, conceptual, and political dimensions haunt the stakes at play in engaging legacies of the Haitian Revolution today. No one, perhaps, better addresses both the ways history *necessarily* silences the past in general and the historical silencing of the Haitian Revolution in particular than Haitian historian, anthropologist, and intellectual Michel-Rolph Trouillot does in his meta-historical study *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995). Trouillot first and foremost foregrounds that history itself is a historical process made possible, informed, and shaped by power at each stage and every moment of its production, writing:

Power is constitutive of the story. Tracking power through various “moments” simply helps emphasize the fundamentally processual character of historical production, to insist that what history is matters less than how history works; that power itself works together with history; and that the historians’ claimed political preferences have little influence on most of the actual practices of power. A warning from Foucault is helpful: “I don’t believe that the question of ‘who exercises power?’ can be resolved unless that other question ‘how does it happen?’ is resolved at the same time.”

Power does not enter the story once and for all, but at different times and from different angles. It precedes the narrative proper, contributes to its creation and to its interpretation. Thus, it remains pertinent even if we can imagine a totally scientific history, even if we can relegate the historians’ preferences and stakes to a separate, post-descriptive phase. In history, power begins at the source. (28-29)

If power, for Trouillot, is inextricably enmeshed in and constitutive of history in all stages of its production, so too is silence. Trouillot identifies as “conceptual tools,” “four crucial moments” in which:

Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance). (26)

Power, for Trouillot, then constantly works in tandem with silence to shape the production of facts, archives, narratives, and finally history. Put another way, at each step in the process of the production of history that which is inscribed is simultaneously made possible by constitutive relations of power necessarily circumscribed by and articulated against silences. Put more simply, “Something is always left out while something else is recorded” (49). To put it metaphorically, imagine, for example, the viewfinder of a camera and the way that that particular technology records a brief moment of light by framing and freezing time within a particular field of vision, but also by necessarily excluding the rest of the world.

While this formulation of history might, for some, seem to lend itself to “constructivist” or “relativist” models that suggest history is merely a fiction amongst others, in *Silencing the Past*, Trouillot explicitly argues against such a stance because:

What happened leaves traces, some of which are quite concrete – buildings, dead bodies, censuses, monuments, diaries, political boundaries – that limit the range and significance of any historical narrative. This is one of many reasons why not any fiction can pass for history: the materiality of the sociohistorical process (historicity 1) sets the stage for future historical narratives (historicity 2). (29)

Using Trouillot’s own language, the materiality of the sociohistorical processes of the Haitian Revolution has left certain, particular silences in the historical sources, and subsequently, the archival records available today. Historian Laurent Dubois, who acknowledges the importance of Trouillot’s work in his intellectual formation, traces some of the historical silences of the Haitian Revolution to the archival predicaments faced when investigating a revolution more than two hundred years in the past undertaken by a largely illiterate people.²⁶ (vii). In *Avengers of the New*

World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution (2004) Dubois writes:

Many of the central protagonists of the Haitian Revolution, unlike those of other Atlantic revolutions, left behind few traces of their political thought. (The major exception is Toussaint Louverture.) Most of what we know about their actions and ideals comes from the writings of (often quite hostile) witnesses, whose views on slavery and slaves profoundly influenced what they wrote. Those who provided details about the words and actions of rebelling slaves, for instance, generally did so with the purpose of convincing their readers that one group or another was responsible for the insurrection. Many later historians have read such sources “against the grain” to tell eloquent stories of the silenced and the marginalized. Their work is an inspiration for my own attempt here to grasp a fleeting moment that is in many ways beyond us, to spur the imagination as well as to invite response and revision. This is a story that deserves—indeed, demands—to be told and retold. (6)

In Dubois’s explanation of the silences that historians of the Haitian Revolution face, the discursive and conceptual stakes at play in engaging the Haitian Revolution today intermingle and inform one another, connecting and disconnecting the past and the present. The first silence, that of the paucity of primary texts written by Haiti’s revolutionaries, with the notable exception of Louverture, is discursive insofar as it is quite literally a lack of discourse, an absence in the written archive that disconnects the present with key actors of this particular past. The second type of archival silence Dubois describes is rooted in the conceptual limitations that informed the discursive production of the vast majority of the historical witnesses of the Haitian Revolution who could and did write. The power relations at play in Saint-Domingue and the Atlantic world of the late eighteenth century are constitutive of both types of silences as these silences are the products of societies that denied slaves full inclusion within humanity, and thus basic rights such as education and literacy.

Dubois recognizes the difficulties of historical scholarship that assumes the discursive and conceptual stakes of engaging the Haitian Revolution’s silences today. How indeed can we speak in the present to these particular silences? Yet while recognizing these difficulties, in the

passage above, Dubois also outlines a politics and praxis of contemporary historiographical engagement with the silences of the Haitian Revolution and offers concrete answers. Scholars must recognize these silences in the historical record of the Haitian Revolution, read the archive “against the grain,” and not only produce but invite others to produce imaginative, revisionary narratives of the history of the Haitian Revolution, each in turn, necessarily inscribed in power and silencing certain aspects of the past while bringing others into language. In the face of these silences, Dubois then offers recognition, discursive production, and openness to future revisions, if not as fail-proof solutions, then at least as productive paths forward in historical scholarship of the Haitian Revolution.

Dubois’s engagement with the Haitian Revolution exemplifies these recuperative strategies available to historians facing the particular silences of the Haitian Revolution. He succinctly summarizes what he understands to be the importance of the Haitian Revolution today writing that:

The impact of the Haitian Revolution was enormous. As a unique example of successful black revolution, it became a crucial part of the political, philosophical, and cultural currents of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By creating a society in which all people, of all colors, were granted freedom and citizenship, the Haitian Revolution transformed the world. It was a central part of the destruction of slavery in the Americas, and therefore a crucial moment in the history of democracy, one that laid the foundation for the continuing struggles for human rights everywhere. In this sense we are all descendants of the Haitian Revolution, and responsible to these ancestors. (7)

Dubois stakes his claim for the importance of the Haitian Revolution in the present, in terms of contemporary ideals of political thought: racial equality, democracy, and human rights. Indeed, the title of Dubois’s book, *Avengers of the New World*, already announces its recuperative, revisionary, and celebratory intentions from the outset by reworking the famous proclamation, “I have avenged America,” of Haitian revolutionary leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines who declared

Haitian independence in 1804. Dubois, however, performs important revisions to Dessalines' proclamation in the book's title. He transforms the first-person rhetoric of Dessalines and attributes the accomplishments of the Haitian Revolution and independence to Haitians collectively.²⁷ Dubois also replaces Dessalines's "America" with "the New World," most likely to avoid confusion amongst a predominantly U.S.-based readership that might associate "America" with their particular nation-state rather than with the original, hemispheric connotations of Dessalines's proclamation. This particular appropriation of "America," it must be added, is, in and of itself, already a form of silencing the nations and peoples of the Americas outside of the U.S. Though it might seem excessively fastidious to criticize such a common, widely understood usage of "America," the criticism is pertinent in the current context. Whether we turn to Toussaint Breda's adoption of the surname *Louverture*—literally "the opening" in French—or to the decision to name the nascent nation "Haiti," a toponym of indigenous Taino origins, it is all too apparent that Haiti's revolutionaries understood the power of names. In selecting this name for their nascent nation, Haiti's revolutionaries recognized Hispaniola's indigenous past and broke with European geographical nomenclature of the "New World."

Through this symbolic gesture, Haiti's revolutionaries framed their actions as avenging not only the injustice of slavery but also the atrocities committed against the Americas' native populations.²⁸ In naming their newly independent nation, Haiti's revolutionaries performed an act of imaginative, symbolic filiation similar to that of Dubois when he writes that "we are all descendants of the Haitian Revolution, and responsible to these ancestors."²⁹ By adopting a name of Taino rather than European origin for their nation, Haitians claimed an alternative, imaginary, and specifically American ancestry for their nation; similarly, Dubois encourages a similar act of imaginative filiation on the part of his readers: to recognize Haiti's revolutionaries as our

intellectual ancestors to whom we are responsible as the inheritors and protectors of their legacies of racial equality, democracy, and human rights.

The Failure of Enlightenment: *The Black Jacobins and Silencing the Past*

“Toussaint's failure was the failure of enlightenment, not of darkness.”

- C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*³⁰

Dubois's scholarship offers a clear example of how contemporary historiographic production attempts to un-silence the Haitian Revolution by recognizing existing silences, reading archival sources “against the grain,” tracing genealogies of contemporary ideals back to Haiti, crafting narratives that make the Haitian Revolution relevant today, and inviting further investigation, future revision, and new historical narratives. It is, after all, unsurprising that in the face of historical silences historians propose historiographical production as a solution. Most contemporary scholarship on the Haitian Revolution—across a spectrum of disciplines, not only in history, but also in philosophy, political science, critical theory, and cultural criticism—deploys similar strategies to re-inscribe the Haitian Revolution into dominant narratives and frameworks. This process of re-inscription is inherently problematic and even contradictory, however, because often these narratives and frameworks into which the Haitian Revolution is re-inscribed are themselves the offspring of older ones that originally silenced the Haitian Revolution in the first place. Put another way, the Haitian Revolution has become the object of study for institutions, disciplines, and philosophies steeped in the very “Western thought” that according to Trouillot made the events that unfolded in Saint-Domingue “unthinkable” as they occurred.³¹

Let me be quite clear, I am not impugning the work of any particular scholar of the Haitian Revolution, rather I am merely underlining an epistemological quandary common in work within the field, so common in fact it was already present in what many consider to be *the*

fundamental text in contemporary studies of the Haitian Revolution: C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins*. Trouillot calls *The Black Jacobins* a "classic," while Dubois writes that *The Black Jacobins*, "remains the classic account of the revolution."³² In many ways *The Black Jacobins* set the stage for contemporary Haitian Studies and scholarship on the Haitian Revolution, and that stage already frames the events that unfolded in Saint-Domingue from 1791-1804 as indicative of the limitations, contradictions, and failures of Western thought, a theme Trouillot takes up and makes the centerpiece in *Silencing the Past*. In other words, if James, on the one hand, incorporates the contradictions and failures of Enlightenment into his historical narrative of the Haitian Revolution focalized through the heroic, tragic figure of Toussaint Louverture, Trouillot focalizes his treatment of the revolution, at least in *Silencing the Past*, not through heroic figures, but through the very problematic of Western thought's inability to understand the Haitian Revolution.

The differences between *The Black Jacobins* and *Silencing the Past* do not end there. In *The Black Jacobins* James retells the Haitian Revolution in a chronological narrative, while in *Silencing the Past*, Trouillot offers a meta-historical critique of "the great silencing of the Haitian Revolution in Western historiography," as but one example of the ways histories necessarily contain "bundles of silences."³³ Whereas James, in the original 1938 edition of *The Black Jacobins*, frames "the failure of enlightenment" through the figure of Toussaint but also suggests that this failure might find redemption in future leaders, Trouillot's critiques of Western thought in 1995 are more damning and final.³⁴ Trouillot argues that because of the fundamental role of racist hierarchies of humanity in shaping the history of the development of Western thought, Western thought could not provide those who witnessed the events of the Haitian Revolution—neither the proponents nor the opponents of slavery nor even the slaves themselves—the

conceptual and discursive capacity to understand, document, and debate what was happening in Saint-Domingue on its own terms as real events as they happened.³⁵ As Trouillot puts it, in the case of the Haitian Revolution, “discourse always lagged behind practice” (89).

Yet almost two decades before *Silencing the Past* was published, before even entering graduate school at Johns Hopkins University, Trouillot too wrote and published his own historical narrative of the Haitian Revolution, *Ti difé boulé sou istoua ayiti* (1977). It was the first book of non-fiction and the first book-length monograph published in Kreyòl and its narrative questions the “great men” tradition of Haitian historiography. Born into a family of historians—his uncle Hénock Trouillot, formerly the director of Haiti’s National Archives, and his father Ernst Trouillot co-authored *Historiographie d’Haïti* with Catts Pressoir in 1953—Michel-Rolph Trouillot undoubtedly read *The Black Jacobins* before writing *Ti difé boulé sou istoua ayiti*, and in questioning the “great men” tradition of Haitian historiography, indirectly questioned C.L.R. James as well. Furthermore while in *Silencing the Past* Trouillot recognizes the importance of C.L.R. James’s “classic,” he also calls the reader’s attention to the “Jacobins” of the title as yet another example of the primacy of the French Revolution over the Haitian Revolution in Western historiography (104).

Later in life James seemed quite receptive to challenges to the Eurocentric tendencies and “great men” tradition on display in *The Black Jacobins*. In *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (2004), anthropologist, founder, and editor of the influential journal of Caribbean criticism *Small Axe* David Scott writes that:

In one of a series of three remarkable lectures on the writing of *The Black Jacobins* given at the (now defunct) Institute of the Black World in Atlanta, Georgia, in the summer of 1971—a lecture significantly entitled “How I Would Rewrite *The Black Jacobins*—James declared, with that arresting sensitivity to his historical present that we first encounter in the 1938 preface, that were he writing now he would completely recast the perspective from which the story is told. In

the first place, he said, he would not depend so heavily on the writings of Europeans.³⁶

James's critique of his own reliance on European sources and his recognition of the need to retell the history of the Haitian Revolution from different perspectives was not only rhetorical but bore tangible fruit. In the acknowledgements to *The Making of Haïti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (1990), Carolyn Fick traces the origins of her dissertation that eventually became *The Making of Haïti* to an idea C.L.R. James suggested to her dissertation director, British Marxist historian and specialist of the French Revolution "from below," George Rudé.³⁷ As Sibylle Fischer underlines, in *The Making of Haïti*, Fick explicitly points to how framing the history of the Haitian Revolution, as embodied in "the figure of Toussaint Louverture," runs the risk of excluding "those vital social, economic, and cultural realities of the ex-slaves whose independent relationship to the land, African in outlook, formed the foundation of their own vision of freedom, while it flew in the face of the needs of the modern state that Toussaint was trying to build" (250).

If we accept that James viewed his own classic, *The Black Jacobins*, with a critical eye and understood the need for new perspectives that relied less on European sources and told the Haitian Revolution from subaltern perspectives, from the view of the Haitian masses rather than as embodied only in its heroes, how might we then link James's work with Trouillot's? Might we read Trouillot's assertion that, "the revolution was indeed at the limits of the thinkable, even in Saint-Domingue, even among the slaves, even among its own leaders," as expanding upon James's famous formulation, "Toussaint's failure was the failure of enlightenment, not of darkness"?³⁸ For James, Toussaint's was a failure, neither of ignorance nor of some supposed, specious racial inferiority, but rather of the very limitations of "enlightenment," of the system of discourse, thought, and knowledge available to Toussaint. If James, as David Scott incisively

argues, stages the Haitian Revolution, and the Enlightenment more generally, as tragedy through the Promethean figure of Toussaint in his revision of *The Black Jacobins* in the 1963, there nevertheless remains in the 1938 edition, at least, the hope of avoiding the pitfalls of conceptual failure and fulfilling the anticolonial, antiracist promise of the Haitian Revolution. Scott insightfully reminds us that in the sentence directly following Toussaint's "failure of enlightenment" in the 1938 edition, which James subsequently deleted from the revised edition of 1963, James originally writes:

It needed another 150 years before humanity could produce and give opportunity to men who could combine within their single selves the unrelenting suspicion and ruthless ferocity necessary to deal with imperialism, and yet retain undimmed their creative impulse and their respect for the attainments of the very culture they fought so fiercely.³⁹

James of 1938 asserts that "150 years" after Toussaint, the unfolding of time, "humanity," or "enlightenment"—the "it" here is ambiguous and might be read as polyvalent—has succeeded in producing leaders with the "ferocity" and critical acumen required of anticolonial struggle on the one hand and the creativity and breadth of thought, on the other, necessary to overcome the internal conceptual contradictions of overthrowing colonial, imperial powers whose very cultures and thought provided the kernels of ideals that offered the impetus and justification for revolt in the first place.⁴⁰ Although the redemptive figure James described in the deleted sentence is, in and of itself, already problematic and in some ways paradoxical, the omission of this sentence from the 1963 edition of *The Black Jacobins* also brings James's critique of the Enlightenment closer to that of Trouillot, suggesting that James was all too aware that there might be no redemptive figure either in the present or on the horizon capable of resolving the tragic, conceptual contradictions of this "failure of enlightenment."

The different historical contexts in which James and Trouillot formulated their critiques

of the contradictions, limitations, and failures of Western thought can, I believe, be useful in tracing a trajectory that connects James's and Trouillot's contributions both to one another and to questions that dominate current academic discourse on the Haitian Revolution today. Once again, Laurent Dubois provides a succinct evaluation of James' context writing that:

On the eve of World War II the Caribbean intellectual and activist C.L.R. James wrote *The Black Jacobins*... James, looking toward the struggles for independence in Africa, saw the story as an example of both the possibilities and dangers of such struggles. He understood – as the title of the book makes clear – the potent cross-fertilizations between the revolutionary transformations in France and the Caribbean. He also eloquently described the dilemmas faced by Louverture as he sought to defend freedom in a world dominated by slaveholding empires.⁴¹ (2)

David Scott's *Conscripts of Modernity* offers an insightful reading of *The Black Jacobins* recontextualized through the lens of tragedy and rethought in light of revisions James made to the text in 1962 and published in 1963. Dubois's account of the context in which James originally wrote *The Black Jacobins* in 1938 remains, however, pertinent. James originally wrote *The Black Jacobins* with both hope and wariness derived from more than a presentiment of the decolonization that would sweep across Africa in the wake of World War II; similarly in 1962 in the preface to the revised edition James writes that:

The Appendix, "From Toussaint L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro," attempts for the future of the West Indies, all of them, what was done for Africa in 1938. Writers on the West Indies always relate them to their approximation to Britain, France, Spain, and America, that is to say, to Western civilization, never in relation to their own history. This here is attempted for the first time.⁴²

Global circumstances had certainly changed between the first and second editions of *The Black Jacobins*. Decolonization in Africa was well under way and on the horizon in the Caribbean: between 1938 and 1962 twenty-five African countries gained independence;⁴³ after 1962 thirteen nations of the Caribbean and in close proximity gained independence.⁴⁴ The Cuban Revolution had ousted the US-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista (1959), and the US Civil Rights Movement

through acts of civil disobedience such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-1956) and the Greensboro sit-in (1960) exposed the injustices of Jim Crow to both the U.S. and the world at large. In a sense it would seem all of these events might vindicate James's original claims that "150 years" had produced leaders capable of overcoming Toussaint's "failure of enlightenment," leaders such as Castro, for example. Yet James in the revised edition deletes this hopeful if problematic sentence and in his preface and appendix signals the need to write of the Caribbean on its own terms rather than in relation to either Western civilization or to Africa.⁴⁵ Perhaps the unfolding complicated process of decolonization in Africa and increasingly oppositional forms of intellectual resistance to colonial rule and white supremacy shaped James's changing stance. In any case, despite James's assertion that he had, "little to add or subtract from the fundamental ideas which governed [*The Black Jacobins*'] conception," (viii) James seems markedly less comfortable with the idea that leaders of anticolonialist struggle whether in Africa or the Caribbean might overcome Toussaint's, "failure of enlightenment," while still retaining "the respect for the attainments of the very culture they fought so fiercely."⁴⁶

Trouillot published *Silencing the Past* in 1995. The US embargo of Cuba that began two years before James revised *The Black Jacobins* was already in its thirty-fifth year and had become especially cruel as Cubans suffered unforeseen hunger and scarcity in the fourth year of "The Special Period in Time of Peace," the euphemism Castro's regime gave to the near total collapse of the Cuban economy in the wake of the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 and the loss of Soviet imports and economic support. Despite the gains of the US Civil Rights Movement, the L.A. Riots of 1992 sparked by the acquittal of four police officers charged for the savage beating of Rodney King, the video images of which were broadcast throughout the world, demonstrated the continuing and deeply entrenched social, economic, and juridical injustices that still play out

all too often along lines of race in the US. All of these things, and more, mark the historical context in which Trouillot publishes *Silencing the Past* in 1995.

Having fled the Duvalier regime and Haiti in 1969 for New York at the age of twenty, the recent history of Haiti must have also weighed heavily on Trouillot's mind. From 1957 to 1995 Haiti saw almost thirty years of brutal, US-backed dictatorship under François "Papa Doc" Duvalier (1957-1971), and his son Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier (1971-1986), two years of military rule (1986-1988), democratic elections marked by violence (1987) and boycott (1988), coups that ousted democratically elected presidents Leslie Manigat in 1988 and Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991, military dictatorship under Raoul Cédras (1991-1994), and the return of Aristide in 1994. Since the publication of *Silencing the Past* in 1995, Haiti's political situation has not improved. After the presidency of René Preval from 1995-2000, Aristide won re-election in 2000 only once more to be removed from power in a US-backed coup in 2004. This coup prompted the establishment of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, or MINUSTAH, an organization that to this day occupies Haiti. In the wake of the 2010 earthquake, MINUSTAH's sloppy waste removal has been linked with the most devastating epidemic of cholera in recent history, killing thousands and spreading the disease to the DR and Cuba.

Between 1938 and 1995, from the *The Black Jacobins* to *Silencing the Past*, we might trace a trajectory of the changing understandings of the contradictions, limitations, and failures of Western thought. From the first to the second edition of *The Black Jacobins* James shifts from anticolonial hope to postcolonial introspection. While in 1938 the decolonization of Africa offered the possibility of redeeming Toussaint's "failure of enlightenment;" in 1962 the Caribbean born of Toussaint's "failure of enlightenment" must harness this, "Passion not spent but turned inward," in order to formulate new identities and understandings of the region, its

peoples, and its nations not subordinated to Western civilization.⁴⁷ In a postcolonial/neocolonial globalized context much closer to our own present, Trouillot's critique of Western thought is not bounded geographically and leads to no clear redemptive future whether through decolonization or nationalist self-discovery, in part because these possibilities were already in the past in 1995, but also because the knowledge that, "narratives are made of silences... and that the present itself is no clearer than the past," disabuses us of the, "certitude... that narratives about the past could expose with utmost clarity positions solidly anchored in the present."⁴⁸ While Trouillot argues that this knowledge does not "entail an absence of purpose" (153), it also does not provide a clear program for the future beyond "a fundamental rewriting of world history" and "the search and defense of values that distinguish the intellectual from a mere scholar" (107).

Back to the Future: Recuperating the Haitian Revolution, Revising Western Thought

At the end of *Silencing the Past*, Trouillot leaves us at something of an impasse. While limitations and contradictions inherent to Western thought, primarily rooted in an inability to think beyond racist hierarchizations of humanity, silenced the Haitian Revolution as it occurred, strategic steps towards un-silencing the past and addressing past injustices in the present are, however, less clear. David Scott summarizes this predicament while setting out his main concerns and goals for *Conscripts of Modernity*, writing that:

...my principal concern is with our own postcolonial present, our present after the collapse of the social and political hopes that went into the anticolonial imagining and postcolonial making of national sovereignties... My concern is with the relation between this (as it seems to me) dead-end present and, on the one hand, the old utopian futures that inspired and for a long time sustained it and, on the other, an imagined idiom of future futures that might reanimate this present and even engender in it new and unexpected horizons of transformative possibilities.⁴⁹

This sense of crisis and of exhaustion, this dire need for new ways forward that Scott describes permeates contemporary academic production on the Haitian Revolution in philosophy, political

and critical theory, and literary and cultural criticism. I would argue this remains the case precisely because Western thought remains ever the privileged imprisoning subject and object of academe.

Contemporary scholarship on the Haitian Revolution tends to pivot on the same fulcrum: un-silencing Haiti's history in order to revise and reimagine historical narratives of the West and central concepts of Western thought such as revolution, "The West," Enlightenment, and modernity. Consider the titles of the most notable, recently published books on the Haitian Revolution: *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (2004) by Sibylle Fischer, *Transcripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (2004) by David Scott, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* (2008) by Nick Nesbitt, and *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (2009) by Susan Buck-Morss. It is not coincidence that all these books were all published within five years of the bicentennial of the end of the Haitian Revolution in 2004. Yet while the anniversary of Haiti's independence certainly stimulated academic production on the Haitian Revolution, and these volumes contribute important knowledge fundamental to this dissertation, the common themes and ideas of this body of scholarship exemplified in the keywords in their titles underline how dominant Eurocentric conceptualizations of knowledge and history remain today even in projects attempting to un-silence the Haitian Revolution. All these projects at some level attempt the contradictory task of deploying critical frameworks that originate in Enlightenment thinking to un-silence the Haitian Revolution. Put in other words, this scholarship tends to adopt theoretical approaches rooted in epistemologies that have proven inadequate in registering much less elucidating these particular historical events. Put more bluntly, I believe scholars need to interrogate how coloniality and uneven power relations that profoundly mark academe grant

certain critical frameworks greater legibility, purchase, and traction and motivate this tendency to frame and to recuperate the contributions of Haiti's revolutionaries within intellectual traditions of the West, traditions grounded in the very epistemologies that silenced Haiti, the Haitian Revolution, and Haitians in the first place.

Part 2: Knowledge from the (Caribbean) Borderlands

Beyond these scholarly debates, the silencing of the Haitian Revolution affects contemporary lived experiences in practical, quotidian ways throughout the Caribbean, the Americas, and the world as Jamaican painter, photographer, and professor in political philosophy and culture at the University of the West Indies at Mona, Clinton A. Hutton underlines:

I first read C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* as a youngster. It took me into a realm of consciousness and emotion that I have never been into before. You see, the All-Age school that I attended at age 6 and for the next 10 years until I was 16, never taught its students about the nature and the extent of the brutality and inhumanity of the enslavement of our African forebears nor of the self-emancipatory ethos they cultivated to free themselves.

The Haitian Revolution was perhaps the highest expression of this freedom making ethos. Yet, I did not learn about the Haitian Revolution in school. We were not taught about it and about the people who made it. [...]

We never heard of names like Dutty Boukman, Toussaint Louverture, Sans-Souci, Moïse, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe, but we knew about Thomas Clarkson, William Wilberforce and Thomas Buxton. And somehow, in what we were taught and in what we learned, emancipation seemed to us like a gift emanating from the generosity of Clarkson, Wilberforce, Buxton, and other European 'Friends of the Negroes.'⁵⁰

Hutton's personal anecdote illustrates succinctly how the silencing of the Haitian Revolution folds into other silences of the Caribbean borderlands, in his case the silences in a public school education in Jamaica that whitewashed the island's history of slavery, passed over figures of the African diaspora from the Haitian Revolution and from Jamaica in favor of white European abolitionists, and thus portrayed Europe as the benevolent source of slavery's abolition and black emancipation. For Hutton, *The Black Jacobins* provided a powerful decolonial counter-narrative

to the colonized, state-sanctioned history he learned as a child in public school, opening an imaginary space similar to that which Emma Pérez embraces in the character Pilar's call to "Forget the Alamo" in *Lone Star*.

After introducing the anecdote in the style of conventional, realist autobiography, the style of Hutton's writing shifts as he returns to his encounter with C.L.R. James's history of the Haitian Revolution and portrays the text's transformative power through poetic reverie:

Reading *The Black Jacobins* was, for me, a journey into imagination and memory: my imagination assessing—imagining memory, memory of ancestral agency with all its fortitude, its majestic battles nurturing a majestic Revolution, a movement of ritualized disparaged Black bodies ritualizing freedom fighting movements and sounds, Black bodies fighting and dying and living and becoming us, becoming them, so that we can become us. In my own journey of becoming, I read *The Black Jacobins* once, twice, many times, over the years, each time journeying further and further into an atavistic way of discerning, of knowing, of assessing this journey journeying into my journey of becoming. (1-2)

With rhythms and repetitions—"my imagination assessing—imagining memory, memory of ancestral agency...this journey journeying into my journey of becoming"—Hutton evokes the power of imaginative inward journeys: the cyclical hermeneutics of reading, interpreting, and rereading a text; the process of reconnecting with one's antecedents; and finally the discovery of new aspects of oneself. This poetic portion of Hutton's personal anecdote is contradictory, extra-logical even; its oneiric tone intimates the presence of the unconscious and the ineffable in these unknowable silences of the past rediscovered. Hutton, of course, has no direct memory of the events from *The Black Jacobins*; this "memory" is "atavistic," imaginary. Hutton's writing nevertheless suggests that the forging of impossible connections for the transmission of lost knowledge through imaginative, even spiritual awakenings can un-silence the past.

The Personal and the Imaginative in Haitian Studies

I open the second part of this chapter with this personal anecdote from Clinton A. Hutton's *The Logic & Historic Significance of the Haitian Revolution & the Cosmological Roots of Haitian Freedom* not only to provide an example of the power of historical narratives of the Haitian Revolution in the Caribbean borderlands but also to highlight how Hutton deploys narrative strategies common in decolonial projects that un-silence marginalized histories. In these first pages of a scholarly volume on the Haitian Revolution, a transdisciplinary book blending philosophy, political science, and history, Hutton turns to personal anecdote and to imaginative exploration as disruptive, redemptive decolonial acts, as solutions to the at times seemingly intractable aporia of how to un-silence histories lost to the past.

I would like to suggest that Hutton's anecdote presents what the Welsh, Marxist cultural critic Raymond Williams might call a "structure of feeling," a term Williams coined to refer to "meanings and values as they are actually lived and felt."⁵¹ Williams' structure of feeling is particularly apt in this context because it validates and makes material the lived experiences and meaning making of peoples in conflict with or at the margins of dominant cultures. Moreover, Williams valorizes structures of feeling as emergent cultural practices not yet codified by dominant culture; structures of feeling presage the future shape of things to come. This structure of feeling in Hutton's anecdote outlines one of the most common conundrums of coloniality often addressed in Haitian Studies and Latina/o Studies: given that dominant cultures have elided and erased the experiences and histories of marginalized peoples, how can these experiences and histories be un-silenced? Faced with these questions, scholars such as Hutton, often turn to the personal and undertake imaginative journeys—at times poetic, at others spiritual, often both—to un-silence the un-archived experiences and silenced histories of the marginalized. This turn to the personal and to the imaginative, present to different degrees and in different manners, infuses

the form and the content of two of the most important works of Haitian Studies, Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* and Colin Dayan's *Haiti, History, and the Gods*.

Trouillot opens and closes *Silencing the Past* and prefaces four of its five chapters with personal anecdotes that elucidate the book's scholarly contents. Yet although Trouillot deploys personal anecdote throughout the volume, he understands imagination as incompatible with historiography, strictly speaking. The anecdote prefacing *Silencing the Past*'s second chapter makes this quite clear. In it, a student interrupts Trouillot's lecture criticizing his assignment of readings by white scholars, asking, "What can they know about slavery? Where were they when we were jumping off the boats? When we chose death over misery and killed our own children to spare them from a life of rape?"⁵² Trouillot asserts that this student's imaginative identification is factually and materially incorrect; she never leaped off a slave ship. Later, another student interrupts Trouillot again to ask why they discuss the lives of slaves instead of black millionaires. Faced with these two memories, overwhelmed by the limitations of time and teaching, Trouillot imagines an impossible scenario:

I wish I could shuffle the years and put both young women in the same room. We would have shared stories not yet in the archive. We would have read Ntozake Shange's tale of a colored girl dreaming of Toussaint Louverture and the revolution that the world forgot...

We all need histories no history book can tell, but they are not in the classroom—not the history classroom anyway. They are in the lessons we learn at home, in poetry and childhood games, in what is left of history when we close the history books with their verifiable facts. (71-72)

For Trouillot, the imagination might not have a place in historiography but the imaginative worlds of personal experience, family life, poetry, play, and other narratives not preoccupied with factuality or historicity are nevertheless necessary to un-silence the past. Indeed *Silencing the Past*, in its critique of history, valorization of alternative archives, and self-reflexive critical deployment of anecdotes both personal and historical becomes something other than history, a

hybrid genre mixing the creative and the analytical. Operating through an associative poetics rather than beholden exclusively to causal logic, Trouillot's text eschews linear historical narratives to explore the vicissitudes and ironies of coloniality by hopscotching between personal anecdote, historical narratives, and historiographical criticism across a complex interconnected geography of sites along the US-Mexico border and throughout the Caribbean borderlands.

Colin Dayan's *Haiti, History, and the Gods* exhibits a generic hybridity akin to that of Trouillot's text blending history, literary criticism, and ethnography in what Dayan calls "literary fieldwork."⁵³ Despite Dayan's declared "disdain" for "'identity politics' or 'personal criticism,'" despite her vow to avoid beginning her book with a personal narrative of her childhood, Dayan nevertheless opens the prologue to *Haiti, History, and the Gods* with personal memories, anecdotes drawn from her travels as a teen with her uncle in Haiti accompanied by photographs that corroborate the experiences (xii). Whereas Hutton recognizes C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* and Trouillot identifies personal experiences, the arts, and the ludic as sources for decolonial counter-narratives, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* argues that Haitian vodou contains remnants and fragments of historical narratives silenced in the "drum and trumpet histories of empire," and that "vodou practices must be viewed as ritual reenactments of Haiti's colonial past, even more than as retentions from Africa" (xvii).

The transformation of the first leader of independent Haiti, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, from historical figure into a *lwa*—a spirit or divinity of vodou who acts as intermediary between the profane and the divine—becomes the focus of Dayan's exploration of vodou as decolonial archive. Famous for declaring Haiti independent and himself the avenger of the New World, and equally infamous for ordering the murder by sword, spear, hatchet, and machete of over three thousand French men, women, and children, Dessalines strikes a complex, contradictory profile

in Haitian history. Unlike Toussaint Louverture who spoke French and Creole, was literate, and died a martyr's death abroad as the result of France's deceitful betrayal, it is unclear what languages Dessalines spoke though he was clearly illiterate and died the death of a tyrant not only killed but literally ripped apart by his own people.

This terror, violence, complexity, and contradiction at the heart of Dessalines' story has made him both a less popular subject for biographical histories than Toussaint and the only historical figure from the Haitian Revolution to enter permanently vodou's pantheon as a *lwa*. Despite Dessalines's deification, only in the twentieth century has Haiti's political elite begun to recuperate the leader as a symbol of Haitian independence. Dayan contrasts this official state-sanctioned version of Dessalines with his portrayal in vodou:

Called by the literate elite "the Great One," "the Savior," "the Lover of Justice," and "the Liberator," the Dessalines remembered by vodou initiates is far less comforting or instrumental. They know how unheroic the hero-turned-god could be. The image of Dessalines in the cult of the people remains equivocal and corruptible: a trace of what is absorbed by the mind and animated in the gut. How inevitable are the oscillations from hero to detritus, from power to vulnerability, from awe to ridicule: a convertibility that vodou would keep working, viable, and necessary.

Not simply master or tyrant, but also slave and supplicant, Dessalines and the religious rituals associated with him keep the ambiguities of power intact... Unlike the spectacles of sanctification endorsed by the urban literati and the politicians, the history reconstructed by the gods and their devotees is not always one of revolt and triumph. Gods held in the mind and embodied in ceremony reenact what historians often forget: the compulsion to serve, the potency and virtue of atrocity. The very suppression, inarticulateness, and ruptures in ritual might say something about the ambivalences of the revolution: it was not so liberating as mythologizers or ideologues make it out to be, and the dispossessed who continue to suffer and remember, know this. (28-29)

Despite Dayan's compelling identification of vodou as a decolonial archive containing historically silenced counter-narratives, the un-silencing of these histories nevertheless requires

imaginative intellectual labor, in no small part because vodou incorporates contradictory historical fragments, creating a complex, nuanced understanding of Dessalines as historical figure and *lwa*, but also because parsing apart fictive and historical elements present in vodou today is, at times, impossible.

Perhaps the most famous example of this contradictory blending of fiction and history through vodou remains the apocryphal tale of the ritual at Bois Caïman on or around 14 August 1791, when Dutty Boukman, a Jamaican-born *oungan*, or vodou priest, is said to have led enslaved laborers in a religious ceremony sanctifying their plans for the insurrections that would eventually lead to the Haitian Revolution. Though never corroborated with absolute certainty, the narrative of Bois Caïman repeats throughout histories of the Haitian Revolution. The first independent Caribbean nation is thus imagined to have emerged from this possibly fictive vodou ritual divisively characterized by the slave-owning Atlantic imperial powers as a pact with the devil, on the one hand, and by Haitians as the foundational rite of their nation, on the other.

Although the account of Bois Caïman cannot be confirmed, and thus exists somewhere between fact and fiction, it nevertheless remains a key component of foundational national narratives of Haiti, written and spoken, by historians and laymen, foreign and Haitian alike. Though the story was, as Dayan insists, “quite possibly imagined by those who disdain it,” Haitians nevertheless have adopted the ritual of Bois Caïman as one of their own central myths of Haitian national identity (29). Unlike other official histories written at the service of the slave-owning powers or of Haitian nationalism with predetermined objectives such as silencing Haiti’s revolutionary ideals or catalyzing Haitian national cohesion, vodou according to Dayan subsumes and incorporates into itself contradictory fragments of the past that subvert expectations, upend hierarchies in unexpected ways, and smudge the borders between colonizer

and colonized. Dayan confesses her personal investments in these particular aspects of vodou writing that, “I want to reveal the blur at the heart of hierarchy. A mutually reinforcing double incarnation, or doubling between violation and sentiment, purity and impurity, is essential to my project” (xx). The story of Bois Caïman, like Dessalines deification, exemplifies these complex, contradictory, carnivalesque cross-contaminations through which history becomes transformed into ritualized practice in Haitian vodou.

“The Decolonial Imaginary”

Similar to Hutton’s inward journey and Trouillot’s redemptive pedagogical fantasy, Dayan embraces imagination not only in vodou itself but also as a scholarly strategy necessary to address the historical silences caused by coloniality writing that, “Facing what remains to a large extent an unreconstructible past—the responses of slaves to the terrors of slavery, to colonists, to the New World—I try to imagine what cannot be verified” (xvii). Yet despite embracing the power of the imaginative in un-silencing Haiti’s history, Dayan remains invested in vodou, not “as an experience of transcendence, an escapist move into dream or frenzy,” but rather in “the materiality of vodou practice, its concreteness, its obsession with details and fragments, with the very things that might seem to block or hinder belief” (xvii). There nevertheless remains a gap, an unknowable gulf between the material remnants of silenced histories embedded in vodou and the decolonial histories that Dayan imagines.

It is precisely in this gap between silenced material pasts and new decolonial histories—a space staged as an oneiric inward journey in Hutton, as a pedagogical ideal in Trouillot, and as vodou’s complex contradictions in Dayan—that I would like to locate the “decolonial imaginary,” a term coined by Chicana scholar and novelist Emma Pérez. Pérez conceptualizes this gap temporally rather than spatially, as the lag between coloniality and postcoloniality. The

origin of this temporal lag springs from debates among Chicana/o Studies scholars on whether Chicana/os occupy a colonial space-time as an internally colonized people in the US or a postcolonial space-time as a formerly colonized people part of a larger postcolonial, post-World War II global condition. For Pérez, the decolonial imaginary short circuits these debates operating interstitially in the borderlands between the colonial and the postcolonial, neither denying the continuing coloniality of power in the present nor its often-announced yet never definitive demise implied in the turn to the post-colonial. In this interstitial lag between the colonial and the postcolonial, Pérez proposes the decolonial imaginary as “a rupturing space, an alternative to that which is written in history... where differential politics and social dilemmas are negotiated.”⁵⁴

The decolonial, for Pérez, however, is more than just a means of negotiating a third space between Chicana/o Studies scholars debating opposing colonial and postcolonial models of periodicity. For Pérez the decolonial imaginary combats the colonial imaginary, the dominant Eurocentric and Anglo-American historiographical categories such as “the ‘West’ or the ‘frontier’” that already necessarily inscribe particular silences into history (5). Similar to Haitian Studies scholars who attempt to un-silence, recuperate, and re-inscribe Haiti’s silenced histories within the very Enlightenment frameworks that silenced Haiti in the first place, Pérez argues that, “Chicana/o historiography has been circumscribed by traditional historical imagination. This means that even the most radical Chicana/o historiographies are influenced by the very colonial imaginary against which they rebel” (5). The decolonial imaginary, for Pérez, allows scholars, rather than simply accepting coloniality “as the norm,” to identify and to dispute coloniality as a problematic framework that proscribes certain realities and experiences at the same time that it privileges others (6).

Pérez describes the decolonial imaginary in poetic terms particularly resonant with Haiti's spectral presence in Caribbean Latina/o cultural production writing that "the decolonial imaginary is intangible to many because it acts much like a shadow in the dark. It survives as a faint outline gliding against a wall or an object. The shadow is the figure between the subject and the object on which it is cast, moving and breathing through an in-between space" (6). Similarly to legacies of the Haitian Revolution that haunt contemporary Caribbean Latina/o cultural production, Pérez depicts the decolonial imaginary as an interstitial trace, an impossible shadow cast in the dark, an invisible and silenced figure intervening between subject and object. This rich metaphor of the shadow introduces perhaps the most opaque but also the most generative of Pérez's formulations about the decolonial imaginary as she turns to psychoanalysis to explain her use of the word "imaginary," evoking "fragmented identities, fragmented realities that are 'real,' but a real that is in question" (6). Continuing with her explanation of the term "imaginary," Pérez interposes coloniality between the subject and object of Lacan's mirror stage:

For my purpose, the imaginary is the mirrored identity where coloniality overshadows the image in the mirror. Ever-present, it is that which is between the subject and the object being reflected, splintering the object in a shattered mirror, where kaleidoscopic identities are burst open and where the colonial self and colonized other both become elements of multiple, mobile categoric identities. (6-7)

For Pérez, coloniality intervenes within the imaginary, the order Lacan most strongly associates with identity and identification, to disrupt, warp, and problematize identification and a whole range of terms describing aspects of human existence and experiences that are often opposed in binary such as black/white, female/male, homosexual/heterosexual, colonized/colonizer. Within the framework of the decolonial imaginary Pérez argues that the borders between these categories blur: "One is not simply oppressed or victimized, nor is one only oppressor or victimizer. Rather, one negotiates within the imaginary to a decolonizing otherness where all

identities are at work in one way or another” (7).

While this more nuanced framework of identity does not necessarily undo the privileging of certain subjectivities, particularly male subjectivity since, “women’s activities are unseen, unthought, merely a shadow in the background of the colonial mind,” Pérez nevertheless argues that, “Chicana, Mexicana, India, and mestizo actions, words spoken and unspoken, survive and persist whether acknowledged or not” (7). Despite underlining at various moments the “intangible” nature of the decolonial imaginary, Pérez insists, similarly to Dayan, on the materiality of what Chicana women have left behind, “acknowledged or not,” and adopts these material remnants as a decolonial archive from which to write Chicanas back into history as the subtitle of *The Decolonial Imaginary* suggests.

Decolonial Imaginaries

But Emma Pérez is not only a historian, she is also a novelist and thus writes Chicanas into history in both her scholarly and creative texts. While Pérez’s contributions are indeed notable, as an established Chicana scholar who is also a successful creative writer, Pérez is thankfully not unique. In fact, in recent decades the blurring of creative and academic production has become a characteristic strength of the output of queer intellectuals of color, in general, and queer Chicana academics in particular. So much so that Latina/o Studies scholar Marivel T. Danielson concludes her volume *Homecoming Queers: Desire and Difference in Chicana Latina Cultural Production* (2009) with an exploration of how queer women of color use creativity “defined here as the personal, emotional, and poetic investment of an author into her critical work... as a tool to both penetrate the mainstream space of hegemonic academia and to create new spaces within academia for the production of and respect for alternative modes of scholarship.”⁵⁵

In her conclusion, Danielson argues that creativity within academe often exists in subordination to theory, which forms part of what Pérez might call the colonial imaginary of academe as a privileged scholarly category “constructed upon inherently racist, sexist, and homophobic ideologies, since the positionalities of the subjects responsible for creating the ideal models are rarely seen to contribute to the value systems embedded within these ideals” (171). For Danielson, theory, in other words, privileges—through its very pretensions to objectivity, impartiality, and universality—male, white, heteronormative subjectivities as the default human experience. Danielson charts the hierarchical values academics tend to associate with the two categories:

theory		creativity
true	→	fictional
unbiased	→	biased
impersonal	→	emotional
critical	→	political
analytical	→	poetic (171)

For Danielson, when a scholar eschews obscuring her subjectivity with the guise of anonymous impartiality and assumes in her scholarship subject positions that deviate from privileged norms, “as women, queer, person of color, her discourse runs a much greater risk of being dismissed as emotional, personal, biased, and political” (172).

I understand this position that Danielson describes as a double bind, a situation in which minoritized scholars are confronted with two irreconcilable demands: adopt anonymity and impartiality in order to access the privileged discourse of theory, on the one hand, and assume one’s under-represented subjectivity, on the other. I sympathize with Danielson’s argument because some of the labor that the university where I am currently earning my doctorate has asked of me during my time here has put me precisely in this position by both calling on me to deploy my personal experience as a Latino as a source of expertise and knowledge to the

university's benefit while simultaneously undermining that knowledge as personal, biased, emotional, and political.⁵⁶

Yet as Danielson implicitly recognizes from the outset of her conclusion, the arrows of her chart are not unidirectional but also flow the other way; marginalized people have successfully assumed their subjectivity and deployed the creative and the personal to great success in academe, transforming universities and creating new, more welcoming spaces within historically exclusive institutions. Emma Pérez, for her part, recognizes this power of minoritized, marginalized subjectivities to destabilize academia's status quo writing that:

The subjectivity introduced by, for example, Chicana/os and Native Americans of the Southwest is a subjectivity that has challenged histories of the region at least since the 1960s, and in many cases since the early twentieth century. These challenges have pushed the detached observer, writer, historian to examine the ways in which the colonial imaginary is structuring the very form of their/our objectivity by compelling authors to situate themselves in the making of the "frontier" or the "United States of America."⁵⁷

While Pérez here writes specifically about how Chicana/o and indigenous subjectivities have challenged and transformed historiography of the US Southwest, exposing the subjective nature of the supposed objectivity of dominant positionalities and established categories, Pérez makes observations in this passage applicable well beyond this specific context. I would therefore like to close this chapter by multiplying and pluralizing Emma Pérez's idea of the decolonial imaginary through a brief exploration of the decolonial imaginaries at work in the border thinking of some of the most celebrated Chicana and Latina writers today: Cherríe Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa, Sandra Cisneros, and Julia Alvarez.

In their work individually and together Moraga and Anzaldúa assume their marginalized, minoritized subjectivities as queer scholars of color to create deeply personal, imaginative, and creative theory blurring generic and disciplinary borders. Moraga and Anzaldúa through

theoretical concepts such as theory in the flesh and autohistoria vindicate the embodied experiences of marginalized, minoritized subjects whose histories have been silenced. Cherríe Moraga developed the idea of theory in the flesh in collaboration with Gloria Anzaldúa in their landmark collection *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Women of Color* (1981). Moraga prefaces the section of *This Bridge Called My Back* titled “Theory in the Flesh,” writing, “A theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity. Here, we attempt to bridge the contradictions in our experience.”⁵⁸ This section of the collection “Theory in the Flesh” explores this concept of embodied, lived theory through personal anecdotes written by Asian American, Latina, Chicana, Latin American, and Native American women that blend poetry, history, critical theory, anecdote, and personal essay simultaneously documenting, un-silencing, and validating the lived experiences of marginalized people in holistic, exploratory, genre blending approaches to knowledge production through creative writing and exemplifying inclusive coalition-building among women of color.

Like Moraga’s and Anzaldúa’s collection *This Bridge Called my Back*, Anzaldúa’s *Borderland/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* enacts a blending of poetic self-reflection, personal anecdote, and spiritual explorations of history, theory, and culture across multiple genres of writing to develop what Anzaldúa would later call autohistoria, a history of the self.⁵⁹ In Anzaldúa’s search for her voice through autohistoria she emphasizes the link between language and identity writing:

Until I can accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex and all the other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself. Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch code without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish... my tongue will be illegitimate.

I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent's tongue—my woman voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice, I will overcome the tradition of silence.⁶⁰

Here Anzaldúa complicates the cliché of finding one's voice by describing hers as emanating from a serpentine tongue, a tongue split between languages, bifurcated by multiple borders.

Autohistoria, for Anzaldúa then, not only un-silences those who have been left without voice, it offers rich possibilities for languages previously delegitimized, overlooked, and silenced.

Although the existence of communities speaking Spanglish, Creoles, and other border languages should be sufficient justification to give these languages linguistic legitimacy and cultural currency this has not been the case historically. The forcefulness and urgency of Anzaldúa's claim—"I will have my voice"—underlines a deep, existential need she succinctly and clearly pinpoints. The simple, radical idea that Anzaldúa clearly states here applies widely across all of the cultural production analyzed in this dissertation; Haïtien/nes, Dominicana/os, Cubana/os, Puertorriqueña/os, border-dwellers, border-crossers, and immigrants the world over, no matter the language one speaks, no matter the color of one's skin, no one should be "made to feel ashamed of existing."

In the 1980s as Moraga and Anzaldúa cultivated community among women of color helping develop some of the foundational ideas and ideals of feminism and border thinking, other Chicana writers elsewhere also found their voices by validating and un-silencing their own lived experiences. In the preface to the tenth anniversary edition of *The House on Mango Street* (1991) originally published three years before Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Sandra Cisneros describes finding her otherness and her voice as a writer after reading Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* while completing her MFA at the University of Iowa:

...it occurred to me that none of the books in this class or in any of my classes, in all the years of my education, had ever discussed a house like mine. Not in books

or magazines or films. My classmates had come from real houses, real neighborhoods, ones they could point to, but what did I know?

When I went home that evening and realized my education had been a lie—had made presumptions about what was "normal," what was American, what was valuable—I wanted to quit school right then and there, but I didn't. Instead, I got angry, and anger when it is used to act, when it is used nonviolently, has power. I asked myself what I could write about that my classmates could not. I didn't know what I wanted exactly, but I did have enough sense to know what I didn't want. I didn't want to sound like my classmates; I didn't want to keep imitating the writers I had been reading. Their voices were right for them but not for me.⁶¹

Cisneros recognizes the absence of her own lived experience in her encounter with Bachelard's theoretical text, which explores the phenomenology of architecture, the lived experience of spatial types within a house. This exclusion of Cisneros's lived experience from the supposedly universal theory of what a house is sparks a rebellion in the young author's heart. Rather than trying to emulate the voice of the writers her professors ask her to read, Cisneros seeks to capture the voices of those she encounters in her own silenced lived experiences:

...I searched for the "ugliest" subjects I could find, the most un-"poetic"—slang, monologues in which waitresses or kids talked their own lives. I was trying as best I could to write the kind of book I had never seen in a library or in a school, the kind of book not even my professors could write. Each week I ingested the class readings and then went off and did the opposite. It was a quiet revolution, perhaps a reaction taken to extremes, but it was out of this negative experience that I found something positive: my own voice.

The language in *Mango Street* is based on speech. It's very much an antiacademic voice—a child's voice, a girl's voice, a poor girl's voice, a spoken voice, the voice of an American-Mexican. It's in this rebellious realm of antipoetics that I tried to create a poetic text with the most unofficial language I could find. I did it neither ingenuously nor naturally. It was as clear to me as if I were tossing a Molotov.⁶²

As a professor invested in the elusive, liberatory possibilities of education, I love that Cisneros's "quiet revolution" begins by angrily and roundly rejecting the domestic spaces Bachelard describes in his famous tome as unrepresentative of her lived experience; I often joke with my students that I am not interested in whether or not they enjoy the texts we read but rather in what

they think about them, good or bad, and this is the perfect example of why. Cisneros harnesses the anger of realizing that her experiences have been silenced and ignored in her schooling and rebels, “as clear as if [she] were tossing a Molotov.” to develop an “antipoetics” that captures her and her communities’ lived experiences with all the nuances of their forked, serpentine tongues.

Though Chicana women are primarily responsible for the development of border thinking, and thus as a body of knowledge border thinking is heavily indebted to and invested in the lived experiences of the US-Mexico border, whether in Southern California, South Texas, or in the US Midwest, in their theoretical work Moraga, Anzaldúa, and Cisneros practiced inclusivity and alliance building from the outset. In *This Bridge Called My Back*, Moraga and Anzaldúa gathered the writings of many women of color with different experiences and ideas. In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa conceives of the border as a universal human experience writing that, “the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.”⁶³ Cisneros, like Moraga and Anzaldúa, reclaims her experience to find her own unique voice as a writer who captures the voices of her community.

Given this inclusivity built into border thinking from its beginnings, it’s not surprising that Latina/os of other diasporas and other origins connected with border thinking. In the twentieth anniversary edition of *Borderland/La Frontera* Dominican-American writer Julia Alvarez movingly describes the importance of Anzaldúa’s contributions to her personally:

... We did not fit in there; we did not fit in here. We were caught between worlds, a no man’s land, no place for troubled mujeres...

Many of us got very lost. I began to write out of necessity, a way to integrate the many selves, to understand the confusion, string for the labyrinth. But my writing was a private matter, a lonely way to make sense of the division.

To drown out, momentarily, what the larger culture was telling me—something was wrong with me...

In 1981 *This Bridge Called My Back*, edited by Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, was published by Persephone Press. Two years later, Moraga published *Loving in the War Years*. In 1984 came *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* (Kitchen Table Press) and *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. And there were other stories, essays, poems, novels, plays—voices were emerging, a conversation had begun among ourselves and with the rest of America, north and south. But it wasn't until 1987 when Gloria Anzaldúa published *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* that a map was charted—the old divisive no man's land became a borderland, a place where a new kind of self was being created.

When I read *Borderlands* in 1988 in preparation for teaching the first course on Latin[a]o literature at Middlebury College, my heart was in my throat. Anzaldúa was giving voice to what it meant to be a hybrid, a mixture, a mestiza.⁶⁴

Alvarez concisely signals several important points about border thinking in this short passage: the violence of the border from which border thinking directly springs, the genealogy of Chicana writers fundamental to border thinking, and border thinking's integral role in the emergence of Latina/o Studies as we know it today.

While border thinking today is rightly celebrated as a liberatory, decolonial praxis that validates and elucidates the lived experiences of people marginalized by race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexuality, and/or disability, border thinking springs directly from resistance to and survival strategies against a long, ongoing history of psychological and physical trauma caused by terror and violence practiced against these very same marginalized peoples. Alvarez and Anzaldúa then both understand the border to be a place of physical and psychological violence. While Alvarez euphemistically describes how dominant cultures think there's something wrong with border dwellers, Anzaldúa portrays the violence of the border in more visceral, violent, and poetic terms as a:

1,950 mile-long open wound
dividing a pueblo, a culture
running down the length of my body
staking fence rods in my flesh
splits me splits me

me raja me raja
this is my home
this thin edge of
barbwire.⁶⁵

From Alvarez's description of her heart in her throat as she read *Borderlands/La Frontera* for the first time and her admission that Anzaldúa put into words experiences that had haunted her and that had motivated her early writing as a survival strategy, I imagine Alvarez's experience reading Anzaldúa to have been analogous to Clinton A. Hutton's experience reading C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* for the first time. Alvarez's strong identification with Anzaldúa's work attests to the fact that despite the specificity of Anzaldúa's imagery and the intimate, personal nature of the experiences Anzaldúa describes in *Borderland/La Frontera*, her work resonates well beyond Chicana/o contexts and influenced important Caribbean Latina/o writers like Julia Alvarez.

Alvarez's account of the emergence of border thinking and Latina/o Studies is in many ways canonical and unsurprising. I am also keenly aware of Alvarez's many privileges as an upper class white Dominican woman who migrated to the US in better circumstances than most Dominican and Haitian immigrants, who was educated in and teaches at elite private institutions, and who married a wealthy Anglo-American man who owns a coffee plantation in the DR. Despite all of this, I would nevertheless highlight Alvarez's unique position as one of the early pedagogues of Latina/o Studies in the late 1980s and as the first well-known and widely read Dominican-American writer in the US. Ever since reading Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, teaching that first Latina/o studies course at Middlebury, and establishing herself as a successful writer, Alvarez has been uniquely positioned to mentor younger writers from Haiti and the DR such as Edwidge Danticat and Junot Díaz, writers from more humble socioeconomic origins who identify as part of the African diaspora.

Despite her privilege, Alvarez served for this younger generation as one of many bridges between the queer Chicana roots of border thinking in Latina/o Studies and the work of a younger generation of writers, artists, and musicians that articulates radically inclusive Hispaniolan border identities connecting Haitians and Dominicans through recognition of these nations' common history of traumatic violence along their shared border. If this chapter opens a conversation across the fractal frontiers of the Caribbean borderlands to connect Haitian and Latina/o Studies, the next chapter looks to the work of this younger generation of Hispaniolan artists, musicians, and writers, some of whom Alvarez mentored. Though coloniality has silenced both the Haitian Revolution and the lived experiences of Latina/os, the scholars and artists of this chapter and those to come creatively and imaginatively respond by un-silencing the past and reclaiming alternative archives rooted in personal anecdote, folklore, popular culture, and religion as alternatives to dominant historical narratives to decolonize the Caribbean borderlands.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 1

¹ Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 1-2. Pérez, Emma. *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*, 126-127.

² Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 2; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

³ Pérez, Emma. *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*, 160, 126.

⁴ It is worth noting that the current Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush—an oil and real estate investor, the grandson of President George H. Bush, nephew of President George W. Bush, and son of former Florida Governor Jeb Bush and his Mexican-American mother—recently won the University of Texas at Austin’s first Latino Leadership Award and currently controls the historical archives as well as the grounds of the Alamo. His tenure as ward of the Alamo has been controversial. He has privatized the management of the historical site and removed its caretakers, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT). In April 2015 the DRT sued Bush for assuming control of the archives that their organization gathered and maintained for over a century. Clearly, the battle over the memory of the Alamo is far from over.

⁵ Pérez, Emma. *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*, 126.

⁶ Lorde, Audre. “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” 112.

⁷ Decena, Carlos Ulises. *Tacit Subjects: Belonging and Same-Sex Desire Among Dominican Immigrant Men*, 242.

⁸ La Fountain-Stokes, Lawrence M. *Queer Ricans : Cultures and Sexualities in the Diaspora*, xiv.

⁹ Accilien, Cécile & François, Anne. “Islands without Borders,” 46.

¹⁰ Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. “Bridging Islands: Gloria Anzaldúa and the Caribbean,” 273-274.

¹¹ Soto-Crespo, Ramón E. *Mainland Passage: The Cultural Anomaly of Puerto Rico*, 11.

¹² Soto-Crespo, Ramón E. *Mainland Passage: The Cultural Anomaly of Puerto Rico*, 6-7. Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. “Bridging Islands: Gloria Anzaldúa and the Caribbean,” 272.

¹³ The two parts of this chapter are of unequal length for a rather practical reason. Whereas each succeeding chapter in this dissertation after this one addresses Caribbean Latina/o cultural production critically read in conjunction with Latina/o Studies theory and criticism from, this chapter provides the only space dedicated exclusively to Haitian Studies. I therefore felt compelled to give my discussion of historiographies of the Haitian Revolution ample space here.

¹⁴ Volumes such as Lorgia García Peña's *Archiving Contradictions: Bodies, Nations and the Production of Dominicanidad*, under contract at Duke University Press, and María Cristina Fumagalli's *On the Edge: Writing the Border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic*, which will be published in June 2015 by Liverpool University Press, are beginning to address this lack of comparative studies addressing the impact of Haiti in Dominican Studies. My scholarship is, to my knowledge, the first to look at legacies of the Haitian Revolution across the Hispanophone Caribbean and its diasporas.

¹⁵ Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 27.

¹⁶ Nesbitt, Nick. "Turning the Tide: The Problem of Popular Insurgency in Haitian Revolutionary Historiography," 28.

¹⁷ Dubois, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 6.

¹⁸ Geggus, David Patrick. *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 42.

¹⁹ Dayan, Joan. *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, xvii.

²⁰ Dubois, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 1.

²¹ In the preface to the first edition of *The Black Jacobins*, C.L.R. James writes, "The revolt is the only successful slave revolt in history," (ix). The idea has been repeated often since, notably by Laurent Dubois (1), J. Michael Dash (2001; 2), and Susan Buck-Morss (59).

²² There are unfortunately too many examples available of how the Haitian Revolution and Haiti have been cast as failures to list them all here. In an interview with Haitian anthropologist and artist Gina Ulysse, Sibylle Fischer offers, "one of the more egregious examples," of how Haiti has been isolated and cast as a failure from Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (1996) in which, "Huntington argues that Haiti belongs to the category of countries that are not part of any of the world's great civilizations... "Haiti, 'the neighbor nobody wants,' is truly a kinless country" (72).

²³ Nesbitt, Nick. "The Idea of 1804," 8.

²⁴ Reinhardt, Thomas. "Two Hundred Years of Forgetting: Hushing up the Haitian Revolution," 252; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

²⁵ Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 27; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

²⁶ Dubois, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, vii; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

²⁷ Dessalines, Jean-Jacques. "Liberty or Death. Proclamation. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Governor General, to the People of Hayti."

²⁸ For an in depth analysis of the Taino origins of Haiti's name, see David Patrick Geggus's "The Naming of Haiti" in *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (2002).

²⁹ Dubois, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 7.

³⁰ James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 388.

³¹ Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 82.

³² Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 104. Dubois, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 2.

³³ Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 27.

³⁴ James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 288.

³⁵ Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 82, 87; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text..

³⁶ Scott, David. *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, 102.

³⁷ Fick, Carolyn. *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, xiii; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

³⁸ Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 88. James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 288.

³⁹ Qtd. in Scott, David. *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, 170.

⁴⁰ James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 13.

⁴¹ Dubois, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 2.

⁴² James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, viii.

⁴³ Between 1938 and 1962 Libya, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, Ghana, Guinea, Cameroon, Togo,

Mali, Madagascar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Senegal, Nigeria, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania gained independence.

⁴⁴ After 1962 Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Barbados, the Bahamas, Grenada, Suriname, Dominica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Belize, Antigua and Barbuda, and Saint Kitts and Nevis gained independence.

⁴⁵ James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, vii, 391-392.

⁴⁶ James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, viii. Qtd. in Scott, David. *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, 170.

⁴⁷ James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 418.

⁴⁸ Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 152-153; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁴⁹ Scott, David. *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, 1.

⁵⁰ Hutton, Clinton A. *The Logic & Historic Significance of the Haitian Revolution & the Cosmological Roots of Haitian Freedom*, 1; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁵¹ Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*, 132.

⁵² Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 70.

⁵³ Dayan, Joan. *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, xviii; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁵⁴ Pérez, Emma. *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*, 6; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁵⁵ Danielson, Marivel T. *Homecoming Queers: Desire and Difference in Chicana Latina Cultural Production*, 170; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁵⁶ Here I refer specifically to labor in student affairs and diversity and multicultural affairs at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. While I have found mentors and allies in every corner of the university, navigating the politics around the creation of the Carolina Latina/o Collaborative when it was just the dream of undergraduate was at times very trying for myself and other Latina/o students, faculty, and staff who volunteered to participate in the process.

⁵⁷ Pérez, Emma. *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*, 6.

⁵⁸ Moraga, Cherríe. "Theory in the Flesh," 23.

⁵⁹ Anzaldúa, Gloria. "now let us shift...the path of conocimiento...inner work, public acts," 578.

⁶⁰ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 81.

⁶¹ Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 19.

⁶⁴ Alvarez, Julia. "Gloria Anzaldúa, que en paz descansa."

⁶⁵ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 24-25.

CHAPTER 2: DAYS OF FUTURES PAST: FRACTAL FRONTIERS OF POST-APOCALYPTIC HISPANIOLAN SPACE-TIME

The first and only time I went to the Dominican Republic, to Santo Domingo, I stayed in a hotel on Calle de las Damas, the Hostal Nicolás de Ovando. After a long day of travel, we arrived at our hotel at around midnight, exhausted, only to find my credit cards were blocked. One is supposed to inform their bank of international travel, but I had not, and found myself at two in the morning with the receptionist in the lobby of the hotel, unable to check into my room, trying to call my bank's international customer service hotline.

Yet because of this inconvenience the receptionist and I had a couple of hours to talk. Negotiating which language to speak proved interesting. He spoke French, Spanish, and English perfectly but all with accents I didn't recognize. I complimented him, insensitively perhaps in hindsight, on his trilingualism, made a comment about how I couldn't place his accent, and asked him where he was from, if he was French, Dominican, or Haitian. He responded, "Soy Dominicano, de la capital." I'm Dominican, from the capital. Killing time, I told him how I was in the DR for the first time to see family, that I studied Haitian and Dominican literature, and that I'd perhaps like to write my dissertation about representations of Haiti in Caribbean literature. After an hour or so of talking, he said to me. "You know I'm actually Haitian," and went on to explain that he had a Masters in computer science from the University of Port-Au-Prince but couldn't get work there, that he had come without papers to Santo Domingo to work and send money back to his family, that he'd gotten the job at the hotel because he spoke multiple languages, but that his mother tongue was Kreyòl, and that he had said he was

Dominican earlier for fear of my reaction to his “true” identity.

The hotel I stayed at is a world patrimony site for UNESCO, the former residence of Nicolás de Ovando y Cáceres, third Governor and Captain-General of the Indies, Islands, and Firm-Land of the Ocean Seas of the Spanish Empire. It’s one of the oldest European-built structures still standing in the “New World,” on the first European-paved road in the Americas. Ovando came to the Caribbean in 1502 in the same expedition of thirty boats as Francisco Pizarro. Ovando had been sent to create structure in the colony, to found cities, build roads, establish clerical and religious bureaucracies, and put down the mounting indigenous Taíno resistance to Spanish rule. He ordered the hanging of the Taíno cacique princess Anacaona and brought with him the first African slaves to arrive in the Americas.

If Junot Díaz’s Dominican nerd hero Oscar de León “Wao” describes Santo Domingo as “Ground Zero of the New World,” then the hotel at which I stayed lay at the epicenter, and my conversation with the receptionist provides evidence of the aftershocks still felt five-hundred years later.¹ Looking back, I’m struck by my own ignorance, insensitivity, and naiveté, but thankful for the patience the receptionist showed me and the knowledge and insights he shared. In any case, I will not be returning to the Hostal Nicolás de Ovando. In hindsight, with knowledge of the history of the buildings in which the hotel operates, I find my own ignorance shameful and the idea that the grounds of the Hostal Nicolás de Ovando—this site where the specters of the historical catastrophes of the Americas live on silenced, unspoken, under erasure—serve as a place of leisure and luxury for tourists visiting Santo Domingo today horrific. Tourists—and to be clear, I myself have been among them—sunbathe right now on the very grounds where the plans for the extermination of the indigenous peoples and the enslavement of Africans in the Americas first took shape.

Introduction

The opening paragraphs of the introduction to this dissertation draw parallels between the US-Mexico and Dominican-Haitian borders as inspiration for a fractal model of multilayered borders (dis)connecting humanity in the Caribbean and its diasporas. Laying the foundation for this model of fractal frontiers, chapter one border crosses between Haitian and Latina/o Studies creating a dialogue between decolonial approaches to un-silencing Haiti's revolutionary history and the US-Mexico borderlands. This chapter returns to the Dominican-Haitian border to weave together these threads from the introduction and the first chapter in the analysis of contemporary Dominican cultural production. In this chapter I argue that Dominican artists George Lewis, Jr., David Pérez Karmadavis, and Junot Díaz perform cultural labor from the island and from diaspora evoking violent histories and catastrophic disasters related to the Haitian Revolution that have shaped Hispaniola and the Caribbean today as post-apocalyptic diasporic borderlands connecting the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and the Americas across multilayered, fractal frontiers structured by coloniality and crisscrossed by decolonial resistance. The work of Lewis, Karmadavis, and Díaz exemplifies the diverse approaches Dominican cultural production takes to exploring Hispaniola's unique position in the Caribbean borderlands and the African diaspora. Lewis's music subtly un-silences the effects of the long history of racial terror policing sexuality in the Caribbean and the Americas. Karmadavis's performance art embodies histories common to Dominicans and Haitians rearticulating Hispaniola as Afro-diasporic borderlands. Finally, Díaz portrays Dominican anti-Haitian racism, black denial, and self-hatred as but part of the larger pattern of coloniality plaguing the African diaspora and animating the master metaphors of global popular culture today. The work of these artists demonstrates the urgent need for Latina/o Studies scholars to engage the Haitian Revolution's role in the histories of Hispaniola and the

African diaspora to better understand how coloniality shapes not only hierarchies intersectionally articulated to class, race, gender, sexuality, and ability but also cultural production of all kinds as well the most intimate orders of the heart and mind in the Dominican Republic and its diaspora.

Conceptualizing Hispaniola—and the Caribbean more broadly—as a post-apocalyptic diasporic borderlands, a crossroads where manifold fractal frontiers converge, creates space for cultural and historical commonalities Haitians and Dominicans share to expand understandings of Dominican-ness and to allow for more porous definitions of Dominican belonging that better account for the diversity of the cultural production and of the lived experiences of Dominican and Dominican-American artists analyzed in the pages that follow both in this chapter and in chapter three. This conceptual flexibility of Dominican-ness is necessary given the diversity of these artists and their work. The Dominican artists from this chapter—George Lewis, Jr., David Pérez Karmadavis, and Junot Díaz—and from chapter three—Angie Cruz and Rita Indiana Hernández—have worked in English and in Spanish in the Dominican Republic, the United States, Guatemala, England, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Italy, Puerto Rico, and Spain, in various fields and media as musicians, visual and performance artists, writers, editors, and filmmakers. Haiti and the Haitian Revolution appear in these artists’ work in a variety of intensities and forms ranging from hauntingly oblique soupçons to heavy-handedly explicit national symbols. This rich diversity of languages, locations, media, and approaches in the contemporary Dominican cultural production begins to provide an idea of the vast and diverse realm of possibilities in which certain Dominican artists are articulating alternative understandings of Hispaniola as a diasporic borderlands connecting Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the past, present, and future, on the island and beyond.

I open this chapter's analysis of Dominican cultural production with a comparison of how the work of two Dominican artists—the US-based musician George Lewis, Jr. and the Guatemalan-based performance artist David Pérez Karmadavis—takes very different approaches to un-silencing violent histories of the Hispaniolan borderlands. I then turn to Junot Díaz's 2011 article, "Apocalypse: What Disasters Reveal" which argues that the silencing of the Haitian Revolution forms a fundamental link in a long chain of silenced historical catastrophes that transformed the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 into what Díaz calls a social disaster and what Senior Researcher at Worldwatch Institute Janet Abramovitz would call an unnatural disaster. In the article, Díaz formulates an ethics of un-silencing the past to imagine better futures, an ethics that Díaz and Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat have put into practice, working together through activism, literary production, and collaborative public interventions for over a decade in efforts to un-silence the Parsley Massacre of 1937, in order to raise awareness about the long history of mistreatment of Dominicans of Haitian descent and Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic. These violent, silenced histories of the Haitian Revolution and the Parsley Massacre structure the Dominican-Haitian border as an open wound, forming part of what Díaz calls "fukú americanus"—the curse of the New World unleashed in the wake of European expansion into the Americas—in his 2007 Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. Through the unique blend of Afro-Caribbean curse and sci-fi apocalypse that is fukú the novel reconfigures global space-time as always already post-apocalyptic post-1492, and portrays the pervasive, deleterious effects of coloniality's fractal frontiers—classism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, and ableism—as inescapable fallout permeating and poisoning everything from the intimacy of family to global popular culture.

Forgetting and Remembering the Silences of the Hispaniolan Borderlands

The music of George Lewis, Jr. and the performance art of David Pérez Karmadavis present clear examples of oblique and explicit engagements with Haiti in contemporary Dominican cultural production. Both artists live in diaspora—George Lewis, Jr. in the US and David Pérez Karmadavis in Guatemala—and produce art that crosses borders structured by coloniality that define and confine Dominican identities in diaspora and on the island. George Lewis, Jr.'s music troubles the black/white racial binary dominant in the US and racial hierarchies in the Americas more generally by obliquely evoking historical images of racial terror in his music while David Pérez Karmadavis explicitly blurs geographical, cultural, and historical borders between the Dominican Republic and Haiti through performance art that embodies silenced Hispaniolan history common to Dominicans and Haitians in symbolically charged spaces linked to Dominican nationalism. Despite occupying different positions in the Dominican diaspora and working in different languages, fields, and media, the music of George Lewis, Jr. and the art of David Pérez Karmadavis both confront the open wounds of coloniality's foundational histories of violence that structure the fractal frontiers of the Hispaniolan and Caribbean borderlands, and in the process un-silence and decolonize histories connecting the Dominican diaspora, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti.

In 2010 Dominican-American musician George Lewis, Jr. released his first album *Forget* under the moniker Twin Shadow to critical acclaim. Twin Shadow has since released two more full-length albums, signed to the major label Warner, and toured extensively in the Americas and Europe. Born in the Dominican Republic and raised in Florida by his Jewish American father and Afro-Dominican mother, Lewis's formation as a young musician spanned genres including folk, rock, punk, metal, and pop blurring the often racially-encoded borders of US popular

music. In an interview with Jesse Ship for the now defunct music website *Spinner*, Lewis explains:

I tried to sing for a metal band when I was 16 but I got kicked out because I was too “not metal.” Race has definitely played a factor in my non-acceptance in the music world, and it probably played a huge factor in me being kicked out of the metal band. I don’t feel it much these days. But I do admit, being a black dude and playing this kind of music is definitely a bit of a novelty.²

In recounting these experiences as a teen and as an adult, Lewis critiques discourses that encode racism into musical genre—“not metal” standing in for not white, or black and thus unwanted—and reduce Lewis merely to the color of his skin. The irony in this particular case is that from the importance of Mississippi Delta blues to the contributions of African-American performers such as Jimi Hendrix, the roots of metal are inextricably linked to music of the African diaspora. Yet these ignorant adolescents would most likely have deemed the music of this long tradition “not metal” as well. The anecdote exemplifies how genres of music as well as other art that are themselves products of the hybridization of cultures from across the globe in the colonial encounter in the Caribbean borderlands can become—through ignorance—bigoted, reductive, racialized codes. Similarly, George Lewis, Jr., at least as a public persona working in the world of pop music becomes for some an incongruous “black dude,” a description that effectively silences his Jewishness, his Dominican-ness, and his individuality.

Though Lewis self identifies as black and pinpoints race as the cause of his exclusion from this teenage metal band, gender by his own admission likely also played a part, and not only because of intersectionality.³ In the same interview, Lewis confesses that he identifies with “a more effeminate type of nature” explaining that growing up with sisters he always enjoyed fashion and having his hair styled.⁴ Lewis’s professed penchant for the effeminate resonates as well in the musical influences on display in Twin Shadow’s debut album, which in sounding like

a cross between Prince's *Purple Rain* and 1980s new wave synth pop harkens to a moment three decades earlier in US and British popular culture when androgynous, gender-bending acts ruled the airwaves. The intersection of race and gender that Lewis intimates in this interview plays a key role in the themes of *Forget*, which consists of eleven tracks that trace the hazy narrative of an illicit, failed romance haunted by race. The relationship between an anonymous first-person protagonist and his female lover is introduced in the first song, "Tyrant Destroyer," which opens with the lover promising she will "never let another black boy break [her] heart" and ends as the protagonist fears that "Any fair skinned boy will take [her] home." While the track announces the importance of race as subtext to the album's doomed romantic drama, it does so only by deploying ambiguous innuendo that suggests that the couple's relationship is interracial while disallowing the listener from definitively identifying either the protagonist or the lover in racialized terms.

Though these two indeterminate references in the first track are the only explicit allusions to race on *Forget*, the album's lyrics nevertheless repeatedly evoke the threat of racial terror encoded in a series of haunting images of flight and pursuit interspersed throughout the record. In the second track, "When We're Dancing," for example, the protagonist escapes an early abusive encounter with his lover only to realize, "The search party's out. Yes, they're hunting your name." In the album's fourth song, "Shooting Holes," the protagonist and his lover flee together leaving "tracks," pursued by "hounds." Finally on the sixth track "Yellow Balloon," when the couple meets hidden in secrecy in the woods, the protagonist warns his lover, "If you hear your momma coming, get away from me."

Always subtle and never foregrounded, these descriptions of getaways and pursuits throughout *Forget* conjure the violent history of racial terror deployed throughout the Caribbean

and the Americas to enforce white supremacy. In the US, the national context in which the album was originally released, this imagery of the protagonist fleeing search parties armed with dogs hauntingly evokes both the pursuit of runaway slaves and the nation's long history of lynching African Americans. This imagery coupled with the implication that the romance between the protagonist and the lover is an interracial relationship resonates with how fundamental the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality has been in the history of racial terror in the US. The encyclopedia of *Race and Racism in the United States*, for example, identifies the fear of miscegenation as “the linchpin of racial antipathy during the Jim Crow era” and states that “Lynching was propelled by many possible anxieties regarding interracial sex embedded in white patriarchal culture.”⁵

Though the relationship between the protagonist and the lover is clearly doomed from the start, as the album progresses and the romance eventually fails, the landscape of the lyrical imagery grows increasingly bleak. The downward spiral culminates in the final, eponymous track “Forget.” Though deceptively simple and terse, the song's lyrics, quoted below in their entirety, menacingly weave the threads of the album together into a rope, presenting the album's final evocative image of the troubled history of racial terror in the US:

They'll give us something; they'll give us so much to forget.
Or enough rope to deal with it.
They'll give us something; they'll give us so much to forget.
Or enough rope to deal with it.

With pencil and knife you heard your love again.
You wrestled your nightmares, the sweat in your bed sheets.
This is all of it; this is everything I'm wanting to forget.

When winter sets in, it has a way of crystallizing the bad times,
The fevers, the heartaches.
This is all of it; this is everyone I'm wanting to forget.

They'll give us something; they'll give us so much to forget.

Or enough rope to deal with it.
They'll give us something; they'll give us so much to forget.
Or enough rope to deal with it.

With pencil and knife you heard your love again.
You wrestled your nightmares, the sweat in your bed sheets.
This is all of it; this is everything I'm wanting to forget.

The song never explains who “they” are, but given the context the rest of the album establishes I interpret this unidentified pronoun—this faceless, nameless subject repeated throughout the song’s chorus—as the personification of the anonymous yet ever-present menace of regimes policing race and gender. “They” embodies the gas-lighting, paranoia-inducing contradictions of living as a subject whose life chances are diminished by racialized and gendered hierarchies so embedded, encoded, enmeshed in the very fabric of society as to seem “natural” and thus invisible, anonymous, and depersonalized. In the song the negative effects of racialized and gendered terror manifest psychologically and somatically as insomnia, nightmares, fevers, and heartache, and the stark options available to counter these symptoms offer little solace: either forget in order to survive or face the noose whether it be of one’s own or the lynch mob’s making. Faced with these bleak options, the protagonist chooses to forget “all of it,” “everything,” “everyone.”

This command to forget—not coincidentally the title of both the closing track and of the album itself—underlines the paradox of the transmission of the protagonist’s traumatic story: if the protagonist must forget in order to survive, then how was the story ever passed on? *Forget*’s final song thus highlights a contradiction common in art that represents the violent, silenced histories of race in the Caribbean borderlands. Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* captures this contradiction brilliantly in one of the novel’s final lines, “It was not a story to pass on.”⁶ Referring both to the story of a victim of infanticide, *Beloved*, who haunts her family in the

novel and to slavery's haunting of the New World more generally, this line repeats, once verbatim, and then with difference in *Beloved's* final pages, becoming in its last incarnation "This is not a story to pass on" (275). Although almost identical, the two phrases differ: "it" becomes "this", the past tense shifts to the present, and the repetition emphasizes the contradictory ambiguity of the prepositional verb "to pass on," which means both to transmit, on the one hand, and to disappear or to die, on the other. Through this repetitive transformation these phrases at the end of *Beloved* become polysemic, interpretable from both the space-time of the novel's fictional characters, who similarly to Twin Shadow's protagonist choose to forget in order to survive, and from the space-time of the readers of "this story," the novel, who by reading *Beloved* un-silence the past through re-imagined fictions based on histories that precisely were not passed on, histories that were silenced. In other words, while for the novel's characters *Beloved's* is a story to forget, as literary scholar Jill Matus argues, for readers the opposite is true, "this story must not disappear or die."⁷

Similarly to Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Twin Shadow's *Forget* complicates the relationship between narrative and archive by telling a story that climaxes in the very act of its own forgetting while nevertheless leaving a record for its audience, in Twin Shadow's case quite literally. Dominican artist David Pérez, known often by his adopted artistic name Karmadavis, creates a similar contradictory effect by exploring tensions between the ephemerality of the human body and the archival afterlives of the body's mediated image. Yet while Twin Shadow's *Forget* portrays the ever-present, anonymous menace of racial terror that polices the gendered and sexed border of the black/white racial binary in the United States through ambiguous innuendo and encoded oblique imagery without explicit explanation, David Pérez Karmadavis has often been extremely explicit about the intentions of his art as a vehicle for rethinking the

Dominican-Haitian border and the two nations that that border connects as one complete structure, Hispaniola. The concluding paragraph of his artist statement on the website of the Centro León—a national museum of contemporary art established in 1964 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic—reads:

En la actualidad, la isla La Española está fraccionada en dos partes territoriales: La República Dominicana, la República de Haití. Países distintos y no distantes, similares y lejanos. Ambos comparten historias, tragedias y orígenes. Ambos se encuentran hoy sostenidos por estados débiles, deficientes, corrompidos o incompletos. En el presente, uno se apoya en el otro; uno requiere del otro. Piezas ambas de un mismo engranaje, de una estructura central.

Today, the island of Hispaniola is fractured in two territorial parts: the Dominican Republic, the Republic of Haiti, countries distinct and not distant, similar and unlike. Both share histories, tragedies, and origins. Both find themselves today sustained by weak, deficient, corrupt, or incomplete governments. In the present, one supports the other; one needs the other. Gears both of the same machinery, of one central structure.⁸

Educated at Altos de Chavón Escuela de Diseño in La Romana, Dominican Republic and the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, David Pérez Karmadavis documents through photography as well as video and audio recordings his *acciones performáticas* —performative actions—that advance this clear objective of articulating Hispaniolan border thinking connecting Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

In 2005 Karmadavis performed *Trata* in Santo Domingo. The title of the piece has at least two meanings. As a noun, *la trata* in Spanish refers to the transatlantic slave trade, while as a verb, *trata* can mean “s/he tries,” since the subject is tacit and gender indeterminate, and also the command “try” or “strive.” For *Trata*, Karmadavis brought five hundred stalks of sugarcane and a Haitian worker from a *batey*, a plantation on the Dominican-Haitian border, to the Plaza de España in the touristic and historical heart of colonial Santo Domingo. While the Haitian worker peeled the cane with a machete, Karmadavis attempted, unsuccessfully, to eat it all; Pérez

eventually had to stop due to a hyperglycemic attack.⁹ In another *acción performática* from 2005 titled *Lo que dice la piel (What the Skin Says)*, Karmadavis had a Haitian interlocutor's description of the socio-political climate of Hispaniola at the time—"Biznis gouvenman benefis gouvenman," or "The business of government benefits the government" in Kreyòl—tattooed onto his forearm.¹⁰ In a 2006 piece titled *Isla abierta (Open Island)*

Karmadavis performed an intravenous cannulation in both his arms, left the catheters open and walked along one of the main thoroughfares in Santo Domingo shedding his blood in order to (literally) embody the principle that Hispaniola's two separate 'arms' (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) belong in fact to the same body and are sustained by the same blood. (429)

During this performance, Karmadavis walked through colonial Santo Domingo from Parque Colón to Parque Independencia on the pedestrian thoroughfare la Calle el Conde. As scholars María Cristina Fumagalli and Lorgia García Peña both observe, this route symbolically retraces Dominican history from the arrival of Spanish explorers in Hispaniola to Dominican independence from Haiti, from the monument of Christopher Columbus and Anacaona—the indigenous Taíno princess Nicolás de Ovando ordered hung—and the Cathedral of Santa María la Menor, the first Catholic cathedral of the Americas, in Columbus Park to the site where the Dominican Republic declared its independence from Haiti in 1844 at Independence Park.¹¹

More recently in 2010, Karmadavis enlisted a blind Dominican man and a Haitian woman whose legs are amputated above the knees for a performance called *Estructura completa (Complete Structure)*. The performance took place in Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic and was featured in the pavilion of the Instituto Italo-Latinoamericano in the 2011 Venice Biennale. In the performance the Dominican man carries the Haitian woman as they walk together through Santiago. The Haitian woman with amputated legs provides the pair vision directing through verbal cues in Krèyol and physical taps the blind Dominican man who provides

locomotion. Working together, Karmadavis implies, these two people, the one Haitian the other Dominican, with complementary abilities, constitute a complete structure like Haiti and the DR. Finally in 2014, Karmadavis entered his piece *Comedor familiar (Family Dining Room)*, in the twenty-fifth edition of Centro León's Concurso de Arte Eduardo León Jimenes winning honorable mention. *Comedor familiar* is part of a larger project *Morisoñando* named after a popular drink from the island made from ice, orange juice, vanilla, and evaporated milk. In *Morisoñando*, Karmadavis explores a borderless Hispaniolan gastronomy fusing ingredients and recipes from Haiti and the DR into a new cuisine. In the performance *Comedor familiar* Karmadavis creates a makeshift kitchen and dining room outdoors in inhospitable terrain along the Dominican-Haitian border to cook and serve a meal of his Hispaniolan fusion cuisine to a family of Dominican laborers of Haitian descent.

Over the last decade David Pérez Karmadavis's *acciones performáticas* have deployed embodied acts performed both by the artist and by collaborators often of Haitian descent as artistic interventions in symbolically charged Dominican spaces to excavate Hispaniola's violent histories of coloniality as well as its mundane instances of conviviality that blur the borders between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Despite the importance of these live, embodied performance in Karmadavis's work, the afterlives of his *acciones performáticas*, like most performance art, rely almost exclusively on the distribution, display, and consumption of photography as well as video and audio recordings underlining important tensions between ephemerality, embodiment, and live performance on the one hand, and the archival, mediation, and the virtual on the other.

These tensions between the embodied and the virtual add yet another set of multilayered fractal frontiers to the work of both David Pérez Karmadavis and George Lewis, Jr. since

musicians like performance artists must also often negotiate the complicated relations between live performance and archival recordings. In their negotiations of the spaces between the embodied performance and the digital diffusion of their work, these two diasporic Dominican artists demonstrate the diverse range of possibilities in terms both of loci of enunciation and of approaches to un-silencing the violent histories that structure the fractal frontiers of the Caribbean borderlands in contemporary Dominican cultural production. From the United States, George Lewis, Jr. creates pop music in English that obliquely mines imagery evoking violent histories of racial terror policing the gendered and sexed black/white racial binary in the Caribbean and the Americas, while David Pérez Karmadavis works from Guatemala creating performance art that explicitly reconceives the DR and Haiti as two parts of one decolonized island connected by history, culture, and geography.

Journeys Across Post-Apocalyptic Hispaniolan Space-Time

In 2012 the famous Dominican-American author Julia Alvarez published *A Wedding in Haiti*, a memoir divided in two parts that recounts two journeys on land from the Dominican Republic to Haiti and back that Alvarez took in 2009 and 2010. On both journeys, Alvarez traveled with her husband as well as undocumented and documented Haitian laborers working in the DR, including a young Haitian man named Piti. The travelers took the first journey to attend Piti's wedding in his native village and the second to return after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Alvarez, her husband, Piti, and the various other Haitian workers traveling together are not, however, simply friends. Alvarez and her Anglo-American husband own an organic coffee plantation in the Dominican Republic, and Piti and the others are their employees on the plantation. Though Alvarez portrays her husband's and her relationships with Piti and their other employees in a generally favorable light for all involved, clear inequalities among the travelers

—socioeconomic and otherwise—emerge as they cross the border from the DR into Haiti on their first journey. The undocumented Haitian employees must leave the group of travelers dining at a hotel in Dajabón, Dominican Republic and cross clandestinely into Haiti to avoid detection and detention.¹² Piti, who was previously undocumented, however, travels with Alvarez and her husband across the border; since becoming a foreman on their plantation he regularized his immigration status with the help of his employers.

A Wedding in Haiti presents Hispaniola as diasporic Caribbean borderlands portraying the many often inequitable bonds connecting the people of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and the United States in literal and figurative border crossings between the people of the island's neighboring nations as well as the diasporic connections of Hispaniola to the United States. If the Dominican-Haitian border structures the plot of the memoir's two halves marking the progress of the two round-trip journeys from the DR to Haiti and back, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti functions as a border as well, a temporal frontier marking a before and after that structures the entire narrative of the memoir, catalyzes Alvarez's reflection on Hispaniola's past, present, and future, and lends the memoir a topical significance and gravitas it most likely would have lacked otherwise. Indeed, the earthquake structures *A Wedding in Haiti* not only narratively and thematically but as a book, as an object, splitting the volume like a border into two halves that recount two voyages, which despite their similar trajectories traverse a terrain utterly transformed. A map charting Alvarez's two journeys from the DR to Haiti and back spreads across two pages separating the pre-earthquake and the post-earthquake halves of *A Wedding in Haiti*, and the memoir's second half opens with a subtitle that reads "*January 12, 2010, the end of the world*" (143, Alvarez's emphasis). Figuring the 2010 earthquake in Haiti as apocalypse makes sense not only because of the vast destruction and loss it wrought, but also because the

earthquake functions as a spatio-temporal border in the space-time of Hispaniola. Like the border separating the DR from Haiti, the earthquake separates the island before from the island after marking a violent temporal rupture that radically altered the lives of those on and connected to the island, transforming the landscape and infrastructure of the island, and forcing the world to reconsider, if only briefly, the interconnected pasts, presents, and futures of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Hispaniola.

Social/Unnatural Disasters

The upheaval of the 2010 earthquake in Port-Au-Prince forced discussions of Haitian history framed within rhetorics of apocalypse into mainstream popular discourse in the US. Indeed if James Berger, author of *After the End: Representations of Post-apocalypse* already detected “a pervasive post-apocalyptic sensibility in recent [US] culture,” in 1999, the beginning of the twenty-first century provided multiple catastrophes worthy of post-apocalyptic comparisons: the 2001 destruction of the New York World Trade Center’s Twin Towers, the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, and the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown in Japan.¹³ The apocalypse seemed to be occurring at an alarmingly ever-increasing rate.

In the summer of 2011, in the wake of the earthquakes in Haiti and Japan, the Dominican-American writer Junot Díaz wrote an article for *The Boston Review*, “Apocalypse: What Disasters Reveal.” In the piece Díaz refers to the Greek origins of the word apocalypse as a revelation or an unveiling and offers definitions of apocalypse gleaned from Berger’s *After the End: Representations of Post-apocalypse*. Through Berger, Díaz reminds us that apocalypse has at least three intertwined meanings. First and foremost apocalypse refers to the literal end of the world, secondly, to catastrophes that evoke the end of the world, and finally, to disasters that lay

bare, in Berger's words, "the true nature of what has been brought to an end."¹⁴ Díaz fleshes out this third revelatory aspect of his definition of apocalypse through David Brooks's 2005 *New York Times* op-ed piece on Hurricane Katrina in which Brooks describes how catastrophes like Katrina "wash away the surface of society, the settled way things have been done. They expose the underlying power structures, the injustices, the patterns of corruption and the unacknowledged inequalities."¹⁵

With these definitions of apocalypse Díaz exhorts his readers to stare into the ruins of Katrina, Haiti, and Japan and "refuse the old stories that tell us to interpret social disasters as natural disasters."¹⁶ Rather than reading so-called "natural" calamities as "acts of god" that randomly befall those stricken thus freeing the rest of the world of responsibility, Díaz teases out the ways that historical, societal choices made on a global scale create the conditions for the "social disasters" of which meteorological and geological events are but the catalysts. Díaz's conception of social disasters parallels Janet N. Abramovitz's "unnatural disasters," a term Abramovitz coined in "Averting Unnatural Disasters" (2001), a study focusing on how migration patterns and environmental policy create a global context in which "human-exacerbated disasters often take their heaviest toll on those who can least afford it—the poor."¹⁷ Abramovitz argues that "By destroying forests, damming rivers, filling in wetlands, and destabilizing the climate, we are unraveling the strands of a complex ecological safety net," and as a result, "Many ecosystems have been frayed to the point where they are no longer resilient and able to withstand natural disturbances" (123-124).

Comparing hurricanes and earthquakes of similar magnitudes provides a concrete frame of reference for the importance of historical, political, and environmental factors in exacerbating the negative effects of natural events. For example, Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, both category

three storms that hit the US gulf coast in 2005, caused sixty-two deaths and 1,833 deaths respectively.¹⁸ The disparity in the loss of human life is even more starkly apparent in the case of Haiti's earthquake. The 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake in San Francisco for example hit 6.9 on the Richter scale, killed sixty-three people, injured 3,757, and left 12,000 people homeless, while Haiti's 2010 earthquake hit 7.0, killed over 316,000, injured over 300,000, and made over a million homeless.¹⁹ Without minimizing the destruction of Hurricane Rita or the San Francisco earthquake, the conditions on the ground at the time of Hurricane Katrina and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti caused these natural phenomena to become social/unnatural disasters.

In "Apocalypse: What Disasters Reveal," Díaz recounts the long chain of historical events that contributed to the socioeconomic and political context that made Haiti's earthquake the disaster it became. Díaz figures the aftermath of the earthquake as but one apocalypse in a cycle of silenced apocalypses that began even before the Haitian Revolution in colonialism writing that:

Whether it was Haiti's early history as a French colony, which artificially inflated the country's black population beyond what the natural bounty of the land could support and prevented any kind of material progress; whether it was Haiti's status as the first and only nation in the world to overthrow Western chattel slavery, for which it was blockaded (read, further impoverished) by Western powers (thank you Thomas Jefferson) and only really allowed to rejoin the world community by paying an indemnity to all whites who had lost their shirts due to the Haitian Revolution, an indemnity Haiti had to borrow from French banks in order to pay, which locked the country in a cycle of debt that it never broke free from; whether it was that chronic indebtedness that left Haiti vulnerable to foreign capitalist interventions—first the French, then the Germans, and finally the Americans, who occupied the nation from 1915 until 1934, installing a puppet president and imposing upon poor Haiti a new constitution more favorable to foreign investment; whether it was the 40 percent of Haiti's income that U.S. officials siphoned away to repay French and U.S. debtors, or the string of diabolical despots who further drove Haiti into ruin and who often ruled with foreign assistance—for example, François "Papa Doc" Duvalier, who received U.S. support for his anti-communist policies; whether it was the 1994 UN embargo that whittled down Haiti's robust assembly workforce from more than 100,000 workers to 17,000, or the lifting of the embargo, which brought with it a poison-

pill gift in the form of an IMF-engineered end to Haiti's protective tariffs, which conveniently enough made Haiti the least trade-restrictive nation in the Caribbean and opened the doors to a flood of U.S.-subsidized rice that accelerated the collapse of the farming sector and made a previously self-sufficient country overwhelmingly dependent on foreign rice and therefore vulnerable to increases in global food prices; whether it was the tens of thousands who lost their manufacturing jobs during the blockade and the hundreds of thousands who were thrown off the land by the rice invasion, many of whom ended up in the cities, in the marginal buildings and burgeoning slums that were hit hardest by the earthquake—the world has done its part in demolishing Haiti.²⁰

In this long passage Díaz lays out how the history of Haiti from the days of the French colony to the fallout from the international reaction to the Haitian Revolution still affects the country to this day explaining that the 2010 earthquake in Haiti was not a discrete event, but rather one apocalypse in a long chain of silenced catastrophes Haitians have faced since before the Haitian Revolution. Over two-hundred years of silencing Haiti and the Haitian Revolution marked by incessant failures to heed the revelations of a long series of apocalyptic catastrophes Haiti has suffered laid the groundwork for the dizzying destruction of the earthquake in 2010.

Although the 2010 earthquake in Haiti certainly provides an opportunity to reveal the country's well-documented but often silenced history, Díaz argues this most recent Haitian apocalypse only foreshadows a future rife with social/unnatural disasters in the Global North as well as in the Global South, disasters caused by the irresponsible, unfettered, predatory practices of global capitalism and the social and environmental damage it exacts. Díaz provides examples of social/unnatural disasters in the Global North comparing Port-Au Prince's overpopulation and shoddy residential construction to the US Army's Corps of Engineers delinquent maintenance of the levies in New Orleans and the history of negligence of the aged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactors in Japan. As the disasters in Louisiana and Japan attest, social/unnatural disasters are not confined to the world's impoverished nations but rather are simply the byproducts of global capitalism's disregard for the social and environmental impact of its inexorable quest for profit.

Yet despite these foreboding predictions, apocalypse, for Díaz, is not completely without hope because it offers the potential to un-silence histories and thus disrupt long chains of silenced historical catastrophes that create the conditions for social/unnatural disasters such as the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

“Hispaniola Conspiracy”: Un-silencing the Parsley Massacre

The earthquake in Haiti in 2010 was not the first time Junot Díaz spoke out as a public figure to un-silence Hispaniola’s history. Since the beginning of his career Díaz has joined his voice with that of Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat to speak out about how violent histories of Hispaniola—most notably the Parsley Massacre of 1937—connect Dominicans and Haitians on the island and in diaspora. The two writers are contemporaries and share a common literary agent as well as similar trajectories to literary stardom. With Edwidge Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) and Junot Díaz’s *Drown* (1997), two distinct literary voices emerged from the rapidly growing Haitian-American and Dominican-American communities in the United States of the 1990’s.²¹ Today, two decades and many accolades later, Danticat and Díaz have established themselves as writers lauded by critics, published by prestigious magazines, journals, and editorial houses, and who “following the call of a historical instinct of Dominican-Haitian collaboration going back several generations,” have expressed their shared affinities and understandings of the (dis)connections between Haitians and Dominicans on Hispaniola and in diaspora through public appearances, op-ed pieces, and interviews.²² Though many factors contribute to the affinities between these writers, Danticat’s and Díaz’s mutual recognition of one another as writers of the Hispaniolan diasporas with deep, almost familial ties goes hand in hand with their remembering of the horrific events of the Parsley Massacre of 1937, the genocide of Haitians and Haitian Dominicans perpetrated along the Dominican-Haitian border during the

Trujillato.²³ For Díaz and Danticat the Parsley Massacre represents a silenced historical catastrophe, an apocalypse under erasure in their shared post-apocalyptic understanding of Dominican-Haitian relations.²⁴

The depth of and the motivations for the connections that Danticat and Díaz draw between their work seem, however, often to go misperceived in US popular media. Appearing on *The New Yorker Out Loud* podcast on 2 June 2007, Danticat chose to discuss Díaz's 1995 short story "How to Date a Brown Girl (Black Girl, White Girl, or Halfie)," and on 15 December 2009, Díaz returned the favor on *The New Yorker's Fiction Podcast* reading and discussing Danticat's short story "Water Child," first published in *The New Yorker* on 11 September 2000, and later revised and collected in Danticat's 2005 book *The Dew Breaker*.²⁵ When *The New Yorker's* fiction editor Deborah Treisman asks Díaz about his and Danticat's choosing one another's works for the podcasts with a very informal, "What's up with you two?" Díaz responds:

Díaz: I know! We have a Hispaniola conspiracy going on! It's like full-scale Caribbean collusion!

Treisman: Well now, since you bring it up, Edwidge was born in Haiti and you were born in the Dominican Republic, and both of you moved to the US as children. You both set fiction back home, and obviously there's this geographic and cultural proximity between you. Do you think that there's also an affinity in your work?

Díaz: I mean of course I'd always love to be identified with such a remarkable talent as Edwidge, so I'd say yes, yes, yes! But you know I think one of the things that this story makes most clear is I think both of us are interested, in different ways and through different strategies, in the idea of silence and folks not being able to say, not being allowed to say, or incapable of saying the things they wish to.²⁶

Treisman's framing of Danticat and Díaz's work as "set... back home" and of the writers as "obviously" sharing "geographic and cultural proximity" simplifies both where these writers might locate "home" and the history that marks Dominican-Haitian relations on the island and in

diaspora. Díaz's response to Treisman's inquiry as to whether he feels there is an affinity in their work, refers, however obliquely, to these very complexities that Treisman elides, by evoking the silences—personal, cultural, and historical—that both Danticat and Díaz's fictional and non-fictional cultural production un-silences and brings into language.

Díaz and Danticat might have chosen to discuss one another's work on these podcasts and in other public fora for a number of reasons imbricated in the silence to which Díaz alludes. First, they genuinely seem to admire one another's skills and talents as writers; finding kindred spirits and solidarity in difficult creative endeavors can prove vital to giving voice to one's artistic potential. Secondly, Haitian-American and Dominican-American writers get very little national coverage in US literary media in general, and through mutual recognition in media appearances they help promote one another's work to a larger audience. In addition, the fact that Danticat and Díaz share a literary agent most likely encouraged their mutual promotion of one another's work.²⁷ Finally, by recognizing and discussing one another's work publicly, they create new dialogues and strengthen existing ones between Haitians and Dominicans on the island and in diaspora.

Whatever their motivations and despite Treisman's elision of the complexities of "home" and of the history of Dominican-Haitian relations, *The New Yorker* and its fiction editor, nevertheless, provide Danticat and Díaz a valuable forum through which to enact their "Hispaniola conspiracy," as Díaz humorously puts it. In fact, both the diasporic positions from which Danticat and Díaz write and the simplification of the complexities of Dominican-Haitian relations perhaps only facilitate public dialogue between these authors. Treisman's characterization that Díaz and Danticat's "obviously" share cultural and literary affinities echoes Torres-Saillant's assertion that Dominican immigrants quickly learn, "that the larger U.S. society

does not care to distinguish between them and Haitians...”²⁸ In diaspora in the US where race is often more clearly divided along a black/white binary and where Dominican and Haitian diasporic communities face similar experiences of racism and discrimination, Torres-Saillant argues “necessity allies Dominicans with Haitians; anti-Haitianism is rendered impractical. Nor can Dominicans in the United States afford the embarrassment of seeming to depreciate racially a community with which, in the eyes of others, they visibly share racial kinship” (141).

Though in their exchange neither Treisman nor Díaz directly address the complicated issues of Dominican-Haitian relations, Díaz does acknowledge, as noted earlier, a shared preoccupation with silence in his and Danticat’s work. One historical silence shared by Haitians and Dominicans that looms large in both Danticat and Díaz’s work is the Parsley Massacre, known as *El Corte*, or “the cutting” in Spanish, and *kout kuoto-a*, or “the stabbing” in Kreyòl. A racially motivated nationalist genocide carried out under the Trujillo dictatorship, the Parsley Massacre occurred from 2 October to 8 October 8 1937 in the regions of the Dominican Republic bordering Haiti. Dominican military personnel, police, and citizens killed tens of thousands of Haitians and Haitian Dominicans, mostly with machetes, and thus the names in Spanish and Kreyòl.²⁹ It’s called the Parsley Massacre in English because *perejil*, the Spanish word for parsley, was used as a shibboleth, or password, to determine if potential victims were Dominican or Haitian. Kreyòl and French speakers have difficulty pronouncing the alveolar trill of the Spanish “R,” and thus Dominican aggressors approached people who appeared to be Haitian or of Haitian descent saying “¡Qué diga perejil!”– “Say parsley!” in Spanish. One’s accent when responding was a matter of life or death.

Trujillo’s government framed the Parsley Massacre as an act of self-protection against a so-called “Haitian invasion.” Yet Haitians had been migrating, settling, and living in the border

region of Haiti and the DR for centuries and more recently had been heavily recruited to work as agricultural laborers on *bateyes* that often provided US corporations with cane for sugar. Eric Roorda describes the Haitian and Dominican-Haitian presence in the region at the time of the massacre as consisting of these two main groups:

One group was the predominantly male brigades of *braceros*, or agricultural workers, who contracted to work on the sugarcane plantations in the south and the east. The seasonal migration of these workers began in the early twentieth century, regulated by the Dominican government for the benefit of sugar companies, many of which were American-owned. The other, more firmly rooted group included families of workers, smallholders, and entrepreneurs established in the north and west along the border with Haiti. Many of these people were Dominican by birth, but culturally and ethnically Haitian. Over the course of years, these independent immigrants and their progeny, who tended to be darker-skinned than the Dominican inhabitants, established a bicultural identity for the province of the Dominican Republic.³⁰

For fear of a North American response, the violence of Trujillo's massacre largely spared the *braceros* working for US-owned sugar interests. Thus, of those killed, the majority came from the second group Roorda describes, Dominicans of Haitian descent born on Dominican soil, people who were legally Dominican citizens.³¹ Yet for Trujillo's government that "emphasized Hispanic culture and demonized Haitian, African-derived culture," however, the massacred were never Dominican or Dominicans of Haitian descent but rather simply Haitian.³² Trujillo and his accomplices denied these peoples' legal right to Dominican citizenship, took their lives, and literally attempted to cut out this Dominican-Haitian border community from the Dominican nation, to destroy a world not in line with the dictator's racist, nationalist idea of a nation.

The Parsley Massacre occupies different places in Danticat and Díaz's work. Danticat treats the subject at length as the primary subject of two of her early fictional works. The short story "nineteen thirty-seven" from her collection *Krik? Krak!* (1996) narrates a daughter's visits with her mother who is being held in a Haitian prison on suspicion of witchcraft due to reports

that she flew across the Massacre River separating Haiti and the Dominican Republic to escape the killings. Danticat's second novel *The Farming of Bones* (1998) retells the Parsley Massacre through the eyes of its Haitian protagonist Amabelle Désir, a fictional survivor of the massacre. Though not treated as a primary subject, Díaz has made the Parsley Massacre an important part of his public appearances and fiction. He has opened public talks given at universities by explaining the massacre to audiences in order to highlight the silenced histories of the Dominican Republic, Hispaniola, and Latin America.³³ In the introduction to *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), the novel's primary narrator, Yunior summarizes, "your mandatory two seconds of Dominican history," in a footnote, sarcastically touting the massacre as one of Trujillo's "[o]utstanding accomplishments" in a list of some of the many crimes of the Dominican dictator, not least of which "the forging of the Dominican peoples into a modern state."³⁴ In another footnote, Díaz writes, "[Trujillo] aspired to become an architect of history, and through a horrifying ritual of silence and blood, machete and perejil, darkness and denial, inflicted a true border on the countries, a border that exists beyond maps, that is carved directly into the histories and imaginaries of a people" (225). Though less prominently featured in his fiction, Díaz nevertheless understands the Parsley Massacre to be a constitutive component of the Dominican-Haitian border as open wound, a silenced historical trauma that connects and separates Dominicans and Haitians, that violently marks Dominican-Haitian relations, but nevertheless could not undo the shared history, culture, and geography that makes Haitians and Dominicans "a people" of one connected borderlands.

Paying more attention to the particular placement of the Parsley Massacre in these authors' writings, a complementarity emerges. Whereas Danticat gives center stage and fictional voice to the silenced experiences of the survivors of the massacre in a style similar to *testimonio*,

Díaz recalls the Parsley Massacre in satirical, historicizing footnotes that interrupt his fictional text from its margins. Danticat's fiction emerges from silenced histories, while in Díaz, silenced histories paratextually interrupt fiction. Both of these strategies, nevertheless, appropriate into fiction non-fictional textual practices that lay claim to authenticity, veracity, and authority; through these appropriations of historiographic textual strategies Danticat and Díaz call into question the supposedly objective, factual, and complete nature of historical narrative. Though Danticat utilizes an approach akin to *testimonio*, critic Amy Novak points out that, "Unlike the non-fiction *testimonio*, which may mask the way that its story is mediated through a secondary witness who is recording and constructing it, Danticat's novel reminds the reader of its existence as a shaped, literary object."³⁵ In a similar but distinct fashion, Díaz brings footnotes—a textual practice associated with academic rigor, objectivity, and factuality—into fiction in order to address historical silences and the resulting gaps in knowledge of his audience.³⁶

Through these strategies Danticat and Díaz fictionalize history, historicize fiction, and problematize historiographical pretensions to objectivity, factuality, and completeness. In doing so, they highlight the creative, recursive nature of the construction of historical narratives and the weight of history itself, how histories both silenced or spoken return to haunt the present.

Questioned in an interview about the process of researching and writing *The Farming of Bones*,

Danticat responds:

I was trying to read it from both sides, the points of view of both Dominicans and Haitians, but it was really hard to find much documentation on the Haitian side. [...] At some point you really had to let the imagination take over. I also liked the idea of testimony, because I felt that in the research that I was doing, that's what was lacking. People were saying, "You know, there are few direct testimonials," and that's where I felt I needed to create these testimonials in the novel, because that's almost what I wished I had when I started.³⁷

Faced with this archival absence of testimonies of Haitian survivors of the Parsley Massacre, Danticat resorts to creating them herself but not without being cognizant of the risks she runs in filling these gaps in historical narratives with fiction. In an interview with Renée H. Shea, Danticat explains, “I was purposely questioning myself and what I was doing—writing this story in English, stealing it, if you will, from the true survivors who were not able or allowed to tell their stories.”³⁸

Díaz’s footnotes in *Oscar Wao* also fill in gaps created by historical silences and self-reflexively acknowledges the novel’s historical inaccuracies, thus cultivating a problematic and open-ended tension between the text’s fictitiousness and historicity. *Oscar Wao*’s primary narrator Yunior admits the limits of his knowledge of Dominican geography and dance and the—here fictionalized but nevertheless real—recursive process through which novels and histories come into being. Yunior ‘writes’ that, “In my first draft, Samaná was actually Jarabacoa, but then my girl Leonie, resident expert in all things Domo, pointed out that there are no beaches in Jarabacoa.”³⁹ Yet while Yunior is willing to ‘correct’ this particular mistake, he divulges in the same footnote that another inaccuracy proved too artistically satisfying to change, again ‘writing,’ that, “Leonie was also the one that informed me that the perrito (see first paragraphs of chapter one, “GhettoNerd at the End of the World”) wasn’t popularized until the late eighties, early nineties, but that was one detail I couldn’t change, just liked the image too much. Forgive me, historians of dance, forgive me!” (132).

The particular strategies Danticat and Díaz deploy to address the Parsley Massacre provide two distinct yet complementary approaches to un-silencing this silenced history. Danticat’s short story and novel produce fictionalized testimonials of the survivors of the Parsley Massacre from the first-person, from a particular formation of Haitian-ness marked by the

historical fluidity of exchanges among Haitians and Dominicans living in the borderlands these countries share and surviving the violence that attempted to destroy this hybrid space and its communities. Díaz's footnotes serve as corrective addendums that eat away from the margins at the credibility of the official history and the anti-Haitian conception of Dominican-ness of Trujillo's regime. These approaches whereby the Parsley Massacre becomes, in Danticat, the central plot narrated in the first-person, and in Díaz a paratextual historical reference inflecting an all together different story, nevertheless, both serve to inform a wider readership of the (dis)connections between the peoples of Haiti and the Dominican Republic by un-silencing the terrible history of the Parsley Massacre. I would argue the complementarity of Danticat's and Díaz's approaches to un-silencing the Parsley Massacre is the product of these writers' loci of enunciation as Haitian-American and Dominican-American writers respectively. Danticat chooses to write from the perspective of a Haitian survivor portraying the violent effects of the massacre as literal, personal, and embodied in both the dead and the scarred survivors. While Díaz chooses to write from the perspective of Dominican survivors of the Parsley Massacre, portraying the Hispaniolan borderlands as the abject remainder that the Dominican dictator attempted to cut out of Dominican national history and identity but that nevertheless returns hauntingly from the margins.

Danticat's and Díaz's complementary engagements with retelling this particular silenced history go beyond their fiction. In 1999 in an opinion piece they published together in the *New York Times* titled "The Dominican Republic's War on Haitian Workers," Danticat and Díaz publicly addressed the Parsley Massacre together as a historically relevant precedent to anti-Haitian politics at work in the DR at the time. They write:

The Dominican sugar industry has recruited Haitians for half a century. They live in isolated work camps, or bateys, near the fields, usually in makeshift shacks

with no electricity, no running water and no medical care. [...] [I]n spite of the Dominican civil code, which grants citizenship to all those born on Dominican soil, most children of Haitian parents are denied Dominican citizenship. [...] One leading party has called for a demonstration to take place [in Santo Domingo] today; it urges Dominicans to take to the streets and protest the "Haitian invasion." For any Dominican, that language echoes the oratory of the dictator Rafael Trujillo, whose government massacred thousands of Haitians along the border in 1937.⁴⁰

In this intervention Danticat and Díaz assume the roles of public intellectuals of the Hispaniolan diaspora.⁴¹ Writing in the US daily periodical of record, published in a city with high concentrations both of Haitian Americans and Dominican Americans, Danticat and Díaz bring the complicated polemics of Dominican-Haitian relations in Hispaniola into popular US discourse. They leverage the representative roles, however problematic, that their literary successes grant them as spokespeople for both their diasporic communities and for their countries of birth in order to make an explicitly political argument against anti-Haitianism in the DR and beyond.⁴² Furthermore, their shared authorship of the piece both models and fosters Dominican-Haitian solidarity, and Díaz's participation—though certainly for some, as a Dominican-American Díaz too is conveniently excluded from the Dominican body politic—can be read as a strategy to disarm counterarguments that would interpret a critique of the internal political workings of the DR by a Haitian or a Haitian-American as an apology for the so-called "Haitian invasion." Finally, Danticat and Díaz's joint public intervention makes explicit the political critiques at work in their fictional engagements that un-silence the Parsley Massacre.

Rhetoric likening Haitian workers' presence in the DR to a "Haitian invasion" clearly hearkens to the propaganda under Trujillo's dictatorship that incited the Parsley Massacre. Sadly, this retrograde rhetoric still holds sway today in the Dominican Republic not only informing contemporary politicians' stump speeches but also affecting Dominican national policy decisions that led in 2013 to the Dominican Constitutional Tribunal's ruling 0168-13, which retroactively

stripped citizenship from over 200,000 Dominicans of Haitian descent born in the country as far back as 1929, creating a whole class of stateless non-citizens on the island of Hispaniola. In response to this decision the best-selling authors Mark Kurlansky and Julia Alvarez joined Junot Díaz and Edwidge Danticat to once again condemn together in solidarity as public intellectuals with ties to Hispaniola the marginalization and mistreatment of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent in an opinion piece published in the 28 October 2013 edition of *The New York Times* which ran in print and online in various other national and international periodicals.

Danticat and Díaz's "Hispaniola conspiracy" continues today with the help of others, through cultural production and public demonstrations of Dominican-Haitian solidarity on the island and in diaspora that contest retrograde xenophobic and nationalist articulations of Dominican-ness by un-silencing violent histories such as the Parsley Massacre that (dis)connect Dominicans and Haitians and structure the unjust and deleterious hierarchies of the Hispaniolan borderlands.

Anti-Haitianism in US Scholarship on the Dominican Republic

In US academe, discussions of the historical formation of Dominican national identity logically gravitate to the War of Dominican Independence of 1844 that created the Dominican Republic and ended the second Haitian occupation of the Spanish-speaking portions of Hispaniola that began in 1822. Given that the Dominican Republic came into being as the result of the overthrow of Haitian rule, the assumption that Dominican national identity at its origins springs from anti-Haitianism is both seductive and partly true. Dominican American literary scholar Silvio Torres-Saillant argues, however, that Dominican-Haitian relations and the complexities of Dominican national and racial identities constitute a blind spot in the US academe, particularly in black studies, because, "The white supremacist Eurocentric leanings of the Trujillo intelligentsia came to represent how Dominicans thought, whereas Haitian attitudes

were evoked via the exalted heroism and racial self-respect of Toussaint Louverture.”⁴³ For Torres-Saillant, in US academic discourse, the racist, xenophobic propaganda of Trujillo that instigated the Parsley Massacre, in effect stands in for, replaces, and places under erasure Dominicans’ own understandings of who they are as a people, historically, nationally, and racially.

For example, in *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint: Nation, State, and Race on Hispaniola* (2003), a work that borrows its title from the famous volume on Afro-Cuban transculturation *Cuban Counterpoint* by Fernando Ortiz and otherwise emphasizes the commonalities that connect Haitians and Dominicans, its author Eugenio Matibag writes, “The collective memory of the 22-year occupation serves as a historical referent and landmark by which the Dominican national identity sets itself off, politically and psychologically, against the image of the Haitian Other.”⁴⁴ Matibag perhaps overstates his case, however, in arguing that the second Haitian occupation of Santo Domingo was constitutive in the formation of Dominican national identity as inherently anti-Haitian, and by implication Negrophobic, since its inception. As Matibag demonstrates elsewhere, Dominican-Haitian relations since before the Haitian Revolution and up to the present have been both more intertwined and more complex than this categorical formulation of Dominican national identity as anti-Haitian might allow.⁴⁵ Indeed, if we look more closely at the events of Dominican independence, the anti-Haitianism that Matibag sees as ensconced in the very origins of Dominican national identity can be understood to be but one of many competing perspectives on Dominican-ness and its relation to Haitian-ness, both at the time of Dominican independence and since.

As an alternative to Matibag’s explication of Dominican-ness as inherently anti-Haitian from its beginnings, Torres-Saillant points out that in 1844, “[Black Dominicans] had valid

reasons for hesitating to support the separation from Haiti espoused by a liberal elite from Santo Domingo; they owed their freedom to their brethren from the western territory. Slavery had been restricted in 1801, under Toussaint, and abolished in 1822, with the arrival of Boyer.”⁴⁶ Black Dominicans eventually fought for Dominican independence from Haiti, but only after an uprising led by Afro-Dominican Santiago Basora in 1844 that forced the leaders of Dominican independence to formalize the permanency of abolition and to include Basora and other Afro-Dominican leaders in the independence movement (130). Yet after this uprising the Dominican independence movement went further than abolition. On March 1, 1844 the first legal decree of the newly independent government enacted not only “the immediate and definitive abolition of slavery” but also penalized slave traders with capital punishment and declared slaves from foreign shores who reached the Dominican Republic automatically free, effectively transforming the Dominican Republic, similar to its Hispaniolan neighbor Haiti, into an international safe haven for runaway slaves.⁴⁷

In his review essay addressing Matibag’s *Haitian Dominican Counterpoint: Nation, Race, and State on Hispaniola* and Dawn F. Stinchcomb’s *The Development of Literary Blackness in the Dominican Republic* (2004), Torres-Saillant closes by summarizing what he understands to be the challenge of addressing these complex, intertwined histories of Haiti and the Dominican Republic on the island and in diaspora writing:

...both [Matibag and Stinchcomb] seem equally persuaded that there is something insufficiently explained in their subject that needs addressing, and they are right. The challenge, it seems to me, is to realize that the complexity lies in the reality under perusal, not in the particular axis of analysis one might wish to deploy, and in having the humility to accept that one is not alone in undertaking the task of explication, that others in the Dominican Republic, in Haiti, and in both diasporas, have already moved the thinking along. The freshness of a scholar’s perspective is not compromised but highlighted by acknowledging that if we are to study Hispaniola, the center of the Caribbean and thus the navel of the modern world, we cannot possibly be total pioneers.⁴⁸

I believe the complexity of “the reality under perusal” to which Torres-Saillant refers must be unpacked. Torres-Saillant describes what he sees to be a set of recurring themes in contemporary studies of race in the Dominican Republic arguing that in “the tale of Dominican blackness” an overemphasized, and simplistic “bad story” of Dominican anti-Haitianism and Negrophobia clashes with a lesser-known and overlooked “good story” from which emerges “a narrative of events that show Santo Domingo setting the pattern of the struggle for freedom and racial equality in the Americas” (182). Torres-Saillant also objects to the fact that although contemporary scholarship frames race as a social construct, some “commentators on the race question in Dominican society persist in suggesting that Dominicans get it wrong when they speak of themselves racially, implying that some constructions are more accurate than others” (180). For Torres-Saillant such explications of race in the Dominican context ignore “the racial exegeses of Dominicans themselves [...], overstate the significance of Haiti in the tribulations of Dominican blackness [...], exaggerate the exceptionality of Negrophobia in the ethno-racial constructions of the Dominican nation [...], [and] pathologize the racial misconduct discernible in given chapters of Dominican history” (189).

To be clear, Torres-Saillant does not impute Matibag’s work with the full weight of all of these criticisms; he is describing general trends in the bibliography of US-based scholarship on race in the DR. In fact, I would argue that generally speaking Matibag and Torres-Saillant agree on more than they disagree and that the expressed goals of their academic contributions are not fundamentally at odds. Matibag and Torres-Saillant nevertheless present conflicting depictions of the emergence and nature of early Dominican national identity. Yet even if, as Torres-Saillant convincingly argues, the importance of anti-Haitianism and Negrophobia in Dominican national and racial identity has been overstated in US scholarly discourse because of a tendency to rely

uncritically on narratives crafted under and even sponsored by Trujillo's dictatorship, the existence of these anti-Haitian and Negrophobic strains of Dominican nationalism and their disastrous effects cannot simply be argued away as the Parsley Massacre chillingly reminds us. The denial of the darkest chapters of Dominican history, is, of course, not what Torres-Saillant nor any reputable scholar of Dominican history, literature, or culture would advocate; Torres-Saillant acknowledges and resolutely condemns this history of anti-Haitianism and Negrophobia in the DR.⁴⁹ Rather Torres-Saillant argues that in addition to being fractious, Dominican-Haitian relations have at important moments been collaborative as well, that Afro-Dominicans cognizant of the material improvements Haitian interventions brought about in their daily lives fought to preserve their freedom and contributed to the racially inclusive nature of early Dominican independence, and finally, that critical analyses of Dominican national and racial identities should also take into consideration these complexities of Dominican-Haitian relations, of Afro-Dominican historical contributions, and of the particularities of Dominican genealogies of race.

While Matibag exposes the unseemly nationalist and racist threads in the historical narrative of Dominican-ness, threads that a dictator wove together all too successfully to genocidal ends, Torres-Saillant acknowledges these realities yet strives to tell a counter-history of Afro-Dominican contributions to the history of the Dominican Republic. Torres-Saillant believes this counter-history to be important because, "the African-descended majority of Dominicans will benefit greatly from a model that allows them to perceive their ancestors as the real protagonists of the epic of the Dominican experience," arguing that this model can potentially, "induce in Afro-Dominicans a degree of historical self-recognition that will cause them, despite their own open concept of race, to seek an end to notions of Dominican-ness that depreciate the physiognomy of the overwhelming majority of the population."⁵⁰ Torres-Saillant

effectively argues that rather than shaming Dominicans of African descent, which is after all the majority of Dominicans, a better strategy for scholars of race in the Dominican Republic and its diaspora is to un-silence contributions of Afro-Dominicans to Dominican history, culture and identity to understand the Dominican Republic's place alongside Haiti in the African diaspora and in the Hispaniolan borderlands.

The Post-Apocalyptic Present in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* takes a different approach to un-silencing the experiences of Afro-Dominicans than that recommended by Silvio Torres-Saillant. Similar to Afrofuturist and Chicanafuturist art, the novel portrays the present as always already post-apocalyptic blending the protagonist Oscar de León's predilection for science fiction with the narrator Yunior's preference for fukú, the Dominican version of an Afro-Caribbean supernatural curse that, similarly to coloniality, originates in European colonial expansion into Africa, the Americas, and Asia and diminishes the life chances of its minoritized and marginalized subjects. Through fukú, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* figures anti-Haitianism, racism, black denial, and self-hatred in Dominican culture on the island and in diaspora as post-apocalyptic fallout that permeates the entire world from the intimacy of familial relations to the master metaphors of global popular culture. Latina/o Studies scholar José David Saldívar argues that through its unique blend of coloniality, Afro-Caribbean cosmology, and science fiction *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* develops its own decolonial theory of history, what Saldívar calls "fukú americanity," a neologism that combines Díaz's fukú with Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein's Americanity and provides useful insights into how race and its negative effects permeate the fractal frontiers of the Hispaniolan borderlands in the novel.⁵¹

Fukú and zafa, curse and counterspell, the silenced and the spoken lay at the heart of the narrative of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. In the novel's introduction, Yunió, the novel's primary narrator, explains fukú, "The Curse and Doom of the New World," as apocalyptic, emerging "just as one world perished and another began."⁵² Fukú marks and is marked by the violence of the global encounter in the crucible of the Americas: "it came first from Africa, carried in the screams of the enslaved" and "was the death bane of the Taínos" (1). Fukú, like most curses, is discursive; it's "screamed," "uttered" (1). Yet though it's discursive, fukú is the curse of the historically silenced—the enslaved Africans and the massacred indigenous peoples—and falls under erasure because "to say" or "to hear it is to invite calamity on the heads of you and yours" (1). Fukú has other names throughout African diaspora in the Caribbean in Puerto Rico and Haiti though it curses Europeans as well. "The Admiral," as the novel refers to Christopher Columbus, "was both [fukú's] midwife and one of its great European victims," dying poor and mad with syphilis (1). The effects of fukú are microscopic and macroscopic, "little and large," local and global (1). After Columbus, "we've all been in the shit ever since. Santo Domingo might be fukú's Kilometer Zero, its port of entry, but we are all of us its children, whether we know it or not" (1-2). In the novel's world, fukú causes a long list of catastrophes Trujillo's dictatorship, the assassination of Kennedy, the US defeat in Vietnam, and the Dominican diaspora in the US (2-5). Yet despite the fear of spreading fukú's curse by speaking of it, there is "Only one surefire counterspell that would keep you and your family safe. Not surprisingly, it was a word. A simple word (followed usually by a rigorous crossing of index fingers.) Zafa" (7). Yunió closes his introduction proposing that by un-silencing Oscar de León's fukú story, the novel perhaps breaks the curse, speculating "Even now as I write these words I wonder if this book ain't a zafa of sorts. My very own counterspell" (7).

Immanuel Wallerstein and Aníbal Quijano coined the term “Americanity” in their 1992 essay “Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world-system” and the similarities with fukú are apparent. Like fukú, Americanity, is both apocalyptic, born of the unprecedented global encounter in the Americas beginning in 1492, and global since through Americanity, “the New World became the pattern, the model of the entire world-system.”⁵³ Americanity, according to Quijano and Wallerstein, consists of four global novelties that sprang from European expansion into the Americas: “coloniality, ethnicity, racism, and newness itself” (550). As already discussed at length above, coloniality structured socioeconomic, ethno-racial, and gendered hierarchies of modern states. Ethnicity, indistinguishable from race for Quijano and Wallerstein, is a set of “communal boundaries” both imposed upon human beings and which human beings impose upon themselves in order to determine identity and rank within a particular state’s internal hierarchy and division of labor (550). Racism, for Quijano and Wallerstein first emerges from European colonists’ fear of decolonial uprisings organized around ethnicity such as the Haitian Revolution and the Incan resistance led by Túpac Amaru, when peoples began to use the ethnicity imposed upon them as a unifying principle to revolt against exploitation, slavery, and genocide. In the wake of these revolts, Wallerstein and Quijano argue that white supremacy and racism emerged as pervasive population and labor control strategies that only grew stronger as European colonial rule of the Americas ended and slavery was abolished, reaching their full “explicit and theorized” expression in the nineteenth century, and permeating global society and culture to this day (551). Though “newness” was already latent in the “discovery” of the “New World,” for Wallerstein and Quijano it took on additional significance after independence of the former American colonies in the growing importance of science to modernity. “Newness” fully emerges, however, for Wallerstein and Quijano in the wake of

Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the establishment of US global hegemony. “Newness” did not in fact propose anything truly “new,” but rather proposed a game of circular logic: US economic success in the second half of the twentieth century became justification for and proof of US modernity, making capitalism the socioeconomic model to follow and diverting attention away from the “development of underdevelopment” (552). As Quijano and Wallerstein put it, “The concept of ‘newness’ was perhaps the most efficacious contribution of Americanness to the development and stabilization of the capitalist world-system. Under the appearance of offering a way out of the inequalities of the present, the concept of ‘newness’ encrusted them and inserted their inevitability into the superego of the world system” (552).

Saldívar’s comparison between fukú and Americanness provides a useful framework for analyzing *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. Fukú and Americanness function like fractals. Both designate Hispaniola an important site in the origins of coloniality, ethnicity, and racism as the first island to be colonized by the Spanish in the New World post-1492, the first site of the genocides of indigenous people and importation of enslaved Africans in the Americas, and the setting of the first and only successful slave revolt in world history, the Haitian Revolution. Yet while recognizing the often-overlooked importance of Hispaniola in world history, fukú and Americanness also situate the particularities of Hispaniola’s history as well as Dominican anti-Haitian racism, self-hatred, and black denial in a larger context as but one rhizomatic iteration of coloniality’s global pattern of nationalist, racist, misogynistic, and heteronormative socioeconomic hierarchies tessellating across the fractal frontiers of Caribbean, the Americas, and indeed the world. Fukú americanness also troubles linear models of time suggesting that time folds in on itself in fractal cycles and repetitions through which the past and the future inform the present. Finally fukú and Americanness both emphasize the need to un-silence counter-histories of

colonialism, coloniality, and decolonial resistance throughout the Global North and Global South because as Saldívar, echoing Michel-Rolph Trouillot, puts it, “the hegemonic history of the world [...] erased and silenced a large part of the planet because it was an unthinkable space to those writing universal history.”⁵⁴

Rather than portraying the positive contributions of Afro-Dominicans to un-silence and decolonize the Dominican past as Torres-Saillant suggests, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* unflinchingly portrays how racism, black denial, and self-hatred permeate the intimate relations of Dominican life through rhetoric that question the Dominican-ness of Afro-Dominicans by evoking Haiti, Haitians, and Haitian-ness. For example, when Oscar’s uncle picks him up from the airport after his first trip to visit his grandmother in the Dominican Republic, the following scene ensues. “At JFK, almost not being recognized by his uncle. Great, his tío said, looking askance at his complexion, now you look Haitian.”⁵⁵ Oscar’s uncle interprets his darker complexion as a regression into Haitian-ness, into an inferior blackness, and sarcastically lets his nephew know through racist verbal abuse underwritten by white supremacy and designed to police Oscar’s behavior. Racism amongst Dominicans in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* operates through this thinly veiled anti-Haitian rhetoric similar to that used to exclude George Lewis, Jr. from the teenagers’ band for being “too ‘not metal,’” anti-Haitian, racist rhetoric that polices from the intimacy of the family the open wound of the Dominican-Haitian border internalized by Afro-Dominicans, reinforced by the cruel notion that blackness is a negative thing, antithetical to Dominican-ness and equivalent to Haitian-ness, which excludes one from the love and protections of family and nation.

Oscar’s case signals a certain fluidity of race along the imaginary yet violently policed racialized borders of the Dominican-Haitian binary. A tan acquired on a trip to the DR reveals

his uncle's anti-Haitian racism and hatred not only of his nephew's blackness but also his own. Yet whereas Oscar's uncle suggests he might conceal his blackness to protect his Dominican-ness qua whiteness by refraining from exposure to the sun, Oscar's mother, Hypatía Belicia Cabral, born in the DR to their once relatively wealthy family, "was born black. And not just any kind of black. But *black* black – kongoblack, shangoblack, kaliblack, zapotepblack, rekhablack – and no amount of fancy Dominican racial legerdemain was going to obscure the fact" (248). Born shortly after Trujillo imprisoned her father Abelard for telling a "chiste apocalyptus" (235)—a joke mocking Trujillo's murderous ways that proves catastrophic for the Cabrals' fortunes—Belicia's family interprets her blackness as an evil portend, the first sign of the family's eventual downfall. The novel's narrator Yuniór condemns the family's interpretation as indicative of "the kind of culture I belong to: people took their child's black complexion as an ill omen" (248).

If anti-Haitian racism, black denial, and self-hatred permeate intimate family relations in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* to the point that the birth of a black child is treated as an ominous augur and a summer tan sparks odious prejudiced comments excluding a child from the family and the nation, it is unsurprising that the novel portrays Dominicans of Haitians descent as barred not only from the Dominican nation but from legal being and ontology itself. The narrator describes Leticia, one of the many young women that charms Oscar early in the novel, as "just off the boat, half Haitian half Dominican, that special blend the Dominican government swears no existe" (26). Despite Leticia's beauty that tortures the hopelessly out-of-his-league Oscar, the narrator Yuniór underlines how the official, nationalist discourse of the Dominican state would deny the young Leticia's existence. Leticia's very being, legal and ontological, as a Dominican of Haitian descent is verboten, inadmissible within official anti-Haitian, Negrophobic

discourses of Dominican nationalism. Yet Leticia does of course exist in Díaz's fictitious world just as Dominicans of Haitian descent exist in the real world today.

These passages underline how the absurd cruelty of anti-Haitian, Negrophobic discourses of Dominican nationalism linked to the Parsley Massacre and Trujillo's dictatorship colonize the intimacy of Dominican and Dominican-American families and the subjectivities of Dominicans and Dominican Americans. Despite the brutal clarity with which Díaz portrays these issues in his fiction representing Dominicans as both colonized victims and perpetrators of white supremacy, in a 2007 interview with Edwidge Danticat Díaz argues that Dominicans too often serve as scapegoats in conversations of black denial and self-hatred that stop short of un-silencing and decolonizing these problems throughout the African diaspora. Díaz explains that

Dominicans are perpetually singled out whenever there's a discussion of self-hatred and black denial. (It's almost like if we talked about Dominican self-hatred we don't have to talk about anybody else's self-hatred.) Mostly because it's easy—owing to some awful peculiarities in Dominican history, our version of “black denial” grates on the Imperial Black sensibilities common throughout the U.S. Dominicans are easy to single out about the blackness problematic because we make certain issues explicit, not because we're alone in having these issues.⁵⁶

In line with Torres-Saillant's critique of the analysis of Dominican race formations in US scholarly discourse, Díaz underlines how Dominican racism, black denial, and self-hatred conflict with dominant “Imperial” conceptions of blackness, a reference to how US scholars' treatment of Dominican race parallels a long history of US military occupations that imported and imposed US-derived conceptions of race in the DR, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.

Returning once again to the Parsley Massacre, Díaz argues that Dominicans “have historically had to define blackness in the face of the anti-Haitian genocide we inflicted and survived in 1937” blurring the borders between perpetrator and survivor, Haitians and Dominicans, breaching two taboo frontiers while nevertheless acknowledging Dominicans'

culpability in the massacre (95). Though in Dominicans' defense Díaz quips with typical macabre sarcasm that, "You'd be amazed at how you reconstruct self when there's a machete in your face," he nevertheless remains as critical of the Dominican "craziness" of anti-Haitian racism, self-hatred, and black denial in his fiction, non-fiction, and interviews as he is of how, "general and pernicious [black denial] is throughout the African Diaspora" (95). Yet Díaz also notes how in discussions of Dominican racism, black denial, and self-hatred, white supremacy often falls out of the equation, which he calls, "some real blame-the-victim shit" (95). Similar to Torres-Saillant, Díaz thus understands Dominican racism, black denial, and self-hatred both as specific to the racist, anti-Haitian Dominican nationalist identity violently imposed through the Parsley Massacre under Trujillo's dictatorship and part of larger problems that plague the African diaspora generally. Finally, Díaz argues that the work his fiction does un-silencing the historical roots and routes of racism, black denial, and self-hatred in the DR is "a key, not a lock" to working through similar issues in the African diaspora at large because black denial and self-hatred in the African diaspora constitute "one of the great silences of our people—no one really wants to talk about how much a role [it] has in defining what we call our cultures... It's a fukú we desperately need a zafa for" (95).

Yet in addition to un-silencing anti-Haitian racism, black denial, and self-hatred in the intimacy of the Dominican family, in retrograde nationalist articulations of Dominican identity, and in the African diaspora more generally, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* mines comics, roleplaying games, television, film, and literature inspired by apocalyptic science fiction to portray the African diasporic present as post-apocalyptic and to pile example upon example of how racism animates the master metaphors of global popular culture. Science fiction, and nerd culture more generally thus offer a parallel, complementary post-apocalyptic narrative thread to

the novel's primary fukú narrative, a glimpse of what might have been Oscar de León's silenced sci-fi version of his own story weaved throughout the fukú tale Yunior recounts after Oscar's death.

Though Oscar never speaks for himself in the novel, his sci-fi post-apocalyptic vision emerges from the very beginning of the novel, but only from the margins, only in spurts and starts, asides and parentheses in the novel's primary narrative told by Yunior, a deceptively typical Dominican American macho who roomed with the nerdy, overweight Oscar as a favor to Oscar's sister while she and Yunior dated during college at Rutgers. For example, as Yunior begins his fukú introduction to the novel referring to Santo Domingo as "The Land He Loved Best" in reference to Christopher Columbus, the narrator pauses in parentheses to note that Oscar preferred to call Santo Domingo, "Ground Zero of the New World."⁵⁷ Almost done "writing" the novel's introduction, Yunior reflects that Oscar might not approve of Yunior framing Oscar's tale as a "fukú story" since Oscar was a man of the "speculative genres" (6). Yunior imagines Oscar asking, "What more sci-fi than the Santo Domingo? What more fantasy than the Antilles?" (6). What readers do get of Oscar's sci-fi apocalyptic vision of the world, presumably through Yunior's archival labor since at the novel's end Yunior guards Oscar's considerable archive, comes primarily from Oscar's first section of the novel that narrates his teen years prior to college, his mutation from a "normal" Dominican boy into an obese, sci-fi obsessed nerd, and his post-apocalyptic mutant-filled fantasies fueled by incessant romantic failures and colonized the racist master metaphors of global popular culture.

Oscar de León fails to conform to the heteronormative stereotype of the *tiguere dominicano*, the Dominican lady's man. Though Oscar as a very young boy impresses his family by dancing and flirting with girls in the neighborhood, by the time Oscar is seven he is no longer

comfortable in or capable of amorous pursuits. His first romantic catastrophe is tragically narrated at an elementary school bus stop. Oscar, previously entangled in a love triangle with two young girls, heartlessly dumps the less attractive of the two, Olga, who often smells of urine because her parents are alcoholics and neglect her, in favor of the more attractive and better-groomed Maritza. Yet as Oscar approaches the bus stop one morning proudly toting his *Planet of the Apes* lunchbox, he finds “Maritza holding hands with butt-ugly Nelson Pardo. Nelson Pardo who looked like Chaka from *Land of the Lost!* Nelson who was so stupid he thought the moon was a stain that God had forgotten to clean...” (16). Oscar’s internal monologue articulates his pain and anger by associating Nelson with racist tropes from sci-fi, comparing Nelson Pardo—whose name not coincidentally means dark—with Cha-ka, a caveman character of ridiculously simian mien from the kitsch 1970s television show *Land of the Lost!* about an Anglo-American family stuck in an alternative dimension terrorized by dinosaurs and other primitive monsters. Cha-ka, plays the stereotypical role of the friendly native assisting the strangers in a strange land.

The novel thus portrays Oscar’s imagination as colonized by the racist sci-fi metaphors of global popular culture. When hurt his mind latches on to these thinly veiled racist tropes from sci-fi to reimagine Nelson as an ape-like primitive, as stupid and ugly, in a manner not dissimilar to how Oscar’s uncle imagines the tanned Oscar returning from the DR as black and thus Haitian, and thus unworthy of love. Upset, Oscar acts as if he does not notice Nelson and Maritza. Looking to the image of the *Planet of the Apes* for distraction, Oscar “admired his lunchbox, how realistic and diabolical Dr. Zaius looked” (16). Yet when Maritza ignores Oscar and proposes marriage to Nelson, Oscar sits on the curb and cries. A classmate calls him “mariconcito,” little faggot, another kicks his lunchbox scratching “it right across General Urko’s face,” and finally the bus driver waiting impatiently for Oscar to board tells him, “don’t cry

fucking baby.” (16). The cruelty of the scene is complicated and multilayered. In a sense Oscar gets his just deserts both for heartlessly mistreating poor Olga and for his internal monologue with its blatantly racist description of Nelson. Yet Oscar also suffers homophobic abuse from his classmates and the bus driver. Though in much less dire circumstances than the Parsley Massacre, Díaz nevertheless portrays Oscar as both perpetrator and victim of coloniality’s cruelties through the colonized inner workings of his sci-fi-obsessed imagination.

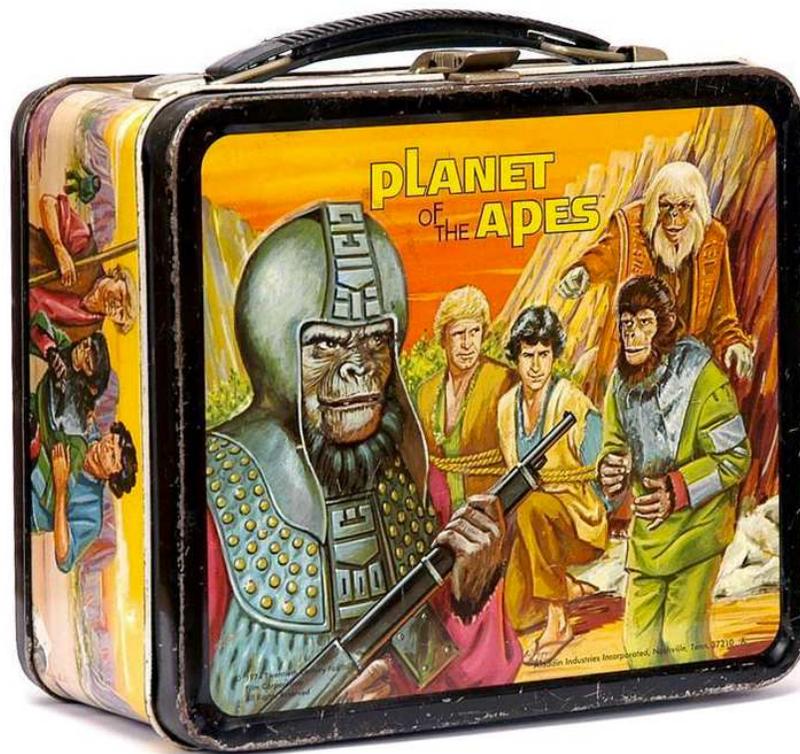


Figure 2.2: *Planet of the Apes* Lunchbox, ca. 1974

Oscar’s lunchbox reinforces how race animates the master metaphors of sci-fi in global popular culture. The version of *Planet of the Apes* depicted on Oscar’s lunchbox pictured above is that of the television series that aired for six months on CBS in the fall of 1974. Dr. Zaius, the character Oscar describes as “realistic and diabolical” is the orangutan in the upper right corner of the image. Though suspicious of and malevolent towards the stranded human astronauts, Dr.

Zaius is a scientist who wants to study the human beings. General Urko, whose face gets scratched when the lunchbox is kicked, the gorilla in the front left of the image, is part of the military and prefers to kill the humans outright rather than study them and risk any complications. Though internal struggles amongst the different class of apes exist around how to handle the humans, both Urko and Zaius see the humans as a threat, and believe their world's official history that incorrectly states that apes are inherently superior to humans and have always ruled them.

With little imagination the plot of *The Planet of the Apes* television series easily stands in for numerous colonial encounters from history as well as the race relations of most nations in the Global North and the Global South. This allegorical flexibility of the series explains why it has constantly been retold and recast since its creation. The 1974 television series was a remake of the original film series from 1968, which was an adaptation of the original French novel *La Planète des singes* from 1963. Since the turn of the twenty-first century the film series has been rebooted twice—in 2001 and again in 2011. In the foreword to *Planet of the Apes as American Myth: Race, Politics, and Popular Culture* (1996), scholar Richard Slotkin explains the master metaphor at the heart of the 1968 incarnation writing that

at the core of racist ideology was a myth or scenario of inescapable violence. Belief in racist myth left Americans with a drastically constricted vocabulary for imagining solutions to the race problem. The myth made equal sharing of power between the races inconceivable: any attempt to achieve equality would merely incite Black violence and provoke a genocidal war of races. Hence the only way to preserve society was to subjugate Blacks by a regime of force: laws excluding them from the exercise of political rights, with violence (both official and lynch-mob) to discourage resistance. The logic of this belief-system produced the Jim Crow regime of racial exclusion, discrimination, violence, and intolerance that was challenged and partly overturned by the Civil Rights Movement. [...] It is this myth of racial violence that is the core scenario of the *Apes* series.⁵⁸

Yet this myth of racial violence that Slotkin describes as the films' master metaphor has never been confined to the race riots of 1968 in the wake of the Civil Rights movement and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and so many others. Since 1492, through the Haitian Revolution, and up to the #BlackLivesMatter movement today, racial violence has been part of the fundamental order that shapes the fractal frontiers of the Americas. Yet while it is perhaps unsurprising that those who benefit from white supremacy rarely understand or admit that they directly reap benefits from coloniality's dominant, violently imposed racial orders, the *Planet of the Apes* in its many different iterations enacts symbolic racial violence, only thinly veiling the apocalyptic paranoia unleashed by the mere idea that people of color might gain rights and thus end white supremacy. At the heart of *The Planet of the Apes*, the apes are as racist of a representation of people of color as Oscar's terrible thoughts about Nelson Pardo, animalizing in terrifying monstrosity the menace of black liberation. Díaz in his depiction of Oscar de León's childhood portrays how children of color internalize these racialized codes of good and evil in global popular culture resulting in an Afro-Dominican child with a budding sci-fi obsession that identifies with the dominant narratives of sci-fi animated by paranoid, apocalyptic fears raised by the prospect of people of color gaining civil rights and upending the white supremacist racial hierarchies violently imposed and maintained in the Americas.

This episode with Maritza marks the beginning of Oscar's mutation into an obese nerd, his growing alimentary appetites rivaled only by his voracious consumption of cultural products associated with the "End of the World. (No apocalyptic movie or book or game existed that he had not seen or read or played."⁵⁹ Though science fiction "helped him get through the rough days of his youth, [...] it also made him stick out in the mean streets of Paterson even more than he already did" (22). The sci-fi obsession increasingly marginalizes Oscar. "You really want to

know what being an X-Man feels like? Just be a smart bookish boy of color in a contemporary U.S. ghetto. Mamma mia! Like having bat wings or a pair of tentacles growing out of your chest” (22). Oscar’s mutation reaches its apotheosis when he realizes, “his fucked-up comic book-reading, role-playing-game-loving, no-sports-playing friends” Al and Miggs, who both recently found girlfriends, “were embarrassed by *him*” (29). Flabbergasted, Oscar locks himself in his room, lies in bed for hours in depressed shock, and finally disrobes staring at his own naked body in the bathroom mirror. Oscar’s reaction to his own reflection is terrible and epiphanic. “The fat! The miles of stretch marks! The tumescent horribleness of his proportions! [...] Jesus Christ, he whispered, I’m a Morlock” (29-30). Even Oscar’s epiphany comes encoded in sci-fi intertextuality echoing the myths of racial violence that animate sci-fi. The Morlocks—the villains of H.G. Wells’s novella *The Time Machine* (1895)—are the dark, hirsute, subterranean, mutated descendants of working-class humans who feed on the Eloi, the fair, fragile, passive, innocent, and yet extremely lazy offspring of humanity’s former ruling classes. In Al and Miggs shame of being Oscar’s friend, through the allegory of Wells’s sci-fi novella, Oscar finally realizes he is not the hero of sci-fi’s colonial imaginary. He is the mutant. He is the monster.

Despite Oscar’s epiphany, despite his newfound awareness that he embodies the real world counterpart to science fiction’s ghoulish Other, Oscar cannot escape his sci-fi obsession because sci-fi is not merely entertainment for Oscar; sci-fi structures Oscar’s inner workings, colonizing his fantasies and his daydreams. Years after Maritza left him for Nelson Pardo, “Maritza [Oscar] still watched from afar, convinced that one day, when the nuclear bombs fell (or the plague broke out or the Tripods invaded) and civilization was wiped out he would end up saving her from a pack of irradiated ghouls and together they’d set out across a ravaged America

in search of a better tomorrow” (27). Despite identifying with the heroes of sci-fi, Oscar’s experiences as the racialized, minoritized, marginalized diasporic other of coloniality’s socioeconomic hierarchies stratified by class, race, gender, sexuality and ability animates the master metaphors of sci-fi in global popular culture. In his interview with Edwidge Danticat for *BOMB*, Díaz is incredibly explicit about what he understands to be the problematic role of coloniality in sci-fi:

Without shit like race and racism, without our lived experience as people of color, the metaphor that drives, say, the X-Men would not exist! Mutants are a metaphor (among other things) for race, and that’s one of the reasons that mutants are so popular in the Marvel Universe and in the Real. I have no problem re-looting the metaphor of the X-Men because I know it’s my silenced experience, my erased condition that’s the secret fuel that powers this particular fucking fantasy. So if I’m powering the ship, at a lower frequency, I’m going to have a say in how it’s used and in what ports of call it stops.⁶⁰

Echoing the concluding sentence from Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*—“Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?”—Díaz suggests his appropriation of sci-fi inspired global popular culture in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* un-silences and decolonizes sci-fi’s master metaphors animated by race, speaking “at a lower frequency” for the millions whose racialized lives invigorate the apocalyptic science fiction fantasies that dominate global popular culture today.

Despite Oscar’s realization that he is the monstrous Other of sci-fi, he never successfully decolonizes his sci-fi obsessed mind, at least not in the narrative the novel provides. Yet the novel does intimate that Oscar wrote an extensive manuscript, a grand science fiction treatment of the past, present, and future of the Antilles, an incomplete Afro-Dominicanofuturist text that the narrator and archivist Yunion guards along with Oscar’s library in four apocalypse-proof refrigerators in his basement, waiting for the day Oscar’s niece Isis finally encounters fukú, comes looking for answers, and attempts like her Egyptian mythological namesake to put the

pieces back together again. Yet the reader never gets to read Oscar's text. The incomplete Afro-Dominicanofuturist sci-fi masterpiece the reader can only hope Oscar wrote remains silenced like so many other key moments in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.

Un-silencing Hispaniola's Past in Search of Decolonial Love

Junot Díaz's novel blends Afro-Dominican traditions with apocalyptic sci-fi to demonstrate how coloniality's fractal frontiers pervasively structure the world from the most intimate human relations to the master metaphors animating global popular culture. In its representations of the Parsley Massacre, of anti-Haitian racism in Afro-Dominican families, and of Oscar de León's sci-fi obsession that begins as an escape only to become a prison, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* blurs the boundaries between Dominican and Haitian, us and them, perpetrator and victim providing example after example of how coloniality's subjects all too often participate in the very systems of structural, cyclical violence, both real and symbolic, of which they themselves are also victims. The novel thus asks how to break the cycles by which coloniality's victims perpetuate the very sources of their own oppression across generations through abuse and violence. While persistently blurring the distinction between coloniality's perpetrators and victims, the novel suggests that the process of decolonization begins with breaking the mental chains of prejudice deeply embedded in the psychologies and epistemologies of individuals. Through fukú and sci-fi the novel also signals systemic issues, both material and cultural, that must be addressed to break coloniality's cycle of violence on a collective level.

Yet though the novel's narrator Yunió speculates in the introduction that his fukú tale might be itself "a zafa of sorts. My very own counterspell," at the novel's conclusion Oscar lies murdered in the cane fields, and the curse remains unbroken.⁶¹ Fukú endures to haunt another generation, and hope for its eventual undoing is placed in the hands of Oscar's niece Isis. The

failure of Yuniors zafa to break coloniality's curse creates a contradictory relationship between the fictional world of the text in which Yuniors zafa fails and the world of the novel's readership in which Junot Díaz won the Pulitzer Prize and accomplished a great deal toward un-silencing the histories of the Dominican Republic and Hispaniola. Through this tension the novel reflexively problematizes the transmission of knowledge derived from traumatic experiences in a manner similar to George Lewis, Jr's music and David Pérez Karmadavis's performance art. Lewis's *Forget* ends with its narrator deciding that in order to survive he must forget the traumatic narrative he only just completed. Karmadavis's performance art plays on the tension between representations of symbolic violence in ephemeral embodied acts versus archived digital afterlives.

In these spaces of reflexive contradictory tension, Lewis, Karmadavis, and Díaz un-silence histories of the Hispaniolan borderlands that connect Haiti and the Dominican Republic to one another and to the rest of the Americas. These Dominican artists as well as those discussed in chapter three, Angie Cruz and Rita Indiana Hernández, form part of a generation profoundly marked by the transformative possibilities of diasporic border thinking, that understands the importance of the Haitian Revolution in the history of Hispaniola, the Caribbean, and the Americas, and that reimagines the Dominican Republic as an integral part of both the Hispaniolan borderlands and the African diaspora. Ultimately, I would argue that this generation of Dominican artists attempts to articulate through un-silencing the apocalyptic histories of Hispaniola a decolonial love of self and other that connects Dominicans and Haitians to one another as fraternal nations of the African diaspora inextricably intertwined in the Hispaniolan borderlands and to the world beyond across the Caribbean's fractal frontiers.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 2

¹ Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, 1.

² Ship, Jesse. “Twin Shadow Can’t ‘Forget’ Musical Non-Acceptance Due to Race.”

³ Critics credit Kimberlé Crenshaw’s 1989 article, “Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics,” with establishing the term intersectionality within academic lexicons. In the article Crenshaw argues that “single-axis” frameworks that consider race or gender individually tend to focus on the grievances of only the most privileged members of a marginalized group and that intersectional models that take race and gender into account together must be developed to address the experiences of people who face multiple forms of marginalization simultaneously.

⁴ Ship, Jesse. “Twin Shadow Can’t ‘Forget’ Musical Non-Acceptance Due to Race.”

⁵ “Miscegenation,” 793, 798.

⁶ Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*, 274; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁷ Matus, Jill. *Toni Morrison*, 120.

⁸ Pérez, David. “El origen de caos.”

⁹ García Peña, Lorgia. *Un-bordering Hispaniola: □David Pérez’s Performance Actions of Haitian- Dominican Solidarity*, 59.

¹⁰ Fumagalli, María Cristina. “‘Isla Abierta’ or ‘Isla Cerrada’?: Karmadavis’s Pre- and Post-Earthquake Hispaniola,” 431; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

¹¹ Fumagalli, María Cristina. “‘Isla Abierta’ or ‘Isla Cerrada’?: Karmadavis’s Pre- and Post-Earthquake Hispaniola,” 429-430. García Peña, Lorgia. *Un-bordering Hispaniola: □David Pérez’s Performance Actions of Haitian- Dominican Solidarity*, 64.

¹² Alvarez, Julia. *A Wedding in Haiti*, 118; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

¹³ Berger, James. *After the End: Representations of Post-apocalypse*, xiii.

¹⁴ Díaz, Junot. “Apocalypse: What Disasters Reveal.”

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Abramovitz, Janet N. “Averting Unnatural Disasters,” 124; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

¹⁸ Knabb, Richard D., Brown, Daniel P., & Rhome, Jamie R. “Tropical Cyclone Report Hurricane Rita.” Knabb, Richard D., Brown, Daniel P., & Rhome, Jamie R. “Tropical Cyclone Report Hurricane Katrina.”

¹⁹ US Geological Survey. “October 17, 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake.” US Geological Survey. “Earthquakes with 1,000 or More Deaths 1900-2014”

²⁰ Díaz, Junot. “Apocalypse: What Disasters Reveal.”

²¹ As mentioned in a note above, the Haitian-American population more than doubled and the Dominican-American population almost quadrupled in the US since the 1990s.

²² Torres-Saillant, Silvio. “One and Divisible: Meditations on Global Blackness,” 23.

²³ Díaz thanks Danticat in the acknowledgements section of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, “for being mi querida hermana,” (338).

²⁴ Berger, James. *After the End*, 19.

²⁵ Though the websites featuring Danticat’s and Díaz’s appearances on *The New Yorker’s* podcasts have since been removed, the audio recordings are still available as of May 2015 via iTunes, WNYC, Stitcher, and tunein.

²⁶ This my own transcription of the podcast.

²⁷ Torres-Saillant, Silvio. “One and Divisible: Meditations on Global Blackness,” 23.

²⁸ Torres-Saillant, Silvio. “The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity,” 141; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

²⁹ Like much of the Parsley Massacre, the exact number of those killed is cloaked in silence and uncertainty because of lacunae in the official archival record. These gaps can be attributed to the chaos of the events, to the Trujillo regime’s attempts to cover up and downplay its involvement in the Parsley Massacre, and to then Haitian President Sténio Vincent’s initial attempts to suppress news of the events for fear it would destabilize his government. Estimates range from 5,000 to 35,000 depending upon sources. In *Trujillo y Haití*, Bernardo Vega includes an extensive discussion and graph of the different statistics cited by many sources from 1937-1987 and eventually settles on a narrow range bound by Jean Price-Mars’ estimation of 12,136 and Élie Lescot’s of 12,168 (385-387). More recently in “A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic” in *Hispanic American Historical Review* in 2002, Richard L. Turits estimates 15,000 were killed (590).

³⁰ Roorda, Eric. *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic*, 129.

³¹ Derby, Lauren Hutcheon. “Haitians, Magic, and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900 to 1937,” 508.

³² Roorda, Eric. *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic*, 129.

³³ When Díaz spoke before publishing *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* in 2006 at UNC-Chapel Hill as part of the Latina/o Cultures Speakers Series organized by the UNC Program in Latina/o Studies, the Parsley Massacre was the second topic he addressed after discussing the idea of negotiating simultaneous, multiple identifications as a Latino and Dominican of African descent living in the US with diasporic attachments to the DR.

³⁴ Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, 2-3; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

³⁵ Novak, Amy. “‘A Marred Testament’: Cultural Trauma and Narrative in Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones*,” 107.

³⁶ In her discussion of post-modern “historiographic metafiction,” Linda Hutcheon argues that, “the footnote is the main textual form by which this [objective, factual] believability is procured. Although publishers hate footnotes – they are expensive and they disrupt the reader’s attention—such paratexts have always been central to historiographic practice, to the writing of the doubled or “braided” narrative of the past in the present,” (304). While recognizing predecessors such as William T. Vollman, Mark Z. Danielewski, and Sandra Cisneros in the use of footnotes in contemporary fiction, in his interview with Edwidge Danticat, Díaz points to Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau’s *Texaco* (1992) as his inspiration for their use in *Oscar Wao* (92).

³⁷ Pulitano, Elvira. “An Immigrant Artist at Work: A Conversation □ with Edwidge Danticat,” 53.

³⁸ Novak, Amy. “‘A Marred Testament’: Cultural Trauma and Narrative in Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones*,” 107.

³⁹ Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, 132; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁴⁰ Danticat, Edwidge & Díaz, Junot. “The Dominican Republic’s War on Haitian Workers.”

⁴¹ Discussions of the genealogy of the public intellectual, the perceived decline or rise of that role, and what might constitute the requirements for attaining the rank of “public intellectual” interest me less here than understanding how Danticat and Díaz have, in addition to their literary output, employed a range of other media—public appearances, radio, television, newspapers,

journals, and internet publications such as blogs and podcasts—in order to educate and engage a larger public on topics often ignored or unaddressed in mainstream US intellectual discourse, topics such as the Parsley Massacre, the experiences of immigrants in the US, the Caribbean, and the Global South, and the politics, histories, and current events of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and their diasporas. At the time Danticat and Díaz’s careers were beginning in the mid-1990s, Michael Bérubé and Robert S. Boynton argue that African-American intellectuals such as bell hooks, Cornel West, Toni Morrison, and Michael Eric Dyson, to name a few, constituted a new wave of US public intellectualism, and Daniel W. Drezner more recently suggests that the proliferation of new forms of media on the internet has contributed to rather than impoverished public intellectualism. A more lengthy discussion of Danticat and Díaz’s intervention as public intellectuals of the African and Caribbean diasporas who have attained popular recognition such as the Oprah Winfrey Book Club and the Pulitzer Prize might be contextualized within these discussions of the now not-so-new African-American public intellectuals signaled by Bérubé and Boynton and the internet’s transformation of the landscape of public media and intellectualism discussed by Drezner.

⁴² In the introduction of their interview with Danticat, Sandy Alexandre and Ravi Y. Howard underline the problematic nature of Danticat’s being labeled a spokesperson for Haiti writing, “If she has been gratified by the success of her work, she has also been troubled by the sense that she’s become a spokesperson for a country that’s far too fractious and complicated to be represented by a single writer—let alone a writer who has spent the last two decades in the United States,” (110). Addressing this role as representative for Haiti elsewhere, Danticat responds, “It is a burden that most writers who are from smaller groups face. There is a tendency to see our work as sociology or anthropology, an “insight” into a complex culture. Readers have to remember that we’re writing fiction, telling stories,” (Lyons 190). Despite these reservations, it would seem that in their intervention Danticat and Díaz mobilize the authority of this problematic spokesperson status because of the political exigencies of the context.

⁴³ Torres-Saillant, Silvio. “One and Divisible: Meditations on Global Blackness,” 22.

⁴⁴ Matibag, Eugenio. *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint: Nation, State, and Race on Hispaniola*, 99.

⁴⁵ For example, Matibag demonstrates that residents of the Cibao region of the Dominican Republic welcomed the second occupation of Santo Domingo by Haitian forces under Boyer and. “raised the Haitian flag above the cities of Montecristi and Santiago de los Caballeros,” (95).

⁴⁶ Torres-Saillant, Silvio. “The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity,” 130; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁴⁷ Torres-Saillant, Silvio. “Blackness and Meaning in Studying Hispaniola: A Review Essay,” 184.

⁴⁸ Torres-Saillant, Silvio. "Blackness and Meaning in Studying Hispaniola: A Review Essay," 188; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁴⁹ Torres-Saillant could not be more clear in his condemnation of the Parsley Massacre when he writes, "the [Trujillo] government massacred Haitian immigrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent along the Dominican-Haitian border in 1937, adding a ghastly Dominican chapter to the annals of crimes against humanity" ("One and Divisible: Meditations on Global Blackness," 22).

⁵⁰ Torres-Saillant, Silvio. "The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity," 140.

⁵¹ Saldívar, José David. "Conjectures on "Americanity" and Junot Díaz's "Fukú Americanus" in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*."

⁵² Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, 1; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁵³ Quijano, Anibal and Immanuel Wallerstein. "Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world-system," 550; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁵⁴ Saldívar, José David. "Conjectures on "Americanity" and Junot Díaz's "Fukú Americanus" in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*," 124.

⁵⁵ Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, 33; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁵⁶ Danticat, Edwidge & Díaz, Junot. "Junot Díaz," 94-95; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁵⁷ Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, 1; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁵⁸ Slotkin, Richard. "Foreword," ix.

⁵⁹ Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, 23; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁶⁰ Danticat, Edwidge & Díaz, Junot. "Junot Díaz," 91.

⁶¹ Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, 7.

CHAPTER 3: LEGACIES OF THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION IN THE CARIBBEAN BORDERLANDS

While the previous chapter highlights Hispaniola, this chapter zooms out mapping reflections and refractions of Haiti and the Haitian Revolution across the fractal frontiers of the Hispanophone Caribbean. In the pages that follow I frame analyses of Cuban-American writer Achy Obejas's novel *Ruins* (2009), Puerto Rican writer Ana Lydia Vega's short story "Encancaranublado" (1982), and Dominican-American writer Angie Cruz's novel *Let It Rain Coffee* (2006) within discussions of Caribbean literature, film, popular music, and visual culture to trace how Haiti and its revolutionary legacies operate within the specific historical contexts that connect Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic to Haiti. Yet because the previous chapter concentrated at length on Dominican conceptualizations of Hispaniola as diasporic borderlands, this chapter shifts its primary focus to two longer sections, one on Cuba's, and the other on Puerto Rico's connections to Haiti. The chapter concludes with a brief return to the Dominican Republic to celebrate what I understand to be two of the most insightful artistic articulations of Haiti's vital place in the Caribbean borderlands.

Part 1: Cuba

Michael's cousin wanted to play music at his funeral. I hadn't played music publicly in a while, but he knew that I used to, and pretended to forget the three simple chords to "Amazing Grace," and asked that I accompany him on guitar. It was obviously a ruse, but a small kindness that I appreciated. My sister had asked that I make a slide show for the funeral service. I recovered photos from her broken laptop and scanned others at a crowded Wal-Mart trying not

to cry as images from Michael's childhood in El Paso, his service in Iraq, his wedding to my sister, and their lives together with their children flashed across the screen. I set the pictures to Debussy's "Claire de Lune." It was the least tasteless of the options for music on the computer program I used to make the slideshow. For a time, the song was ruined for me. Whenever I heard those first crystalline chords of the piece, I felt a mixture of grief and nausea.

After the service, the reception at my sister's house was chaos. Children ran from one end of the upstairs to the other like the dull roaring rhythm of crashing waves. Family brought an endless stream of food and drink through the cluttered garage where Michael's friends from the army smoked and drank, half-heartedly concealing the alcohol my sister asked no one bring. My sister remained in her bedroom, overwhelmed, while I walked around lost trying to be polite to people I didn't actually care to talk to. As I put cheese and crackers on a paper plate my Aunt June—my mother's sister—greeted me. She'd recently returned from a trip to the Caribbean and reported that she'd found documents proving our family was Jewish. I was confused. "You were in Cuba? You mean the Ribós from Cuba are Jewish?" I asked. A couple of years earlier I'd learned my father's grandmother's maiden name Rodríguez was one of many Spanish names typical of Sephardic Jews, but my aunt wasn't talking about that side of the family. "No, our family from Santo Domingo, we're Jews!" she said cheerily joking, "Come on, it's obvious! Just look at the nose on your cousin!"

The memory of my aunt's revelation takes me back to several years before when I was in a comparative literature class about memory with Dr. Eric Downing at UNC-Chapel Hill. The majority of the students were Germanists, the remaining students were comparatists most of whom worked on Latina/o and Latin American literature. While discussing W.G. Sebald's Austerlitz a debate erupted. For the Germanists, like Sebald, World War II represented perhaps

the most fundamental shift in contemporary understandings of memory since the Holocaust ushered in post-modernity. The Latina/o and Latin American Studies folks, however, pointed to 1492, reminding them how the colonization, genocide, and slavery the arrival of Europeans in the Americas unleashed on the world still fundamentally shape our everyday lives today.

After class Dr. Downing and I walked towards the library discussing my Masters thesis. He asked about my thoughts on Buena Vista Social Club. It was one of the few Cuban things besides food I'd seen my father enjoy. The music took him back to happier times. After listening to my thoughts, Dr. Downing grinned and said that for him it wasn't actually about Cuba at all, insisting that the German director Wem Wenders had made a film about the reunification of East and West Germany only disguised as a film about Cuba. Perhaps he had a point. Wenders's documentary did seem to silence messier questions to pluck resonant heartstrings nostalgically connecting Cuban and German experiences of the Cold War. And after all some of the same people who planned the kindertransport that sent Jewish children, like Sebald's fictional protagonist Austerlitz, to Great Britain saving them from the Nazi concentration camps also helped organize Operation Pedro Pan, the program that arranged my father's, uncle's, and thousands of other Cuban children's migration to the US without their parents.

Cuba and Haiti: Common Memories of Underdevelopment

In a scene from Cuban director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's 1968 film adaptation of Cuban writer Edmundo Desnoes's novella *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1965), the protagonist Sergio rides in the passenger seat of a convertible with its top down along the Malecón, a wide esplanade running along a seaside wall in downtown Havana, listening to his best friend Pablo explain why he plans to leave Cuba for the United States in the wake of the Cuban Revolution.

—Pablo: Esta gente dice que está haciendo la primera revolución socialista de América. ¿Y qué? Van a regresar a la barbarie. Van a pasar un

hambre, como los haitianos. Derrotaron a Napoleón, ¿Y qué? Tuvieron la primera industria azucarera antes de la revolución, y míralos ahora. Descalzos y convertidos en zombies.

—Sergio: Los tiempos cambian.

—Pablo: Además Sergio, este es un problema que no es nuestro. Este es un problema entre los rusos y los americanos. A nosotros no se nos ha perdido nada en este problema. Óyeme una cosa que te voy a decir, Sergio. Aquí se va a formar tremenda moña. La primera galleta que se pierda aquí en este mundo, ¿tú sabes quién la coge? Nosotros. ¿Y sabes por qué? Porque somos muy pequeños. Una isleta muy pequeñita, Sergio. Bueno, la galleta la cogen ustedes. Porque lo que es yo, no estaré.

—Pablo: These people say they're leading the first socialist revolution of the Americas. So what? They're going to return to barbarism. They're going to starve like the Haitians. They defeated Napoleon, and so what? They had the number one sugar industry before the revolution, and look at them now. Penniless zombies.

—Sergio: Times change.

—Pablo: What's more Sergio, this isn't our problem. This problem is between the Russians and the Americas. We haven't lost anything in this yet. Listen to this one thing I'm going to tell you, Sergio. It's going to become a huge mess here. When the first punch is thrown, here in the real world, you know who'll catch it? Us. You know why? Because we're small, a tiny, little island, Sergio. Well, you all will catch the first punch. Because me, I won't be here.¹

This dialogue between Pablo and Sergio succinctly illustrates how the history of the Haitian Revolution has informed interpretations of the Cuban Revolution since the immediate aftermath of Fidel Castro's ouster of the Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. A friend of Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, Batista fled Cuba for the DR with millions of dollars embezzled from Cuba's coffers and US aid. Though Pablo, like Batista, decides to leave Cuba, and Sergio decides to stay to see what social transformations the Cuban Revolution will bring, Alea's film, funded and distributed by the *Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográfica* [Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Arts and Industry], the official state apparatus of Cuban cinema, initially portrays the best friends, both Sergio and Pablo, as unlikeable snobs.

While Sergio neither vocally agrees nor disagrees with Pablo during their conversation about the Haitian and Cuban Revolutions, by the time Pablo finally leaves for the US from José

Martí International Airport both Sergio and his relationship to Pablo have changed. In their last scene together as Pablo prepares to embark on the plane, a glass wall separates the two. The departing Pablo attempts to speak to Sergio gesticulating and exaggerating the movements of his mouth, but Sergio and the audience can no longer hear or understand Pablo. In a voiceover, Sergio admits to himself he is glad to see Pablo leave.

¿Yo era como él antes? Es posible. La revolución aunque me destruya es mi venganza contra la estúpida burguesía cubana, contra los cretinos como Pablo. Me doy cuenta de que Pablo no es Pablo sino mi propia vida, todo lo que yo no quiero ser. Es bueno verlo partir como si me lo resacara de adentro.²

I was like him before? It's possible. The revolution, even if it destroys me, is my revenge on the stupid Cuban bourgeoisie, on cretins like Pablo. I realize that Pablo isn't Pablo but my own life, all the things I don't want to be. It's good to see him leave, like vomiting out something from within me.

Like Batista fleeing to the Dominican Republic, Sergio imagines Pablo's departure for the US as an old, undesirable part of himself and the Cuban nation that must be excised, cut out, the abject remainder of the *ancien régime* incompatible with the new revolutionary Cuba. Since the Revolution the Cuban state has often deployed similar imagery and tropes calling Cuban émigrés *gusanos*, worms, and depicting emigrating Cubans as traitors to the nation unsuited to the new revolutionary ideals that bind Cubans together.

Alea's filmic treatment of Desnoes's *Memoria del subdesarrollo* succinctly captures the complex, dynamic relationship between Haiti and Cuba in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) and Cuban Revolution (1953-1959) are inextricably linked both historically and as iconic symbols of struggles for freedom and self-determination in the Caribbean. Though occurring more than a century and a half after the Haitian Revolution, the Cuban Revolution addressed socioeconomic, political, and cultural inequalities in Cuba that date to the fall of Saint-Domingue and the rise of Cuban sugar. As the character Pablo rightly notes,

before the Haitian Revolution, Saint-Domingue had been the number one global producer of sugar. The opportunity to corner the global market in sugar created by the Haitian Revolution led to the rapid expansion of plantations, sugar production, and slavery in Cuba in the nineteenth century. Historian Ada Ferrer frames this cause and effect, this push and pull between Saint-Domingue's fall and the rise of sugar in Cuba as a reflexive, inverse relationship between the two nations, a thesis that inspires the title of her volume *Freedom's Mirror: Cuban and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (2014). Ferrer writes:

At a basic level, liberation in Saint-Domingue helped entrench its denial in Cuba. As slavery and colonialism collapsed in the French colony, the Spanish Island underwent transformations that were almost the mirror image of Haiti's. The sugar no longer produced in Saint-Domingue was now produced in Cuba. Machinery, suddenly without a purpose in revolutionary Saint-Domingue, found its way to Cuba; so too did men who worked as sugar technicians and others considered experts in managing slaves. Many of the African captives who would have once arrived in Cap Français or Port-au-Prince were diverted to Havana. The Haitian Revolution thus hastened and hardened Cuba's sugar revolution and the brutal practices of enslavement that came with it. Two decades after Haitian independence, Cuba had emerged as the world's largest producer of sugar and one of the greatest consumers of enslaved Africans in the nineteenth-century world.³

Ferrer argues that Cuba, in the nineteenth century, effectively became the counterrevolutionary mirror image of revolutionary Haiti, catalyzing a process that profoundly transformed Cuba's demographics, culture, economy, and politics. In effect, the Haitian Revolution and the migration of planters, laborers, slaves, technology, and knowledge from Saint-Domingue to Cuba made the Cuba that the world knows today possible. Not coincidentally, this migration spread, like the Cuban War of Independence in 1898 and the Cuban Revolution in 1953, across Cuba westward from the island's mountainous eastern region Oriente, home to Cuba's original capital and second most important port Santiago de Cuba, and to the island's easternmost extremity closest to Haiti.⁴ Yet Cuba was not alone. The Haitian Revolution unleashed similar processes elsewhere in the Caribbean basin in what some historians refer to as "the second slavery."⁵ As Ferrer puts

it, if “the first slavery” occurred during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Barbados, Jamaica, and Saint-Domingue, “The second wave of slavery in the nineteenth century consisted of the rise of new or reinvigorated slave regimes producing tropical commodities at unprecedented scales in areas formerly marginal to the global economy, most notably Cuba, the U.S. lower South, and southeastern Brazil” (12).

In the nineteenth century the paths of Haiti and Cuba diverged. Haiti’s independence only encouraged the expansion of the sugar industry, plantations, and slavery in Cuba. Yet as a result, these two nations share connections with the African diaspora that two of the most famous Cuban writers of the twentieth century, poet Nicolás Guillén and novelist Alejo Carpentier, explored in their journalistic and literary work in the decades leading to the Cuban Revolution. In *Haiti and Trans-Caribbean Literary Identity* (2011), a volume exploring the impact of Haitian literature in the Hispanophone Caribbean, Cuban literary critic Emilio Jorge Rodríguez describes Guillén’s visit to Haiti in 1942.

Among writers, artists, journalists, teachers and other intellectuals, the presence of the poet [Nicolás Guillén] was a tangible recognition of the common African cultural roots of the neighboring country, where thousands of seasonal farm workers emigrated—working for starvation wages and housed in barracks under conditions similar to slavery—to cut sugar cane during the early decades of the 20th century while subject to sustained discrimination.⁶

Guillén who had been born in Camagüey, a common destination of Haitian immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century who cut sugar cane in Cuba, was sympathetic to the plight of Haitian immigrants to Cuba. Guillén’s early poetry, which rather than syllabic scansion typical of poetics in Spanish emphasizes stress-based rhythms strongly influenced by the Afro-Cuban music *son*, had been well received in Haiti as a unique and welcomed celebration of Afro-Cuban culture. His visit to Haiti during World War II as an official delegate of the Cuban National Antifascist Front brought a timely message of Cuban-Haitian solidarity based on the recognition

of the two nations' shared African heritage that resonated with the Haitian President Élie Lescot's recent declaration of war on Germany on 1 January 1942, which included a call to arms to all the black people of the world in solidarity against the threats of Nazism's racist ideology (213).

Similarly to Guillén, Carpentier understood Haiti as integral to Caribbean and Latin American culture, most famously taking inspiration from his journey to King Henri Christophe's Citadelle La Ferrière and Sans Souci palace in northern Haiti, a year after Guillén's trip to Haiti, in 1943, as inspiration for the development of his concept of the marvelous real in the introduction to his novel *El reino de este mundo* (1949). Yet as Rodríguez insists in *Haiti and Trans-Caribbean Literary Identity*, Carpentier wrote about Haiti's importance in the Spanish-speaking world not only in his literary production but also in his work as a journalist.

In 1951 [Carpentier] published the article "Miremos hacia Haití" ["Let us look to Haiti"]. In it he comments on the literary and ethnographic wealth of this country, where we find the "coexistence [...] of what we can call the cultured language and a popular language." He also explains how Haitian intellectuals, marginalized from Hispanic American ideological trends due to language barriers, are an example of fruitful tenacity in all disciplines, which leads to a profound awareness of themselves and everything that can historically characterize them as a people with its own physiognomy. In this very text, Carpentier refers to the imperious need of taking Haitian novels into account when establishing a panorama of Hispanic American literature. (163)

In his journalism, Carpentier thus expands the arguments he laid out in the famous introduction to *El reino de este mundo* for adopting Haiti as historical referent and aesthetic model for a decolonial turn in the arts and humanities of the Americas away from Europe and towards the fantastic yet real histories of the New World. Little could Carpentier have known in 1951, however, that in the wake of the Cuban Revolution, Cuban artists and intellectuals on the island would experience isolation not altogether dissimilar to the Haitian isolation he praised.

Regardless, with the Cuban Revolution, Guillén and Carpentier became official literary

voices of the revolutionary state. Carpentier returned from exile to Cuba in 1959 working in cultural posts for the revolutionary regime in Havana before becoming Cuban ambassador to France in Paris in 1966. In 1961, Guillén founded the *Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas Cubanos* [National Union of Cuban Writers and Artists] (UNEAC), an official state organization that has served as an important source of support, promotion, and distribution of Cuban literature and art. Since the Revolution successfully overthrew the Batista dictatorship and Guillén and Carpentier aligned themselves with the revolutionary regime, Cuba made progress on a number of important fronts. UNEAC provided Cubans free access to art, literature, and music on the island for over half a century. The work of Guillén and Carpentier improved understandings of the historical links between Haiti and Cuba and of the fundamental contributions of Afro-Cubans to Cuban literature, culture, and history. And Castro's regime made quantifiable progress in reducing material disparities articulated to race on the island by providing essential medical and educational services to the poorest sectors of Cuban society. Cuba reduced infant mortality rates and increased life expectancy and literacy rates as well as the ratio of Cuban doctors to patients to among the best levels in Latin America, North America, and Europe.⁷ While partisanship often plagues discussions of Cuba, these material gains are verified by the statistics of the US Central Intelligence Agency, the very organization that has attempted multiple assassinations of Castro.

Yet despite clear progress in these key areas, Castro's regime has also been criticized for censoring Cuban culture. For example, in certain cases rather than serving as a source of support, UNEAC has been a means to sanction, censor, and ostracize writers and artists the Cuban government deems counterrevolutionary. Two artists who have made their difficulties with UNEAC very public are novelist Reinaldo Arenas and performance artist Tania Bruguera.

Before heading into exile in the US during the Mariel boatlift, Arenas saw only one of his novels published in Cuba, *Celestino antes del alba* (1964), which was allowed just one quickly sold-out limited printing. Despite winning second prize from UNEAC in 1965, the Castro regime never accepted Arenas's iconoclastic style or open homosexuality. More recently Bruguera has been arrested multiple times for staging unsanctioned performance pieces criticizing the Cuban government in the wake of US President Barrack Obama's announcement of new diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba on 17 December 2014.

In addition to censorship that artists have faced, anti-racist material gains won by the Revolution eroded after the collapse of the Soviet Union during *el período especial en tiempos de paz*, the Special Period in Peacetime, the euphemistic name the Cuban government gave to austerity measures taken in response to the withdrawal of Soviet material and financial aid. To amass foreign currency, Castro's government opened the island to international tourism and US dollars. Yet the primary benefactors both of remittances in US dollars from Cubans living abroad, primarily in the US, and new jobs catering to international tourists have overwhelmingly been lighter skinned and white Cubans. These inequalities are largely due to the fact that lighter skinned and white Cubans tend to have more family living abroad, and new positions in the tourist industry have tended to be given to lighter skinned and white Cubans as a means to cater to the perceived and real racism of international tourists. While these policies have allowed the Cuban government to gain access to streams of hard currency with which to purchase much needed staples on international markets such as food, fuel, and medical supplies, the material conditions of Cubans overall have nevertheless declined since the 1990s and the growing importance of US dollars and international tourism in the Cuban economy have in effect reintroduced the inequalities of racist socioeconomic hierarchies that can be observed throughout

the rest of the Americas and the Caribbean, hierarchies that the Castro regime had combatted with some success throughout the 1970s and 1980s (792).

The Special Period thus presents a number of contradictions between revolutionary discourse and praxis in Cuba. While the Cuban state maintained through the Special Period that racism had been defeated by the Cuban Revolution and celebrated Afro-Cuban artists, musicians, writers, and performers in discourse heavily influenced by the likes of Guillén and Carpentier to promote Cuban culture and tourism internationally, the actual benefits of US dollars and international tourism accrue disproportionately to non-Afro-Cubans. As anthropologist and African American studies scholar Jafari S. Allen describes the situation, “Today the [Cuban] state asks black Cubans in particular to hold the ground won by the Revolution on their behalf by continuing to adhere to socialist mores and to persevere through material shortages and privation.”⁸ One can also observe this troubling contradiction of post-Cold War Cuba asking Afro-Cubans to endure the harshest socioeconomic consequences of the Special Period while simultaneously instrumentalizing Afro-Cuban culture to attract the hard currency of international tourists can in the international commodification of Cuban culture, especially Afro-Cuban music.

There is perhaps no better example of the international marketing and capitalist success of Afro-Cuban culture in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union than *Buena Vista Social Club*, both the 1997 album and the 1999 documentary film. The album, a collaboration between guitarist and producer Ry Cooder from the US and a number of Cuban musicians from the island including Ibrahim Ferrer, Compay Segundo, Rubén González, and Eliades Ochoa, became the best selling world music album of all time, and the documentary was nominated for an Academy Award.⁹ Yet although the group and film were named after the famous Havana *sociedad de color*, Social Club Buena Vista, scholar of Latina/o and Latin American music David García

points out that the album and film have little to do with the culture, music, and politics of the group's namesake writing that

[...] with the exception of pianist Rubén González, very few of the older musicians have performed in Havana's working class *sociedades de color*, including the real Social Club Buena Vista, after which the original Ry Cooder-led group and film was named. In addition the musical content of the CD *Buena Vista Social Club* hardly reflects the two primary musical and dance genres—*son montuno* and *danzón-mambo*—that emerged and thrived in Havana's black social clubs in the 1940s. Instead, the music in both the CD and film constitutes a geographically and historically diverse representation of Cuban music. What is also missing in *Buena Vista Social Club*'s historical musical narrative is the importance fighting racial discrimination, segregation, and ideologies of racial supremacy had for the directors and members of the black social club.¹⁰

In addition to these historical inaccuracies and shifts of musical and political emphasis between Social Club Buena Vista and Buena Vista Social Club, musicologist Geoffrey Baker, author of *Buena Vista in the Club: Rap, Reggaetón, and Revolution in Havana* (2011), notes how Wenders's film perpetuates colonialist, racist stereotypes of Cuba and Cubans as primitive ingénues stuck in the past describing how Wenders portrays the US guitarist Cooder as almost a sci-fi hero, "as an explorer who travels through space and time to find a musical 'lost world' in Havana; the Cuban musicians who visit New York at the end of the film are captured as bewildered innocents, relics of an earlier age."¹¹ Similarly, Latina/o Studies scholar María Elena Cepeda notes the film's complete lack of "references to race, gender, class, or, most notably, U.S.-Cuba relations" as part of the dynamic by which the documentary "serves to reinscribe the romanticized, tropicalized vision that many U.S. 'leftists' harbor of post-Castro Cuba in particular, and Latin America in general."¹²

In *Buena Vista in the Club* Baker argues that *Buena Vista Social Club*'s overwhelming global success has produced ambivalent reactions among younger generations of Cuban musicians eager simultaneously to mine the cultural currency of Buena Vista Social Club to seek

their own success, on the one hand, and to react, on the other, against the perception the album and film perpetuate that Cuba today is stuck in the last century. As examples, Baker cites Havana-based rapper Telmary, her former group Free Hole Negro, and the Paris-based Cuban group Orishas who have all sampled, sung, and rapped over famous tracks from *Buena Vista Social Club* while simultaneously distancing themselves from the famous album, film, and group in their lyrics and public declarations in order to distinguish their music as fresh, new, and contemporary.¹³ Buena Vista Social Club as international phenomenon and cultural touchstone of Cuba's transition into the Post-Cold War global order exemplifies the ambiguous, contradictory ways "authentic" Afro-Cuban music circulates within global, capitalist culture in the twenty-first century.

Two more recent Cuban musical projects, Ibeyi and Creole Choir of Cuba, demonstrate the long-term effects of Buena Vista Social Club on the global circulation of Cuban music. *Ibeyi*, the 2015 debut album of twenty-year-old, Paris-based, Franco-Cuban twin sisters Lisa Kaindé-Díaz and Naomi Díaz, daughters of Buena Vista Social Club percussionist Anga Díaz, embraces both Afro-Cuban traditions and contemporary international independent music. The duo's promotional materials emphasize their family connection with Buena Vista Social Club; the name of their group and title of their album, *Ibeyi*, is Yoruban for twins; their music features cajón and Batá, traditional Afro-Cuban percussion instruments; and their album opens and closes with Santería prayers sung in Yoruban to the orishas Elegua, guardian of the crossroads and destiny, and Ibeyi, twin deities associated with prosperity and good fortune. Yet the twins sing primarily in English and French, commonly cite contemporary UK and US pop, electronic, and rap groups as their major influences, and have adopted production, distribution, promotional, and touring practices typical of independent pop music rather than world music, signing to

independent British music label XL, and performing and promoting their music in US venues and to media outlets such as the South by Southwest Music Festival in Austin, Texas and Pitchfork Media. Similarly to how their father's work with Buena Vista Social Club broke Cuban music into world music, the Díaz twins appear prepared to bring their unique take on Cuban music to the international independent pop music scene.

While Ibeyi promotes Cuban music to younger demographics and new segments of global markets, the strategies for promoting the music of the Creole Choir of Cuba follows the Buena Vista Social Club's playbook much more closely. Founded in 1994 by classically trained singers of the Professional Choir of Camagüey as a reaction to the economic difficulties of the Special Period, the performers of the Creole Choir of Cuba are Cuban descendants of Haitians who first began arriving to work on sugar plantations in Cuba as slaves in 1791 at the beginning of the Haitian Revolution and continued to migrate to Cuba seeking employment as immigrant laborers into the early twentieth century. The Creole Choir sings songs passed down through the members' families, typically in Cuban Creole, the second language of the island strongly influenced by Haitian Kreyòl. Though they have traveled repeatedly to Haiti since their first trip there in 1996, their first international release only came in 2010 after they were "discovered" by British producers John Simpson and Jon Lee. Riding the wave of international solidarity with and interest in Haiti in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, the Creole Choir of Cuba have released two albums *Tande-la* (2010) and *Santiman* (2013) with Real World Records, a British world music label founded by musician Peter Gabriel and WOMAD, the World of Music, Art, and Dance Festival. To promote the Cuban Choir of Cuba, Real World Records created for YouTube and other social media a series of videos in the style of Wender's *Buena Vista Social Club* explaining the history of the group. Since releasing these albums and videos the group has

toured the UK and US extensively playing concert halls at universities and art centers typically associated with classical, jazz, and world music.

While important distinctions between Ibeyi and the Creole Choir of Cuba exist, both musical groups deploy Afro-Cuban culture as key components not only in the musical and thematic content of their work, but also in their marketing materials promoting their music. While Ibeyi emphasize their Afro-Cuban musical influences through instrumentation, use of the Yoruban language, references to orishas, and claiming familial ties to their father in order to promote their music to a younger market associated with independent popular music in the US and Europe, the Creole Choir of Cuba underlines the African-diasporic origins of their music, their heritage as descendants of Haitian immigrants to Cuba, and their classical training to disseminate their work to an older clientele on the world music scene. The trajectories of both groups, nevertheless, highlight how since the success of *Buena Vista Social Club*, “discovering” the African diasporic roots of Cuban culture has become a primary emphasis in the international promotion and circulation of Cuban music, illustrating how discourses embracing Haiti and the African diaspora developed by Guillén and Carpentier before the Cuban Revolution and adopted as official discourses of the Cuban state after the Revolution in 1959 have been evacuated of much of their political charge as they have become commercialized during the Special Period to sell Cuban culture internationally.

Counterfeits and Counterrevolutionaries in Achy Obejas’s *Ruins*

In Chicago, Illinois on 18 July 2014, as part of the first conference of the Latina/o Studies Association, at a panel organized to discuss her novel *Ruins*, Cuban-American writer Achy Obejas told the audience that the book had been written at a time of great personal difficulty, during a period of self-imposed exile from the United States in Havana, Cuba. After the 2001

attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, disillusioned by the growing tide of Islamophobia and lack of critical perspective on US foreign policy in US media and the seemingly unstoppable march to war with Afghanistan and Iraq, Obejas chose to return to Cuba, the country of her birth, indefinitely. *Ruins*, Obejas suggested, can be understood then as the byproduct of her profound disillusionment with the cultural evolution and official state discourses of her adopted home country in the wake of a national catastrophe. Yet by reading *Ruins* alone, one could never surmise the circumstances of the novel's production. Rather than portraying a protagonist disillusioned with US foreign policy in the post-9/11 United States, the novel presents a character that becomes disenchanted with the revolutionary ideals of post-Cold War Cuba.

At the panel in Chicago, not one paper of the three presented, nor any of the questions from the audience afterwards, including my own, addressed the central revelation of *Ruins*: the protagonist's discovery at the end of the novel that he is Jewish. A room full of Latina/o Studies scholars thus discussed a novel in large part about crypto-Judaism in Cuba and its diaspora with the novel's author for over an hour and a half without once mentioning Jewishness. Similarly to the personal and political contexts in which Obejas produced the novel, Jewishness became an absence present in the conversation. Jewish and Latina/o Studies scholar Maya Socolovsky captures this dynamic between absence and presence in crypto-Judaism in Cuba and the Cuban Diaspora in Obejas's earlier novel, her first to deal with Jewishness, *Days of Awe* (2001). In "Deconstructing a Secret History: Trace, Translation, and Crypto-Judaism in Achy Obejas's *Days of Awe*," Socolovsky writes:

The fact that for crypto-Judaism secrecy is an integral part of ritual means that the secret of it is never either hidden nor out in plain sight. [...] Rather than the logic of a secret that is uncovered and then becomes known, visible and present, the secrecy of crypto-Judaism in principle cannot be uncovered: in terms of ritual

practice, and self-description, it can define itself only through what is not-there, or through a memory of having once been not-there.¹⁴

Days of Awe complicates its narrative of its Cuban-American protagonist Ale uncovering her father's Jewish roots, traveling to Cuba to learn about Judaism on the island, and coming to terms with these previously unknown elements of her family's heritage with this dynamic interplay of absence and presence that defines crypto-Judaism. Although because of this dynamic Ale never has the opportunity to openly celebrate her Jewishness with her father while he is alive, the novel nevertheless ends with the Ale coming to terms with her father's death by taking his ashes to Cuba and saying a kaddish, a Jewish prayer of mourning.

Obejas's novel *Ruins* addresses many of the same themes as *Days of Awe* yet never provides its protagonist or readers a similar sense of closure. *Ruins* instead deploys the absent presence of the crypto-Judaic roots of its protagonist Usnavy to problematize official, state-sanctioned, revolutionary discourses celebrating Afro-Cuban culture in Cuba despite the socioeconomic and cultural transformations of the Special Period that saw racial equality decline in Cuba and Afro-Cubans disproportionately affected by discrimination and deprivation. Through its central motif of the blurred borders between the authentic and the counterfeit, *Ruins* explores the contradictions not only of Cuban revolutionary doxa, but also of the US embargo of the island, which according to US hardliners should have led to democratization but actually only drove Cubans to the black market and to the high seas. The novel thus not only questions the ideals of revolutionary Cuba but also US foreign policy, especially the notion that democracy can be imposed through foreign intervention. Furthermore, through repeated references to the 1994 US invasion of Haiti known as "Operation Uphold Democracy," Obejas extends critiques of US foreign policy to the Caribbean at large and to Haiti specifically suggesting that Cuba and Haiti in their ruinous states might be confused for one another like copies or forgeries, repeating

islands repeating disasters. The novel's thematic blurring between the real and the fake culminates as Usnavy, the protagonist, uncovers the truth about himself and his family. Usnavy's Afro-Caribbean roots are phony. Usnavy actually descends from Cuban Jewish artisans who originally invented and later counterfeited the US designer Louis Comfort Tiffany's famous glass lamps. And finally Usnavy's prized family heirloom, the grandest of all Tiffany lamps, was actually commissioned by Cuban president Mario García Menocal in 1920 for the Presidential Palace and produced by Usnavy's Jewish ancestors. Through the proliferation of counterfeits, fakes, and forgeries—some even superior to their originals—*Ruins* underlines how slippery the truth is in the post-Cold War era of globalized capitalism in which the real and the fake become indistinguishable and interchangeable.

Born in 1956, Achy Obejas is a queer Cuban-American, Chicago-based writer, journalist, and translator who immigrated to the US in 1962. Her earlier fiction includes the short story collection *We Came All The Way from Cuba So You Could Dress Like This?* (1994) and the novels *Memory Mambo* (1996) and *Days of Awe* (2001). All portray queer, female Cuban-American first-person narrators who live in the US and grapple with issues of identity, memory, and history. *Ruins*, on the other hand, is set entirely in Cuba, and narrates in the third person the misadventures of Usnavy, a middle-aged, heterosexual male Cuban. Yet while *Ruins* represents a shift in setting, subject, and perspective in Obejas's work from the US to Cuba, from first-person queer female Cuban-American protagonists to a third-person Cuban heterosexual male protagonist, one can nevertheless understand the novel as congruent within the trajectory and thematics of Obejas's fiction. The themes of *Ruins* such as the unreliability of memory, history, and identity expressed through counterfeit objects and false memories run throughout Obejas's work from her earliest. Additionally since her 2001 novel *Days of Awe*, Obejas has increasingly

explored these themes through stories of Cubans and Cuban Americans who uncover their families' hidden Jewish ancestry and who consequently must reconstruct and reconfigure their identities, memories, and histories. Finally, while at a cursory glance *Ruins* might appear more heteronormative than Obejas's previous work with its male, hetero, third-person protagonist Usnavy, *Ruins* explores gender perhaps only in a more oblique way. Through its subplot describing the transition in exile of a Cuban American transgender woman, Reynaldo who becomes Reina, and its radical shift in gender from Obejas's previous work, *Ruins* subtly hints that the choice of Usnavy as protagonist might itself be a sort of exilic, narrative drag that Obejas dons. Reynaldo/Reina provides only the first of many examples of the novel's obsession with artifice and the indistinguishability between the real and the fake.

From references to the Special Period and an impending US intervention in Haiti, the events of *Ruins* take place in Cuba around the summer of 1994, a particularly dire moment during the Special Period that culminated in public protests in Havana in August 1994. Cubans on the island had already suffered three years of starvation, a dire state tricksters like Rosita and Lidia, Usnavy's neighbor and wife, ultimately turn to their advantage by selling black market sandwiches filled with counterfeit meat made of strips of blankets and old mop heads soaked in beef broth and spices. By 1994 this starvation also drove Cubans to the sea aboard *balsas*, homemade boats Cubans forged piecemeal from whatever could be found including household goods, scraps of building materials, and trash. Like the sandwiches stuffed with counterfeit meat that nevertheless fill the hungry bellies of Usnavy's neighbors, the *balsas*, counterfeit sea vessels, are authenticated upon successfully traversing the straits of Florida. Furthermore, Obejas pairs the starvation and exodus of the Special Period with the 1994 US invasion of Haiti, ironically code named "Operation Uphold Democracy." While the US intervention reinstalled

the ousted, duly elected Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide, his reinstatement too might be considered a hoax since only ten years later in 2004, Aristide would once again be removed from power in a coup carried out with the financial and political backing of the US government.

Within this complex socio-historical context *Ruins* tells the tale of Usnavy beginning with the origin of his name. Usnavy's mother, "...had spied the powerful US ships, their sides emblazoned with the military trademark, which she then bestowed on her only son. She pronounced it according to Spanish grammar rules—Uss-nah-veee [...]."¹⁵ Raised by his Cuban mother and abandoned by his Jamaican father, Usnavy is from Oriente, Cuba's easternmost province of the island, the geographical point of origin of Cuba's slave revolts, wars for independence, and revolutions, as well as the region closest both geographically and culturally to Haiti. Usnavy incorporates the importance of revolution, resistance, and the African diasporic roots of the Oriente region into his identity, crafting a counterfeit ancestral legacy that, despite not being his by blood, nevertheless defines him ethnically and politically.

Usnavy's revolutionary politics make his name, a direct byproduct of US hegemony in the region, all the more ironic. Moreover, Obejas's decision to name her protagonist Usnavy further blurs the lines between authentic and counterfeit, fact and fiction by raising the question, "Is that name real?" Since the late 1990s stories from international news outlets such as the BBC, CNN, *The New York Times*, and elsewhere have emphasized the idiosyncratic naming practices of Central America and the Caribbean in stories that only thinly veil a tone mocking people who would name their children names such as Usnavy or Odlainer—the traditional Spanish name Reinaldo backwards. In short, over time such names have become the punch line for mean-spirited, elitist jokes mocking the less wealthy and the less educated among Latin Americans and Latina/os. Despite the fact that such names have a basis in reality, their novelty and their

widespread use in jokes have led people to question if they are in fact “real” names. The very privilege to question the authenticity or validity of another person’s name *as a name itself* implies a troubling inequality of power and authority, and further emphasizes the tension between the authentic and the counterfeit embodied in Usnavy.

As the novel begins Usnavy shares a small, one-bedroom Havana apartment with his wife Lidia and his daughter Nena. He works at the local state-run bodega and is an exemplary employee and upstanding member of his local *Comité de la Defensa de la Revolución*. Though materially poor, Usnavy has his family, his job, his patriotism, and one prized possession, a gigantic Tiffany-style multi-colored glass lamp he inherited from his mother. Usnavy associates this lamp intimately with his revolutionary, African-diasporic Cuban identity and often spends hours staring into its light daydreaming of a mystical, idealized Africa derived more from Hemingway’s fictions than from reality. Throughout the course of the novel, however, as his friends increasingly leave for the US, and as his wife and daughter increasingly complain of hunger and poverty, Usnavy’s identity begins to crumble. For example, as his friend Obdulio prepares to leave on a *balsa* for Miami, Obdulio asks Usnavy: "C'mon... when you look at that crazy lamp of yours—do you realize it's the only thing you have of value, my friend? Don't you see anything in all that light and color besides clouds and giraffes and Africa? Africa—I mean, Usnavy, how perverse is that? Who dreams of Africa when you can dream of Miami?" (46). Though dreaming of Miami as Obdulio suggests certainly implies a rejection of socialism for capitalism, Obdulio is never characterized as anti-Castro. Rather *Ruins* portrays how within the dire context of lack during the Special Period, the grinding pressures of constant hunger renders high-minded ideological arguments moot. Usnavy, the most idealistic character at the novel’s

opening, is, however, not thinking of Miami nor even of Cuba, but rather escaping to his mythical version of Africa. Later, Usnavy again discusses Africa with another friend Diosdado:

"Do you ever think about Africa?" Usnavy asked suddenly.

"Africa?"

"Yeah, Africa."

Diosdado shook his head. "Can't say that I do."

"I do," confessed Usnavy, "all the time."

"You mean Angola?"

"No, no," said Usnavy, who had wanted to volunteer for that struggle but was kept from doing so because of his flat feet and back pain. "I mean, Africa—its vastness. Maybe it's because I'm part Jamaican, I don't know..." Diosdado said nothing. (125-126)

Obejas thus humorously portrays Usnavy as a sympathetic, idealistic character who is nevertheless misguided, gullible, and ignorant. Usnavy's also something of a tragic figure in that he is so strongly influenced by the revolutionary regime's official embrace of Afro-Cuban culture exemplified in figures such as Afro-Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén that he knows nothing of his own Jewish origins and heritage. Usnavy's identity itself is a counterfeit, a phony, state issued. The bankruptcy of Usnavy's revolutionary Afro-Cuban identity is further emphasized in his daughter's act of rebellion. When Nena is caught sneaking into an international hotel to see friends of her family who had emigrated to the US and returned to Cuba as tourists, Nena protests her removal from the hotel—Cubans are not allowed in many international Cuban hotels—by reciting at the top of her lungs Guillén's famous poem "Tengo" ["I have"] that lists all of the material, moral, and cultural gains Cubans, and especially Afro-Cubans, enjoy on the island thanks to the Cuban Revolution (90-93).

What is more, Obejas portrays Usnavy's understanding of the role of Cuba and the Cuban Revolution in the Caribbean and in the African diaspora as limited, and ultimately nationalist. Throughout the novel, Usnavy's naive reflections on his mythical version of Africa often wander to Haiti and the impending US invasion of that nation. Yet while Usnavy idealizes Africa and his

imaginary familial connection to Africa, he is much less favorable towards Haiti. While his friend Obdulio and hundreds of others prepare to set sail for Miami, Usnavy thinks:

Thousands of Cubans like them had already made their way to Florida shores that summer, joined by almost as many Haitians fleeing their own island—in Usnavy’s mind, a place of real nightmares, a wasteland of wanton violence and rampant disease. (He could understand why those people left Haiti, that made sense.)

In recent days, there had been reports that the US was planning to invade Haiti and Usnavy, wary of how expansive the assault might be, had allowed himself at scattered moments to fret about whether they were safe in Cuba, and what might happen if the Americans changed course and dropped on their coasts instead. (79-80)

Obejas packs in a revealing number of tensions and contradictions into Usnavy’s thoughts on Haiti. Despite Haiti’s place in history as both the first independent nation of the Caribbean and the only nation founded through slave revolt, despite Usnavy’s idealization of Africa, the African diaspora, and Cuba’s revolutionary history, despite the parallels thinkers such as C.L.R. James have drawn between the histories of Haiti and Cuba, Usnavy fails to sympathize with Haiti. Rather, he feels anxiety that Haiti and Cuba might be mistaken for one another by invading US troops. Usnavy’s fear that US troops might not distinguish Cuba from Haiti, the real from the fake, the authentic from the counterfeit, is ultimately a nationalist expression of Usnavy’s anxiety that Haiti might indeed have been the original and Cuba the copy, that Cuba might be on the same historical path already worn by Haiti, and that the failures of these nations’ revolutions—the Haitian Revolution and the Cuban Revolution—have doomed their peoples to poverty, marginalization, and ultimately ruin. Through these glimpses into Usnavy’s thoughts, Obejas reveals that Usnavy’s identification with the African diaspora and the Cuban Revolution are motivated by nationalism, that his solidarity with other peoples of the African diaspora end at Cuba’s borders, and that a hierarchy in which Cuba is superior to Haiti undergirds Usnavy’s anxiety-ridden regional conceptualization of the Caribbean.

Under the pressures of the Special Period, Usnavy's idealism and nationalism eventually buckle. As Usnavy becomes increasingly disillusioned with the status quo in Cuba, he begins to salvage goods among the ruins of Havana for sale on the black market, and even begins selling pieces of his prized lamp. When Usnavy salvages a similar, smaller Tiffany-style lamp and seeks to resell it, he meets Virgilio, a local Cuban Jewish artisan specializing in glasswork. Like Virgil for Dante, Virgilio guides the protagonist. Only rather than guiding Usnavy through the Catholic afterlife from hell, through purgatory, and into heaven, Virgilio helps Usnavy excavate his Jewish roots. Upon learning Usnavy's surnames, Martín Leyva, Virgilio insists, "You, my friend, are a Jew...or, at the very least, the son of a Jewish woman—just like me" (173). Usnavy reels from the revelation, rejecting the possibility thinking of his identity tautologically, "*Me, a Jew? What did that mean anyway? [...] He was who he was, nothing more, nothing less*" (174). Virgilio reveals furthermore that ever since Virgilio's grandfather had a wage dispute with Tiffany, Tiffany stopped producing all products with glass produced by Cuban Jewish artisans, and Virgilio and his family began counterfeiting them. Virgilio explains:

For all the Tiffanies that are real, there are probably just as many that aren't. Those are ours mine, my father's, my grandfather's. But the thing is, because my family worked for Tiffany, because my grandfather was who really got it right for Tiffany, you have to ask the question, don't you: Which Tiffanies are the real Tiffanies? Because if you're talking about the artistry that's known in the world as Tiffany, then that's ours. But if you're talking about the brand name, the industrial copyright, then that's his. (175)

As his final act of guidance Virgilio reveals to Usnavy the mystery of the "Cuban holy grail" (178). The dispute between Virgilio's grandfather and Tiffany disrupted the production of one of the largest Tiffany lamps ever designed, a lamp rumored to have nevertheless been completed and hidden by the Jewish artisans who worked for Tiffany. According to Virgilio the Cuban holy grail is not a Christian artifact but rather an authentic-counterfeit of Jewish craftsmanship, a lamp

originally made by Cuban Jews for an American corporation under the commission of the pro-US, Cornell-educated Cuban president Mario García Menocal for the presidential palace that would eventually be converted into *el Museo de la Revolución*, the official museum of the Cuban Revolution. This Cuban holy grail whose tale Virgilio tells is of course the very lamp hanging in Usnavy's cramped Havana apartment. Usnavy never gets the chance however to enjoy either the privilege of seeing his lamp hang in a museum or the financial wealth the lamp would have undoubtedly brought him. Distraught by watching his daughter Nena depart for the US aboard a *balsa*, severely injured by the glass of yet another lamp that seriously cuts him while he is digging through yet another set of Havana's ruins, staggering home a man ruined emotionally and physically, Usnavy discovers his home collapsed and his lamp destroyed.

The meaning of the novel's title *Ruins* is then at least twofold since the ruination of Cuba that Obejas depicts is both literal and ideological. Through the novel's central motif which constantly confuses the authentic and the counterfeit, Obejas levies critiques of the moral bankruptcy of both the Castro regime and US foreign policy on Cuba at the end of the Cold War as late capitalism gained new ground in its inexorable quest for global hegemony. As friends and family flee for Miami, as his city collapses, Usnavy finds wealth on the black market only to become impoverished in terms of what really matters. He robs the ruins of his city and the graves of his neighbors for baubles and trinkets, and sells off his family's most prized possession piece by piece. Whether the light of that lamp transports Usnavy back to Africa or on to Zion, whether it illuminates a true or false memory, Usnavy's lamp, that Cuban holy grail, represents the unique cultural, historical legacy of his family and of his nation, variegated like layers of sediment, polysemic like a palimpsest, and forever lost amongst the ruins.

Part 2: Puerto Rico

We spent the first two days on Vieques, Puerto Rico exploring nature reserves on opposite ends of the island, driving a small 4x4 down treacherous dirt roads that run along the coast and lead to trails through mangroves, jungles, and scrubland to pristinely beautiful, often-empty beaches. Many of Vieques's beaches only opened to public use in the last decade and large portions of the coast and interior still remain off limits as the island and its surrounding waters are slowly cleared of unexploded ordnance. During World War II, the US Navy expropriated two thirds of the island, removing local residents from their land and relocating them either to the central third of Vieques or to the island of Saint Croix twenty miles away. The Navy installed barracks and a radar station on the western end of the island and used the eastern end to practice bombing runs, dropping heavy explosives on the land and sea for more than half a century.

After years of protests and suspicions that toxic heavy metals from the US Navy's munitions were seeping into the soil and the water of the island causing elevated rates of cancer and birth defects, on 19 April 1999 a Navy pilot accidentally bombed an observation deck killing local Viequense David Sanes Rodríguez and injuring four of his co-workers, all of whom were security guards hired by the Navy to keep civilians from wandering onto the test grounds. The death set off local protests that quickly drew the support of activists, intellectuals, artists, and politicians from Puerto Rico, the diaspora in the US, and beyond. By July 2003, international protests shut down US Navy activity on the island, and the lands previously expropriated became the nature reserves we explored. All except for the radar station, which still operates to this day under a veil of secrecy.

Just off Puerto Rico's east coast, Vieques and its smaller neighboring island to the north

Culebra, Puerto Rico sit at the crossroads where the archipelagos of the Virgin Islands, the Greater, and the Lesser Antilles meet. In 1991, archeologists found a human skeleton on the island dating perhaps to as early as 2000 BCE, more than three millennia before Columbus “discovered” Vieques on his first trip to the Americas in 1493. With the arrival of the Spanish, Vieques became a base for indigenous resistance to the colonization of Puerto Rico. The Spanish eventually killed or enslaved the insurgent Taíno on Vieques but lacked the numbers necessary to settle the island. Scottish and Danish explorers unsuccessfully claimed the island, while buccaneers and indigenous peoples used it as a port of refuge on various routes through the Caribbean.

After the fall of Saint-Domingue, the Spanish retook Vieques converting it almost completely to sugar production under the leadership of Théophile Le Guillou. According to the English, the Frenchman Le Guillou was a pirate; according to his own accounts, he was a refugee of the Haitian Revolution who settled in Spanish Santo Domingo only to flee again when Haiti occupied the eastern half of Hispaniola in 1822.¹⁶ Le Guillou organized Vieques into five regions serviced by large sugar mills recruiting French planters from Saint-Domingue, Martinique, and Guadeloupe who bought slaves and hired laborers from the neighboring Virgin Islands. By the time the US Navy expropriated the land on Vieques for its bases, the plantations still fed cane to three remaining sugar mills but production had steadily declined since the late nineteenth century.

After two days hiking the beaches, we decided to head inland to explore the ruins of the Central Playa Grande, one of the five sugar mills planned by Le Guillou. Roads on Vieques are often unmarked and dangerous. A first wrong took us down an impassable jungle road where our vehicle almost became stuck next to the desiccated carcass of a wild horse. A second wrong turn

took us to the entrance of the US Navy's radar station where a man with a machine gun emerged telling us to turn around and leave immediately. Lost, frustrated, and scared we finally pulled over on the side of the road just out of sight of the guard next to some brick structures peaking out of the jungle vines. We saw these signs.



Figure 3.1: Sign at Central Playa Grande

The FCHV/VCHT or El Fideicomiso de Conservación e Historia de Vieques [Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust], organizes MANTA, the Movimiento en Apoyo a Nuestros Tesoros Ambientales [Movement in Support of Our Environmental Treasures], a series of educational summer programs for the school-aged children of Vieques. The conservation group's unofficial sign above the legal warning refers indirectly to a quote attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte, the same Napoleon defeated by Haiti's revolutionaries, who warned not to

awaken the sleeping giant of China lest it shake the earth. The air felt heavy, haunted by the island's sleeping giants: colonization, slavery, and military occupation. The foreboding sign combined with the other bad augurs discouraged us from further exploring the sugar mill's ruins. We left only to find ourselves lost in the long maze of the Navy's abandoned underground barracks as night began to fall.

Pan-American Puerto Rican Border Crossings

At the eighth annual Latin Grammys Awards on 8 November 2007 in Las Vegas, Nevada the Puerto Rican Reaggaetón group Calle 13—siblings “Residente” René Pérez Joglar who raps, “PG-13” Ileana Mercedes Cabra Joglar who sings, and “Visitante” Eduardo José Cabra Martínez who composes the group’s music—performed their song “Pa’l Norte” [To the North] from their second studio album *Residente o Visitante* [Resident or Visitor] (2007). Inspired by the group’s journeys to various indigenous and Afro-descendant communities throughout Latin America, Central America, and the Caribbean captured in Calle 13’s travel documentary *Sin Mapa* (2009), “Pa’l Norte” recounts the picaresque adventures of a fictive Latin American immigrant traveling north without papers to cross the border. Accompanied by the Cuban rap group Orishas, the Colombian Cumbia group Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto, and the US dance troupe Stomp, Calle 13 staged the performance at the Latin Grammy’s as a provocative, Pan-American protest reclaiming the dignity and rights of Latina/o immigrants in the US and reimagining North America as an integral part of *las Américas*.

As the performance began, the Calle 13 front man, the rapper Residente, an ensemble of dancers dressed as bandits with bright bandanas tied across their faces, and a group of indigenous men and women in traditional dress from the home region of Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto in Colombia invaded the stage entering from the back of the large auditorium and streaming down

its aisles through the audience. The visual effect of the choreography coupled with the song's lyrics provided a powerful audio-visual spectacle, symbolically re-enacting centuries of Latin American migrations to the US. As the performance concluded, Stomp led the musicians into a percussion-heavy, free-style jam as Residente, playing on his *nom-de-plume*, repeatedly and defiantly shouted to the audience in Spanish, "To all the Latina/os here. Here, we're staying, because we're all residents." In the final moments, Residente exhorted the exultant audience to dance harder, "to show them how it is, that we're here to stay," that this is "Latin America united like Simón Bolívar dreamed." With these last words of the performance, Residente passionately referred to the revolutionary liberator of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru who in 1815 took refuge in Haiti, where in exchange for his promise to Haitian president Alexandre Pétion that he would liberate the slaves of the Spanish Americas, Bolívar received essential financial and material aid as well as the support of Haitian troops.

Calle 13's spirited performance of "Pa'l Norte" came almost exactly five months after the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 failed in the US Congress on 7 June 2007. Today, eight years later, comprehensive immigration reform in the US appears no closer to becoming reality, yet Calle 13's message of Latina/o, Caribbean, and Latin American solidarity persists forming part of a long tradition in Puerto Rican culture stretching back to the founding figure of Puerto Rican independence, Ramón Emeterio Betances y Alacán (1827-1898). Born in Cabo Rojo on Puerto Rico's western coast closest to Hispaniola's eastern shores, to a family primarily of French and African descent, Betances maintained transnational connections to Hispaniola, Cuba, and Europe throughout his life. A doctor, surgeon, freemason, and abolitionist educated and later exiled in France where he befriended the Haitian intellectual Anténor Firmin, Betances sought not only the end of slavery and the independence of Puerto Rico, but as Ethnic

Studies scholar Irmay Reyes-Santos insists, regional solidarity founded in the recognition of the Haitian Revolution. Reyes-Santos writes:

Betances infuses a nationalist movement with a Pan-Antillean and Pan-American genealogy of struggle that emphasizes the significance of interracial relationships to the future of the Caribbean. Cubans must pursue an interracial fight for independence if they mean to be as victorious as Pétion and Bolívar. Haiti once again serves as an emblematic example of the path toward independence that must be followed by the rest of the Caribbean. In practical terms, claiming to be *antillano* means for Betances to draw from Haiti's history to sustain Cuban decolonial efforts five decades later.¹⁷

Betances, who helped organize both the *Grito de Yara* and *Grito de Lares* uprisings in Cuba and Puerto Rico respectively, two unsuccessful attempts at independence from Spain in 1868, wrote extensively about the Haitian Revolution, the abolition of slavery, and plans for a Pan-Antillean confederation. Thus, although Betances remains a national hero of Puerto Rico and symbol of Puerto Rican independence, his radical politics, Pan-Caribbean and Pan-American solidarities, and open embrace of his and others' African diasporic heritage nevertheless continues to challenge moderate Puerto Rican political discourses to this day.

This discomfort with the more radical elements of Betances's intellectual and political work can be understood in large part in terms of the legacies of the Haitian Revolution in Puerto Rico. Similarly to Cuba, the Haitian Revolution catalyzed attempts to expand sugar production and slavery in Puerto Rico. Yet simultaneously the fear of slave revolt led the Spanish colonial administration to adopt measures the Marxist Puerto Rican critic José Luis González describes as a "qualitative 'whitening' of Puerto Rican society," or the "re-Europeanization of the white élite, whose relative weakness vis-à-vis the increasing power of the mulattos gave the Spanish regime genuine cause for alarm."¹⁸ This included banning Afro-Puerto Rican cultural expressions such as *bomba*, a style of Puerto Rican music, dance, and drumming practiced by slaves and perceived by slave owners to have the potential to be a coded form of communication that could be used to

foment revolt.¹⁹ Other “whitening” measures reinforced the Spanish military and naval presence in the capital San Juan, developed local political administrations and bureaucracies, and encouraged renewed immigration to the island from Europe.²⁰ It is largely in opposition to this dominant culture in Puerto Rico marked by a fear of Haiti, of slave revolts, and of Afro-Puerto Rican cultural expression that Betances developed his abolitionist, Pan-American ideals of Puerto Rican independence.

According to Firmin’s account from *Lettres de Saint-Thomas* (1910) Betances died in 1898 in exile in France in a state of agony over the Spanish cession of Puerto Rico to the US in the wake of the Spanish-American War.²¹ The year of Betances death and of Puerto Rico’s passing from Spanish to US control, Puerto Rican poet Luis Palés Matos was born in Guayama, Puerto Rico into a family of poets. Palés, like the Cuban poet Guillén, would become famous for writing poetry celebrating Afro-Caribbean language and rhythms, most notably his collection *Tuntún de pasa y grifería* (1937). Yet whereas Betances and Guillén were both of African descent and could not have been clearer about their political engagements both in their writing and in their political work, Palés’s was white and not politically engaged. Literary scholar Anibal González-Pérez goes so far as to suggest that there is little in common between Guillén and Palés beyond the fact that both poets emerged from *negrismo*, the Hispanophone Antillean literary movement that originated between the World Wars and celebrated the cultural contributions of the African diaspora.²² Further distinguishing Palés from Guillén, Latin American literary critic Víctor Figueroa explains that a playful and problematic sense of “detachment” and even “condescension” to his poetic subject matter and to the Caribbean more generally characterizes Palés’s poetry.²³ For example, though some translate *Tuntún de pasa y grifería* as *Rhythms of*

Blacks and Mulattos, pasa y grifería actually refers to kinks and nappiness, negative descriptions of *pelo malo*, the supposedly “bad hair” of people of African descent.

Palés’s famous collection *Tuntún de pasa y grifería* is thus highly problematic. It addresses, from the privileged position of a white poet, who is not politically engaged, a range of highly charged topics related to the African diaspora, from the intimacy of black hair to the historical significance of the Haitian Revolution, all with a sense of ironic distance while problematically deploying exoticizing imagery and language. It is no surprise then that this ensemble of issues negatively affects the reception of Palés’s work to this day. Nor is it surprising that it is easy to find scathing critiques of the collection’s racist undertones whether written by scholars of Latin American literature or famous Caribbean leaders.²⁴ Yet despite these clearly valid critiques of Palés’s work, his poetry nevertheless introduced styles and subject matter to Puerto Rican literature at a time when the most celebrated Puerto Rican literary mind, Antonio S. Pedreira, defined, as part of an ongoing national discussion, Puerto Rico’s collective identity in his touchstone work *Insularismo* (1934) as essentially hindered by Puerto Rico’s African heritage and by the water that surrounds the island in its insular isolation. Within this context, Puerto Rican literary critic Juan G. Gelpi identifies the *negrista* poetry of Palés, warts and all, as an alternative literary lineage to Puerto Rico’s paternalistic canon dominated by the likes of Pedreira, a lineage that valorizes the contributions of the African diaspora in Puerto Rico and understands the waters surrounding the archipelago of the Antilles as a borderlands connecting the islands to one another.²⁵

“Encancaranublado” by Ana Lydia Vega

In the eponymous opening short story from *Encancaranublado* (1983), Puerto Rican writer Ana Lydia Vega lampoons hierarchical Caribbean migratory dynamics. In nine dense

pages, the short satirical allegory portrays the unsuccessful voyage of three refugees, a Haitian, a Dominican, and a Cuban, aboard a Miami-bound raft. Vega's migrant protagonists begin with the best of intentions aspiring to achieve the American dream in Pan-Caribbean solidarity. Yet the castaways' latent antipathies rooted in linguistic division, nationalism, regional conflicts, racism, and greed ultimately win out climaxing in the violent capsizing of their boat. A US vessel eventually saves the refugees only for one of its Puerto Rican sailors to reveal the extreme difficulty of achieving the American dream as the story closes. With impressive succinctness and a wicked sense of humor, "Encancaranublado" roundly skewers the least savory stereotypes of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the U.S, and mocks the naive optimism of both the American dream and Pan-Caribbean internationalism. However, while the short story's take-no-prisoners sarcastic satire may appear no more than cynical critique, through allegory "Encancaranublado" places Haiti at the center of the politics of the Greater Antilles imagining the difficulties of founding a Caribbean confederation, exploring the Caribbean's and indeed Europe's hybrid origins, recreating in miniature the history of the Greater Antilles, and signaling the need for solidarity among Caribbean peoples of the African diaspora.

"Encancaranublado" opens with fragments of the US Declaration of Independence beckoning like a siren song to Antenor, a Haitian at sea in a makeshift raft. "Cosa mala, ese mollerudo brazo de mar que le separa del pursuit of happiness. [A nasty thing this wharf-ish strait separating him from the pursuit of happiness.]"²⁶ Shortly after setting sail, Antenor rescues a capsized Dominican, Diógenes, and the two share a brief moment of solidarity: "se dijo la jodienda de ser antillano, negro y pobre. Se contaron los muertos por docenas. Se repartieron maldiciones a militares, curas y civiles. Se estableció el internacionalismo del hambre y la solidaridad del sueño [they spoke of how screwed up it is to be Antillean, black, and poor. They

counted their dead by the dozens. They divvied out curses for the military, church, and state. An internationalist movement against hunger and in solidarity of the dream was established]” (14-15). Shortly later, Antenor and Diógenes together save Carmelo, a shipwrecked Cuban who while still in the water asks, “Van pa Miami, tú? [Y’all headed to Miami?]” (15). The Dominican and Cuban briefly sympathize in commiseration:

Carmelo contó las desventuras que lo habían alejado de las orientales playas de la Antilla Mayor.

—Óyeme, viejo, aquello era trabajo va y trabajo viene día y noche...

—Oh, pero en Santo Domingo ni trabajo había.

—Pica caña y caña pica de sol a sol, tú...

—Qué vaina, hombre. (15-16)

Carmelo recounted the misadventures that distanced him from the eastern beaches of the Greater Antilles.

—Listen, man, there it was work coming and going, day and night...

—Oh, but in Santo Domingo, there wasn’t even any work.

—Cutting cane and cane cutting from sun up to sun down, you...

—What a pain, man.

These instants of camaraderie are very short lived, however, as the tensions between the castaways mount and solidarity gives way to antagonism.

No matter the language Antenor, Diógenes, or Carmelo speaks, the trio fails to communicate effectively. Upon Carmelo’s arrival, the Cuban and Dominican converse in Spanish disregarding their French and Kreyòl-speaking Haitian rescuer. “Antenor intervenía con un ocasional Mais oui o C’est ça asaz timiducho cada vez que el furor del tono lo requería. Pero no le estaba gustando ni un poquito el monopolio cervantino en una embarcación que, destinada o no al exilio, navegaba después de todo bajo bandera haitiana [Antenor intervened with an occasional and excessively timid Mais oui or C’est ça each time the frenzied tone of the conversation required it. But he wasn’t liking, not one bit, this monopoly of Cervantes’ tongue on an embarkation that, destined for exile or not, sailed after all under the Haitian flag]” (15).

Yet this provisional Hispanophone alliance also quickly shows its fissures as Diógenes and Carmelo compete more than communicate. Carmelo complains in empty, hyperbolic platitudes, “trabajo va y trabajo viene día y noche,” while Diógenes interrupts and attempts to upstage Carmelo with his own complaints. Nor is their Spanish completely inscrutable to Antenor who understands Diógenes all too well when the Dominican uses a derogatory epithet to blame Haitians for the Dominican Republic’s economic woes explaining that, “En mi país traen a los dichosos madamos pa que la piquen y a nosotros que nos coma un caballo [In my country they bring in these wretched *madamos* to cut cane, and us, we’re up a creek without a paddle” (16). Antenor, “se estremeció ligeramente al roce de la palabra madamo, reservada a los suyos y pronunciada con velocidad por el quisqueyano [shivered slightly at the sound of the word *madamo* reserved for his people and pronounced quickly by the Quisqueyano]” (16).

Diógenes’s xenophobic comments signal the beginning of the trio’s increasing conflicts as each degenerate into negative national clichés. Carmelo, the stereotypical Miami-obsessed Cuban well versed in smuggling contraband under the US embargo, literally sniffs out the provisions hidden in a shoebox on which Antenor sits and commands the Haitian, “Levanta el corcho, prieto [Lift your can, darkie]” (16). Though Diógenes and Antenor previously identified together as, “Antillean, black, and poor,” Diógenes adopts an overtly aggressive, racist tone with Antenor insisting, “Alza el cagadero, madamo, que te jiede a ron y a tabaco [...]’ olvidando súbitamente los votos de ayuda mutua contraídos, antes de la llegada del cubano, con su otra mitad insular [Raise your ass, *madamo*, it stinks of rum and tobacco {...} suddenly forgetting the votes cast for mutual aid with his insular other half before the arrival of the Cuban]”(16). In response, Antenor, pretends he cannot understand their orders, “jugando al tonto [playing dumb],” and thinking to himself, “De algo tenía que servir el record de analfabetismo que nadie

se le disputaba a su país [The undisputed record illiteracy rate of his country should at least serve for something]” (16-17).

After forcibly stealing and greedily consuming Antenor’s cassava, corn, rum, and tobacco—New World agricultural staples associated with indigenous and African slave labor—Carmelo and Diógenes avariciously discuss pleasures of the flesh comparing prostitution’s earning potential in the US, Cuba, and the D.R. While Carmelo laments Cuba’s lack of bordellos, Diógenes jokes about the D.R.’s surplus of prostitutes. All the while Antenor stares at his fellow travelers with, “ojos [que] eran dos muñecas negras atravesadas por inmensos alfileres [eyes {that} were two black dolls pierced by immense needles],” and mutters, notably for the first time in Kreyòl, “Tout Dominikenn se pit [All Dominicans are whores]” (17-18). Carmelo and Diógenes’s discussion nose-dives, however, as Diógenes waxes overly nostalgic for debaucheries past in Cuba under the Batista dictatorship. Offended Carmelo quips, “¿Cómo está Santo Domingo después del temporal? Dicen los que saben que no se nota la diferencia [How’s Santo Domingo after the hurricane? Those who know say you can’t tell the difference]” (18).

Made nervous by the Cuban’s increasingly aggressive behavior, Diógenes fumbles with the canteen containing the trio’s remaining water. Antenor grabs it and throws their only water overboard. As the Haitian commits this potentially suicidal act, he spitefully thinks of Haiti’s past military victories over Dominicans. “Pa que se acuerde que los invadimos tres veces [So they remember we invaded them three times]” (19). In response, Diógenes roars, “Trujillo tenía razón [Trujillo was right]” a reference to the infamous Dominican dictator whose virulent anti-Haitianism climaxed in the Parsley Massacre of 1937, when Dominican military personnel, police, and citizens murdered tens of thousands of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent

living in the D.R. on the Dominican-Haitian border (19). The Haitian and Dominican's ensuing fisticuffs along with the worsening weather finally capsize their raft.

With the boat's foundering, however, the trio's interests once again align: "Las tres voces náufragas se unieron en un largo, agudo, y optimista alarido de auxilio [The three shipwrecked voices united in one long, sharp optimistic cry for help]" (19). Thanks to the miraculous combined effort of "la Altagracia, la Caridad del Cobre, y las Siete Potencias Africanas [The Virgin of Altagracia, Our Lady of Charity, and the Seven African Powers]," a boat, ironically "Americano, por cierto [American, for sure]" rescues them (19-20).²⁷ Their rescue, however, more closely resembles an arrest. The racist US captain, with "áureos cabellos y azulísimos ojos [golden locks and the bluest eyes]," treats them like criminals, yelling in English, "Get those niggers down there and let the spiiks take care of 'em" (20). One of the "spiiks," an unnamed Puerto Rican sailor, informs them that, "Aquí si quieren comer tienen que meter mano y duro. Estos gringos no le dan na gratis ni a su mai [Here, if you want to eat you'll have to work and hard. These gringos don't give anything away for free, not even to their ma]" (20). The story ends with the Puerto Rican sailor reaching out with his "brazo negro [black arm]" to give them dry clothing.

"Encancaranublado" humorously hits the low notes of Haitian, Dominican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, and US national stereotypes. Antenor, pop culture caricature of Haitian vodou, seeks to escape present misery in Haiti's revolutionary and martial past. Diógenes, the duplicitous Dominican overly eager to reinforce his Hispanic roots, turns on his Haitian rescuer at the first opportunity revealing the alarming extent of his racist, xenophobia. Carmelo, the Miami-obsessed, machista Cuban smuggler considers pimping his best future career option in exile. The nameless Puerto Rican sailor, most privileged of the four but nevertheless a lackey of

the US, is a cultural, linguistic mutt speaking a Spanish “algo maltratada [somewhat mistreated]” (20). Finally, the US captain, characterized by phenotypical markers of a humorously exaggerated whiteness, is a racist tyrant and cross between a modern slaver and the pied piper luring others below deck beholden to the comforts, sanctuary, and stability of his behemoth boat.

The humorous, biting absurdity of these exaggerated, stereotypical characters are characteristic of Ana Lydia Vega’s oeuvre and career as an equal opportunity satirist of everything and everyone. As Diana L. Vélez puts it, Vega:

...“no perdona a nadie” : she forgives or excuses no one. Her writing is located in that contradictory space of the split subject. Irrationality, desire and the imaginary are her stock-in-trade. Her ambivalence and estrangement from her characters is figured in their contradictory utterances and in those of her preferred narrative voice – a smart-aleck, less than likable know-it-all who gives the term “omniscient narrator” new meaning. That her ambivalence is figured primarily in the comic mode is apparent as much of her work consists of satiric fables and jokes structured into a short story narrative.²⁸

Yet despite the illogical and humorous elements rooted in the unconscious in her fiction, Vega nevertheless clues readers in to the political implications of *Encancaranublado*. Playing on the collection’s meteorological motifs, Vega cryptically dedicates the collection, “A la confederación Caribeña del futuro, para que llueva pronto y escampe [To the future Caribbean confederation, so that it rains soon and clears up].”²⁹

While referring to the mercurial, tempestuous nature of the Caribbean, one primary motif in Vega’s collection, the dedication also alludes to nineteenth century Puerto Rican intellectual, independence advocate, and champion of Pan-Caribbean political confederation, Eugenio María de Hostos, whose novel *La peregrinación de Bayoán* (1863) many consider the founding text of Puerto Rican literature.³⁰ *La peregrinación* portrays the allegorical romance of its Puerto Rican protagonist Bayoán and his Cuban beloved Marién, whose father, Guarionex, is from Hispaniola. Though Doris Sommer excludes *La peregrinación* from her “foundational fictions” because of

its internationalist scope, Hostos nevertheless presents characters that represent their nations and dramatize the, albeit ultimately unsuccessful, founding of a new Pan-Caribbean political entity in the Americas.³¹ Vega's short story similarly plays with allegorical tropes: her characters stand in for their nations and form a dysfunctional international union. Although in distinction to *La peregrinación*, "Encancaranublado" updates its allegorical cast adding Haiti and the US.

As is often the case in allegory, Hostos and Vega lay the symbolism on quite heavily in naming their Antillean representatives. Similarly to Saint-Domingue's revolutionaries who chose Haiti, a toponym of indigenous origin, for their nascent nation, Hostos evokes the indigenous history of the Greater Antilles in his characters' names:

Although they are contemporary with Hostos, the main characters of the work have the following Taíno names: Bayoán, the first Puerto Rican Indian to doubt the immortality of the Spaniards; Marién, a maiden named after a beautiful region of Cuba; Guarionex, a powerful chieftain from Hispaniola in the times of Columbus and Marién's father.³²

Through names Hostos and the first Haitians both connect their present to the Caribbean's indigenous past. The widespread destruction of native Caribbean populations after the arrival of Europeans, however, renders these connections between the nineteenth century Caribbean and the region's indigenous past problematic. Hostos and Haiti's revolutionaries, nevertheless, use names that evoke the Caribbean's indigenous past as imagined bedrock for future-oriented foundational projects international and national.

In the twentieth century, the names Vega gives her characters emphasize a different set of contemporary concerns that can be described through a constellation of related critical terms such as *créolité*, *mestizaje*, *hybridity*, and *transculturation*. Furthermore, Vega stages a double-edged critical intervention by alluding through her characters' names both to the Caribbean's Eurocentrism, on the one hand, and to the often overlooked diversity one finds at the classical

origins of Europe, on the other. In effect, Vega expands the horizons of hybridity back to the mythical origins of the West emphasizing the diverse admixture of African, Asian, and European cultures and peoples active in the ancient Mediterranean. The names Antenor, Diógenes, and Carmelo originate in liminal figures from Mediterranean antiquity that blur national, social, religious, and regional boundaries. In Greek and Roman epic, for example, Antenor is counselor to King Priam of Troy tasked with the difficult chore of mediating between warring nations. In the *Iliad*, Homer portrays Antenor as the wise advisor who recommends the return of Helen, while Virgil in the *Aeneid* depicts Antenor as the traitor who opens Troy's gates to the Greek invaders. The philosopher Diogenes of Sinope, born in the Greek colony on the Black Sea, was the principle proponent in ancient Athens of Cynicism, a philosophy that questioned the established order and values of society advocating for an ascetic lifestyle rejecting fame, fortune, and social customs. The name Carmelo, finally, derives from Mount Carmel, Israel, a site of prophecy sacred to Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Bahá'í faiths. And finally, the geography associated with these three figures—Troy and Sinop in Turkey, and Mount Carmel in Israel/Palestine—all emphasize the Mediterranean's role as a contentious maritime crossroads connecting the East and West; North and South; Europe, Asia, and Africa.

In addition to these connections to Mediterranean antiquity, Antenor and Diógenes's names have more contemporary referents. In a brief aside, Vega's narrator ironically mocks the tendency to adopt names from European antiquity as, “[la] gracia neoclásica del dominicano [the] Dominican neoclassical flair.”³³ Yet each of the characters has a neoclassical name creating in the short story a more generalized dissonance between the wretched state in which Antenor, Diógenes, and Carmelo find themselves, and the Eurocentric sophistication of their names. Antenor's name, for example, also presumably refers to Anténor Firmin, the nineteenth

century Haitian intellectual who published, amongst other works, *De l'égalité des races humaines* (1885), a rebuttal to Arthur Comte de Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853). As mentioned earlier, Firmin was friends with the abolitionist and founder of the Puerto Rican independence movement Betances, father of Puerto Rican independence. Additionally, J. Michael Dash has argued that Firmin's work as an important precursor to that of both Fanon and Glissant is ripe for recuperation today.³⁴ Yet rather than an intellectual defender of racial equality like his namesake, Antenor in "Encancaranublado" plays dumb and is victimized. Similarly, neither Diógenes nor Carmelo lives up to their namesakes. Far from rebelling against society's vagaries, Diógenes embodies the worst xenophobic elements of Dominican anti-Haitianism hypocritically turning on Antenor with only the slightest pressure. Neither holy nor enlightened, Carmelo selfishly steals from his rescuer and only aspires to whoremongering.

Yet Vega's characters fail not only to live up to their namesakes but also the historical events that they allegorically represent: national independence and the abolition of slavery. The order of appearance of the allegorical characters of "Encancaranublado" loosely mirrors the timelines of national independence and the abolition of slavery in the Greater Antilles. Haiti became independent in 1804, the D.R. in 1844, and Cuba in 1898. Puerto Rico remains an unincorporated US territory – thus the nameless Puerto Rican works aboard the US ship. The timeline of slavery's abolition in the Antilles corresponds less neatly. Haiti between 1793-1804, the D.R. between 1801-1844, Puerto Rico in 1873, and Cuba between 1880-1886. However, despite these parallels, the crassness of the characters, the dire straits in which they find themselves, and their dreary fate as willing prisoners aboard the neocolonial US ship at the

story's close undermine optimistic readings of the text as an allegory of progress towards national independence, regional solidarity, and universal emancipation.

Rather in "Encancaranublado" we have an allegory about the exhaustion of resources both literal and imaginary. Vega's refugees remain locked in a struggle of zero sum gain, fighting over Antenor's limited rations, and ultimately capsizing their raft. More importantly, the Enlightenment ideals that helped found the independent nations of the Americas, abolish slavery, and imagine Pan-Caribbean political union ultimately fail. In retelling the anticolonial history of the Caribbean through the exhausted neocolonial present, Vega critiques the impact of the Caribbean's historical failures in the present. Antenor's boat, within the framework of a nineteenth century allegory, represents the possible birthplace of a Caribbean confederation and the hope of freedom from colonial rule and slavery. Yet in the present, the raft cannot sustain the three for their bickering over resources and their inability to work through past grievances. The union fails, Antenor's boat founders, and the trio ends up in the same neocolonial boat as the Puerto Rican, suffering the racist abuse of the US captain, and finally realizing the American dream to be an illusion. Furthermore, while abolition indeed eventually wins out throughout the Americas, Vega's short story highlights the persistence of racism among peoples of the African diaspora and the steep price Haiti has paid for being the first Caribbean nation to abolish slavery.

"Encancaranublado" paints a grim if comic image critiquing the failures of anticolonialism, antiracism, and regional political unity in the Caribbean, on the one hand, and the difficulties of achieving the American Dream in diaspora, on the other. Yet the story's ending perhaps offers a sliver of hope in the contradiction between the words and the actions of the nameless Puerto Rican sailor who denounces the lack of charity in the US—"Aquí si quieren comer tienen que meter mano y duro. Estos gringos no le dan na gratis ni a su mai [Here, if you

want to eat you'll have to work and hard. These gringos don't give anything away for free, not even to their ma]"—while simultaneously offering the three a helpful hand that Vega emphasizes to be “negro.”³⁵ The nameless Puerto Rican, too, is poor, black, and Antillean. Despite the lack of solidarity in the US, the Puerto Rican nevertheless helps the trio, leaving open the possibility for solidarity in US-based Caribbean communities of the African diaspora. The ambiguity of this ending and of the dedication that opens the collection—“A la confederación Caribeña del futuro, para que llueva pronto y escampe [To the future Caribbean confederation, so that it rains soon and clears up]”—suggests that “Encancaranublado” critiques the historical failures of anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and Pan-Antillean and Pan-American solidarities without abandoning the ideals themselves (7). Notably, Vega includes Haiti, a nation more often ignored or worse by its Spanish-speaking Caribbean neighbors, as a key member in a potential Pan-Antillean African diasporic network of solidarity.

Part 3: The Dominican Republic

After my trip to the Dominican Republic, I visited my parents in Texas and spoke with my mother about my time with our family in Santo Domingo and my impressions of the city. My mother had lived in the Dominican capital as a young woman and my trip there brought back memories for her. The summer after her ninth grade, she left her brother, sisters, and parents in Tampa, Florida to visit her family in the DR. She liked it so much she ended up staying for two years, living one year with her Tía Fifita and another with her Tía YuYú, her mother's sisters who took her in and treated her like their own daughter.

My mother arrived in Santo Domingo in the summer of 1963 two years after Trujillo's assassination and only months after the swearing in of the first democratically elected president in Dominican history Juan Bosch. Not long after her arrival, a military coup d'état led by

Trujillista leaders overthrew Bosch and installed a junta, el triunvirato, to govern on 25 September 1963. A little over a year and a half later, during the April Revolution, loyalists attempted to reinstate Bosch, starting the Dominican Civil War of 1965. It was a precarious time. Soldiers came knocking at their door, searching for a member of the family loyal to Bosch who'd fled. Stray bullets flew through the wall above my mother's head as she showered one morning. Yet she mainly remembers being bored and playing games to pass the time with her cousins as they were holed up with the rest of the family in their house near the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo downtown. Fearing another Cuba, the US intervened, occupying the Dominican Republic, and my mother left, returning home to Tampa.

After my conversations in the DR with the receptionist at the Hostal Nicolás de Ovando and with my second cousin who strongly and repeatedly recommended I read the writings of Juan Bosch, the kernel of this dissertation began forming as I began to understand that Haitians in the Dominican Republic are treated analogously to Latina/o immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean in the US. In hindsight, my ignorance of these dynamics in Dominican-Haitian relations embarrasses me. Curious to know how it was when my mother had been in Santo Domingo I asked her about her encounters with Haitians, Dominicans of Haitian descent, and Haitian culture in general during her time in the DR. She told me her family in Santo Domingo had had servants who were both Haitian and Dominicans of Haitian descent, and that they got along well with the family.

The only sources of conflict she remembered were a couple of times when a servant had said things or made gestures evocative of vodou in their family's home. This upset her aunts and uncles and was strongly discouraged. But my mother also remembered that el cocoa, the boogeyman in the DR, that common tale told to children to scare them into better behavior, was

described to her as a Haitian who'd carry away naughty children in his large bag at night. The Dominican iteration my mother heard of this myth appears influenced both by Dominican-Haitian antipathies dating to the Haitian Revolution as well as by the Haitian version of the tale—Uncle Gunnysack who catches poorly behaved kids in his sack to eat them. This same myth gave La Milice de Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale—the paramilitary group that extorted, tortured, murdered, and disappeared Haitians for the dictator François “Papa Doc” Duvalier for almost three decades—their nickname, the Tonton Macoutes.

As I finish this dissertation, the Dominican Republic began forcibly rounding up Haitian immigrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent and deporting them to Haiti on 18 June 2015, despite the fact that many of these people were born in the DR and only speak Spanish. Estimates of the number to be deported reach as high as a quarter of a million. The day before the deportations began, Dominican President Danilo Medina promised to speak to the Dominican people. Despite expectations he would address the deportations, Medina never once mentioned them. It was a pre-recorded, twenty-minute stump speech launching his new presidential campaign that concluded with a US-styled political advertisement featuring wealthy, pale-complexioned Dominicans smiling as they did meaningless tasks in buildings that looked like the sterile US suburbs.

“Many of us have Haiti in our blood”

In Angie Cruz's 2007 novel *Let It Rain Coffee*, the character Miraluz Altagracia Naterra speaks this phrase, “Many of us have Haiti in our blood.” She's a secondary character in the novel who's nevertheless important as her symbolically loaded name suggests. Miraluz means literally “see the light.” Altagracia is the virgin mother, the overseer and protector of the Dominican pueblo. Miraluz's names thus associate her with vision, revelation, divinity,

motherhood, and protection. She speaks these words, “Many of us have Haiti in our blood,” invoking the revolutionary, transnational history connecting the DR and Haiti to incite her fellow Dominican citizens to action in the wake of Trujillo’s death.

While *Let It Rain Coffee* spans most of twentieth century recounting the lives of four generations of the Colón family as they migrate from the Dominican Republic to the United States and back, the portion of the novel discussed here takes place exclusively in the DR at the end of the Trujillo dictatorship, in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The novel’s central figure, Don Chan, a Chinese orphan adopted by the Colón family, is a man in his prime. Already famous for using his power of invisibility to sneak into Trujillo’s office, Don Chan discovers a fortune buried by one of Trujillo’s henchmen, uses it to buy the land on which he and his fellow townspeople live, and organizes his pueblo to live off their land collectively. These feats make Don Chan a local hero and leader, and each evening he holds court to a crowd in a small public park sharing jokes, gossip, music, and heroic stories from Caribbean history.

The political instability in the wake of the assassination of Trujillo, however, signals the beginning of the end of Don Chan’s leadership. At one of these evening gatherings Miraluz suggests the townspeople “storm the palace” to prevent Trujillo’s cronies from taking power. When Don Chan is reluctant to act, Miraluz admonishes him asking, “Then why do you bother and tell us stories about Toussaint, who fought for the freedom of his people, or Martí, who died in battle for Cuba? If you want us to sit here and do nothing.”³⁶ Don Chan attempts to pacify Miraluz by suggesting that instead they vote in the democratic elections being organized in Santo Domingo (51). The rest of the crowd is indifferent, however, and a man finally interrupts their argument dismissively asking, “Now hand me over a beer. Who has a dirty joke to sweeten the night?” (52). In this sexist dismissal of Miraluz, gender and sexuality intersect with patriarchy,

politics, and power. The men of the town prefer beer and sexist jokes to a political debate with an intelligent woman. Even Don Chan, who is older and married, and who take Miraluz and her politics seriously, is ultimately distracted by Miraluz's sexuality, thinking "Miraluz was beautiful when she was angry" (51). Rather than a legitimate political interlocutor, Miraluz, with her symbolic, sexual charge as the visionary virgin mother and feminine embodiment of the *patria*, becomes a sexual prize the would-be local leader Don Chan desires to win, to conquer.

After Don Chan promises the presidential candidate Juan Bosch the townspeople's votes, Miraluz again questions Don Chan's leadership, and her loyalties shift from Don Chan to Don Chan's son Santo. Miraluz argues that Juan Bosch is not the best leader for the DR insisting:

—[...]we need someone like us, who knows what it's like to be poor [...]
Someone like Toussaint. He wasn't afraid to die for his people's freedom.
—You want us to end up like Haiti? another called out.—Forget the Haitians.
—Speak for yourself. [Miraluz said.]—Many of us have Haiti in our blood. Santo stood close to Miraluz to show solidarity.

Miraluz held on to Santo's arms. Don Chan felt a twinge of jealousy. He had lost control of the crowd and was also losing the affections of Miraluz. (62)

When presented with the failures of Haiti, rather than backtracking, Miraluz proudly assumes the ancestry Dominicans and Haitians share, though interestingly she requires Santo's support to do so. In the exchange Don Chan loses the control of the townspeople and of Miraluz, and these two things are clearly tied. Don Chan's loss of political power is figured in both sexual and generational terms as a loss of control and of virility. He is no longer the leader of his people or the guardian of *la patria* because Don Chan's hold on Miraluz has been usurped by his own younger, more attractive, more virile son.

Though Miraluz's revolutionary call to arms ultimately fails to stir her compatriots to action, her discourse nevertheless challenges the moderate, patriarchal authority of her local and national Dominican leaders—Don Chan and Juan Bosch. Miraluz also clearly questions the

borders separating Dominicans and Haitians. Although Don Chan has lost much of his power in the exchange, his wisdom nevertheless tempers Miraluz's idealism when he warns forebodingly:

—Be careful what you wish for, Miraluz. Everything looks simple when you read it out of a book, but nothing that requires violence is heroic... Trujillo wasn't only poor, but he had Haitian in him, and he ordered the murder of tens of thousands of Haitians. I've made up my mind. You want to go bomb the president's palace? Do as you will, but I'm voting for Bosch. (63)

In this moment Angie Cruz's novel articulates a Hispaniolan border identity, not from a place of idealism, optimism, or universalism but rather from the recognition of a history of shared violence that binds Haitians and Dominicans together. Through these exchanges between Don Chan and Miraluz, *Let It Rain Coffee* stages the complex negotiations of gender, sexuality, ideology, race, ethnicity, and history at play in articulating a new understanding of the Dominican nation and the Caribbean borderlands during a precarious moment of historical transition. Rather than offering a romanticized version of the Hispaniolan border, the novel meditates on the violence of the border—revolutions, dictatorships, genocides, migrations—the border as open wound that binds Haitians and Dominicans together along the Dajabón river, a river not coincidentally also known as the Massacre River.

Decolonial Love in “Da Pa’ Lo Do” by Rita Indiana y Los Misterios

Throughout her career, the queer Dominican artist Rita Indiana Hernández has performed many roles as a model, novelist, journalist, performance artist, filmmaker, and musician. In many of her projects, such as her musical career as lead singer and songwriter of Rita Indiana y los Misterios, she has performed more than one of these roles at once. The group released its debut album *El Juidero* in 2010 accompanied by multiple videos distributed via social media networks on the Internet. Wary of musical genre labels Hernández has described her music variously as alternative, merengue, or simply Dominican. In the video for the song “Da Pa’ Lo Do [There’s

Enough for Both],” the lyrics retell the history of Hispaniola as a parable not dissimilar to that of Jacob and Esau while we see images of two black men, who could easily be brothers, though one ostensibly is Dominican and the other Haitian, as their nineteenth century military garb indicates.

The men are lost, wandering in the deserted wilderness of the Hispaniolan borderlands. In a wonderful anachronism indicative of the artist’s outré sense of humor, Hernández appears on the back of a an motorbike dressed as an Afro-Hispaniolan Holy Virgin, in bright colors and black face, wearing a necklace with a large golden pendant in the shape of the iconic, Haitian vodou *veve* styled “M” representing the first initial of Hernández’s musical nickname, “la Montrua,” the monster, which refers endearingly to her abnormally tall height and equally impressive creative output. After the Virgin appears to the men, they are enlightened. Golden halos of weaved grass appear behind their heads. Neon colors flash across their faces. Each strip off their military jackets, throw their machete and rifle to the ground, and appear before one another shirtless, shoeless, unarmed and vulnerable, dressed only in identical white pants, symmetrically framed by a large, beautiful tree. The two men walk towards one another, meeting at the tree trunk. First they shake hands and then embrace as Hernandez sings repeatedly, “Da pa’ lo do,” there is enough for both. As the video ends, a final image appears: the Afro-Hispaniolan Virgin stands in front of the same beautiful tree with three beautiful black children on either side dressed in simple, white flowing clothes. As the sound and image fade, they all dance together.

Rita Indiana y Los Misterios’s video “Da Pa’ Lo Do” adeptly deploys a visual vocabulary enriched by the symbology of the Caribbean’s colonial history and syncretic religious landscape to portray queer, transnational, decolonial solidarity in the African and Caribbean diasporas. Through the images of soldiers abandoning their militarized, nationalist identities steeped in

coloniality in favor of a loving, homosocial embrace and of Hispaniola's children dancing together under the protective gaze of their syncretic Afro-Caribbean mother and protector, the video provides a powerful, iconographic visual representation of decolonial love that transcends the Dominican-Haitian border. Whether buried amongst ruinous counterfeits in Havana, at sea amidst boat people aboard a makeshift raft, or reimagined along the Hispaniolan borderlands, legacies of the Haitian Revolution echo across the fractal frontiers of the Caribbean borderlands, un-silencing histories that repeat with difference connecting the islands of the Antillean archipelago.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 3

¹ Alea, Tomás Gutiérrez. *Memorias del subdesarrollo*. My transcription of this dialogue was verified in Alcàzar, Joan del & Lopez Rivero, Sergio. *De compañero a contrarrevolucionario : La Revolución cubana y el cine de Tomás Gutiérrez Alea*, 90-91.

² Alea, Tomás Gutiérrez. *Memorias del subdesarrollo*. This quotation is from my own transcription.

³ Ferrer, Ada. *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolutions*, 10.

⁴ Owing to its geography and topography Oriente has long been the place of origin for resistance, revolts, and revolutions that have shaped the history of Cuba. The famous Sierra Maestra mountain range offers a strong, strategic position from which Taínos resisted Spanish colonization, maroons revolted against slavery, and revolutionaries from Martí and Maceo to Castro and Guevara launched efforts to topple the government.

⁵ Ferrer, Ada. *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolutions*, 12; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁶ Rodríguez, Emilio Jorge. *Haiti and Trans-Caribbean Literary Identity*, 214; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁷ Roberg, Jeffrey L. & Kutruff, Alyson, "Cuba: Ideological Success or Ideological Failure?" □784; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁸ Allen, Jafari S. *¡Venceremos?: The Erotics of Black Self-making in Cuba*, 4.

⁹ Baker, Geoffrey. *Buena Vista in the Club: Rap, Reaggaeón, and Revolution in Havana*, 1.

¹⁰ García, David F. *Arsenio Rodríguez and the Transnational Flows of Latin Popular Music*, 144.

¹¹ Baker, Geoffrey. *Buena Vista in the Club: Rap, Reaggaeón, and Revolution in Havana*, 3.

¹² Cepeda, María Elena. "'Columbus Effect(s)': Chronology and Crossover in the Latin(o) Music 'Boom,'" 71.

¹³ Baker, Geoffrey. *Buena Vista in the Club: Rap, Reaggaeón, and Revolution in Havana*, 1-2.

¹⁴ Socolovsky, Maya. "Deconstructing a Secret History: Trace, Translation, and Crypto-Judaism in Achy Obejas's *Days of Awe*," □240.

¹⁵ Obejas, Achy. *Ruins*, 17; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

- ¹⁶ Cruz Soto, Marie. *Inhabiting Isla Nena, 1514-2003: Island Narrations, Imperial Dramas And Vieques, Puerto Rico*, 16
- ¹⁷ Reyes-Santos, Irmay. “‘On Pan-Antillean Politics’: Ramón Emeterio Betances and Gregorio Luperón Speak to the Present,” 146.
- ¹⁸ González, José Luis. *Puerto Rico: The Four-Storeyed Country*, 36.
- ¹⁹ Romberg, Raquel. “‘Today, Changó is Changó’: How Africanness Becomes a Ritual Commodity in Puerto Rico,” 83.
- ²⁰ Soto-Crespo, Ramón E. *Mainland Passage: the Cultural Anomaly of Puerto Rico*, 34.
- ²¹ Chaar-Pérez, Khalil. “‘A Revolution of Love’: Ramón Emeterio Betances, Anténor Firmin, and Affective Communities in the Caribbean,” □13.
- ²² González Pérez, Aníbal. “Ballad of the Two Poets: Nicolás Guillén and Luis Palés Matos,” 285.
- ²³ Figueroa, Víctor. “Between Africa and Puerto Rico: Haiti and Lyric Self-Fashioning in the Poetry of Luis Palés Matos,” 74-75. □
- ²⁴ See Matías Pérez-Miñambres, “‘Tun tun de pasa y grifería’: Perpetuación de estereotipos euroetnologicocéntricos en el discurso poético afroantillano de Palés Matos,” and Eric Williams, “Four Poets of the Greater Antilles.”
- ²⁵ Gelpi, Juan G, “Ana Lydia Vega: ante el debate de la cultura nacional de Puerto Rico,” 96.
- ²⁶ Vega, Ana Lydia. *Encancaranublado y Otros Cuentos De Naufragio*, 13; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.
- ²⁷ La Altagracia, la Caridad del Cobre, y las Siete Potencias Africanas are, respectively, the syncretic patronesses of the D.R. and Cuba, and the principle Yoruban orishas analogous to the Iwas in Haitian vodou.
- ²⁸ Velez, Diana L. “We Are (Not) in This Together: The ‘Caribbean’ Imaginary in ‘Encancaranublado’ by Ana Lydia Vega,” 827.
- ²⁹ Vega, Ana Lydia. *Encancaranublado y Otros Cuentos De Naufragio*, 7.
- ³⁰ Campos Johnson, Adriana Michéle. “*La Peregrinación de Bayoán: Writing (and Failing) in the House of Pilgrims*,” 65.

³¹ Of Hostos's novel *Sommer* writes, "Alberdi may have borrowed his title from Eugenio María de Hostos's *The Peregrinations of Bayoán* (Puerto Rico, 1863), an intriguing attempt at Pan-Caribbean (amorous) alliance which is hardly so schematic as Alberdi's "travails of truth." Yet Bayoán is rather heavy-handed about announcing distinct allegorical registers, and its contradictory affairs with politics and passion founder in the rather un-American competition between erotics and duty. Whether or not the conventionally allegorical and puritanical features of Hostos's sentimental and political peregrinations kept Bayoán off the canonical list of national romances I take up here, it can hardly have had a similar career. Which country would it celebrate or project? Which existing government could it have supported, when Bayoán's dream was precisely international, beyond the future institutions that might have required it?" (50).

³² Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. "13 – The nineteenth century Spanish American novel," 466.

³³ Vega, Ana Lydia. *Encancaranublado y Otros Cuentos De Naufragio*, 14.

³⁴ Dash, J. Michael. "Nineteenth-Century Haiti and the Archipelago of the Americas: Anténor Firmin's Letters from St. Thomas," 44.

³⁵ Vega, Ana Lydia. *Encancaranublado y Otros Cuentos De Naufragio*, 20; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

³⁶ Cruz, Angie. *Let It Rain Coffee*, 51; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

CODA

As this project comes to an end, I find myself at a crossroads personally and professionally. Finishing this dissertation means bidding farewell to North Carolina as well as to a formative stage of my adulthood; an unknown tomorrow beckons in uncertain directions. Where will the future lead my partner and me? What will our life be like wherever we head next? What new forms will the work in these pages take as both it and I evolve? What new projects will inspire me? At this crossroads I close by reflecting on still other crossroads, other borderlands that remind me that no matter how closely one reads a text, or carefully one reflects on the past, no matter how beautifully one writes, paints, or performs, human existence is inevitably marked by losses, not only by the constitutive loss of subjectivity in language, nor merely by the many personal losses incurred by the eliding wave of time's interminable march, but also by historical losses experienced unevenly on multiple scales large and small.

This project has endeavored to address these types of historical losses by un-silencing the Haitian Revolution in contemporary Latina/o cultural production from the Caribbean and its diasporas, by connecting the US-Mexico and Dominican-Haitian borders, and in the process illuminating the multitude of fractal frontiers emanating from and across the Caribbean, the Americas, and the world. Yet no matter how well I have succeeded in realizing these ambitions, my words on these pages cannot undo, cannot remediate losses associated with historical injustices, migrations, and discrimination. Haitians have suffered extreme poverty, poor government, political isolation, cultural denigration, and international interventions for over two

centuries, for a variety of reasons certainly, but in no small part because their ancestors dared oppose an early Atlantic economy inextricably invested in the enslavement and sale of human beings for profit. Dominicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans too have faced similar, if unique, and less acute challenges domestically and internationally.

On other frontiers, thousands of migrants have died along the US-Mexico border since the 1990s as US politicians redouble efforts to fortify border security, the United States' "structurally embedded demand" for cheap labor continues unabated, and migrants seek the least guarded, most remote, and consequently most treacherous paths north to avoid border patrol.¹ Deaths of migrants at sea in the Caribbean and elsewhere similarly increase at alarming rates as political instability, economic inequality, and climate change displace ever-increasing numbers of people across the globe; the United Nation's High Commissioner on Refugees estimates that 350,000 refugees took to the seas in 2014, over 4,000 of whom died.² Finally, these macro level losses associated with historical injustices and the dangers of migration all too often translate into the daily, lived experiences of discrimination and micro-aggressions against people marked by these histories and these migrations. To be Haitian, to be black, to be Latina/o, to be poor, to be female, to be queer, to be disabled is, at least in part, to bear the scars of these histories, these migrations, and to bear witness to their continued effects in the pernicious, quotidian lived experiences of racism, classism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism.

At the Crossroads: Memorials, Memories, and Loss

Though often difficult to discuss and even more difficult to remedy, these historical losses haunt people, places, and cultural productions, often in unexpected ways. North Carolina, the state I have called home while writing this dissertation, has its own history, its own ghosts, its own site-specific iterations of coloniality's fractal borders. This coda explores North Carolina,

and more specifically Chapel Hill and Durham, as part of the Americas inextricably connected to histories of indigenous genocide and African enslavement and thus part of the Caribbean borderlands intimately imbricated in coloniality.

The art historian Renée Ater, currently at work on a book manuscript titled *Unsettling Memory: Public Monuments to the Slave Past in the United States*, opens her essay, “The Challenge of Memorializing Slavery in North Carolina: The Unsung Founders Memorial and the North Carolina Freedom Project” with a passage about the placement of monuments from *Emancipation and the Freed in American Sculpture* (1916), written by Freeman Henry Murray, often considered the first African American art historian. In Ater’s selection from Murray’s volume, published only three years after the United Daughters of the Confederacy unveiled the Confederate Memorial at UNC-Chapel Hill, Murray writes:

The fact is, nearly all sculptural groups and a considerable number of individual statues, are based on some purpose beyond mere portraiture or illustration. Moreover, these commemorative and “speaking” groups generally stand in the open, at the intersections of the highways and in the most conspicuous places.³

In the pages that follow I take up Murray and Ater’s emphasis on space and place in collective commemoration to explore how crossroads serve as sites of knotted, conflicting memories, spaces where the paths, histories, and losses of diverse peoples converge and diverge.

This coda itself is a personal crossroads, a time and space to reflect on my past and my future, my time here in North Carolina and my future destinations unknown. At this crossroads, I meditate on other crossroads: McCorkle Place at UNC-Chapel Hill, Mario Marzan’s painting *Sinter Method: Dive and Reappear no.1* (Figure 4.8), Izel Vargas’s painting *Handle on the Past* (Figure 4.9), and a concert on September 19, 2010 when the bands Megafaun and Fight the Big Bull joined musicians Sharon Van Etten and Justin Vernon to reinterpret Alan Lomax’s famous field recordings *Sounds of the South* at the Hayti Heritage Center in Durham, North Carolina. At

each of these crossroads, at each of these fractal nodes of the Caribbean Borderlands, routes connecting North Carolina, the US South, the Caribbean, the Americas, and the Global South converge.

Real and virtual, sacred and profane, the crossroads as nexus of flows, migrations, borders, and histories serves both as a reminder of the importance of concrete places and spaces, of local histories, and of the site specific, on the one hand, and as master metaphor for the process of collectively commemorating the past and dealing with loss in cultural production, on the other. Memorials erected at crossroads function as prostheses for collective memory and in the process do social labor to commemorate, to remember together, to make history concrete, and to bring the past into the present for the future of a society. Through engaging the past, memorials engage loss—lost people, lost battles, lost epochs—in the name of shared values. The placement of memorials at crossroads, at spaces where the paths of many converge and diverge, underlines the contentious nature of collective memory materialized in memorials. Each monument at each crossroad begs the question: whose losses are (un-)silenced here and to what end? With these reflections and questions in mind, my exploration of loss and memory at the crossroads is indebted to two ongoing conversations in critical theory. The first revolves around *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory, as coined by the French historian Pierre Nora. The second conversation addresses loss in Latina/o Studies and hinges on the contributions of two of my mentors during my time in North Carolina, Antonio Viego and María DeGuzmán.

Pierre Nora first coined the concept of *lieux de mémoire* in his introduction to the massive, multi-volume, collaborative historical project of the same name that Éditions Gallimard began publishing in Paris, France in 1984, and that required the labor of numerous historians to elucidate various historical “sites of memory” of French history including monuments, archives,

literary texts, ethnographical journals, etc. “Sites of memory” as a critical concept made its debut in US English in the spring of 1989 in a special issue on memory and counter-memory published in the journal *Representation*. In the piece “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” excerpted from Nora’s original introduction to *Lieux de mémoire* and translated into English by Marc Roudebush, Nora lays out his complicated understanding of sites of memory. For Nora, sites of memory are any place or any object that is at once “symbolic, material, and functional,” that is created by the interplay of memory and history, and that is:

mixed, hybrid, mutant, bound intimately with life and death, with time and eternity; enveloped in a Mobius strip of the collective and the individual, the sacred and the profane, the immutable and the mobile. For if we accept that the most fundamental purpose of the *lieu de mémoire* is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial—just as if gold were the only memory of money—all of this in order to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs, it is also clear that *lieux de mémoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramification.⁴

Nora argues the growing importance of sites of memory to be the byproduct of the decline in memory and the rise of history, all of which Nora understands to be symptomatic of post-modernity. For Nora, as the rise of critical historiography—what one could call meta-history, the history of history, or revisionist history—erodes the collective memories of nations and peoples, sites of memory become important repositories of collective memory.

Though widely celebrated, Nora’s contributions have not been without critics, and in 2010 two special issues of *Yale French Studies* edited by Michael Rothberg, Debarati Senyal, and Max Silverman revisited and revised Nora’s *lieux de mémoire* to explore, “the points of contact between the memories and legacies of genocide, colonialism, and slavery in a world defined both by decolonization and the aftermath of the Shoah.”⁵ In the introduction to the issues, “Between Memory and Memory: From *Lieux de mémoire* to *Noeuds de mémoire*,”

Rothberg outlines the most common critiques of Nora's *Lieux de mémoire*: the binary opposition of memory and history; the linear, causal model of temporality that undergirds Nora's theory; its limited Gallocentric understanding of French national identity; and an overwhelming lack of sites of memory from France's former colonies, overseas departments, and overseas territories. In laying out these critiques in the introduction to the two special issues of *Yale French Studies*, Rothberg proposes a revision of Nora's sites of memory as knots of memory explaining that:

A project oriented around *noeuds de mémoire*... makes no assumptions about the content of communities or their memories. Rather, it suggests that "knotted" in all places and acts of memory are rhizomatic networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed attempts at territorialization (whether at the local or national level) and identitarian reduction. Performances of memory may well have territorializing or identity-forming effects, but those effects will always be contingent and open to re-signification.⁶

Rothberg, the other editors, and the contributors to these two special issues of *Yale French Studies* signal a shift away from what they understand to be Nora's linear, racinated theoretical model that opposes history and memory in favor of a non-linear, rhizomatic, performative model that proposes an inextricable interplay between history and memory and privileges knotted, contentious sites of memories from beyond France's continental European territory.

While I am certainly sympathetic to the aims of this proposed shift from *lieux de mémoire* to *noeuds de mémoire*, especially the need to explore more extensively space, place, and memory in formerly colonized countries of the Caribbean, the Americas, and the Global South, I find Nora's assertion that sites of memory "only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramification," more in consonance than in conflict with Rothberg's claim that, "Performances of memory may well have territorializing or identity-forming effects, but those effects will always be contingent and open to re-signification." As I understand it, both Nora and Rothberg

conceptualize sites or knots of memory as site-specific objects without inherent, fixed meaning, that nevertheless have the capacity to stimulate the endless, evolving hermeneutic production of meaning over time. Thus like a mirror that society holds up to itself, the meanings of memorials, public works of art, archives, and other sites of knotted memory evolve as societies change. Herein lies the power of Nora's *lieux de mémoire* as well as Rothberg's *noeuds de mémoire*; these models signal a point of departure rather than a final destination, an open-ended mode of site-specific object analysis predicated on the indeterminacy of meaning and thus specifically suited to the interminable production of meaning.

I understand this paradoxically productive indeterminacy of meaning at the heart of *lieux de mémoire* and *noeuds de mémoire* to be structurally homologous to the constitutive loss central to the Lacanian model of subjectivity in language. The indeterminacy and slippage at the core of both Nora's sites of memory and Rothberg's knots of memory parallel Lacanian theorizations of language as a differential system of signifiers without inherent or exhaustive meaning into which human beings inscribe themselves in order to become speaking subjects. In Lacanian psychoanalysis this coming into subjectivity is figured as a loss, as the unavoidable and irrevocable price every human being pays in order to enter into language and the production of meaning. For Lacan, this loss is not only constitutive and fundamental to becoming a subject in language; it guarantees the radically unknowable and inexhaustible nature of the subject of language, of the human being. In *Dead Subjects: Towards a Politics of Loss in Latino Studies* (2007) Latina/o Studies scholar Antonio Viego takes up Lacan's linguistic model of the radically unknowable subject precipitated through this primordial loss in language as anti-racist critique because:

Racism depends on a reading of ethnic-racialized subjects that insist on their transparency; racism also banks on the faith and conceit that these subjects can be

exhaustively and fully elucidated through a certain masterful operation of language. Lacan's psychoanalytic theory provides the tools to radically disrupt these colonizing, dominating, and ultimately racist interpretative practices.⁷

Through Lacan, Viego distinguishes between different types of losses Latina/os and other racialized subjects encounter: the constitutive loss of the signifier, on the one hand, and material, historical losses associated with structural and systemic inequalities, on the other. Viego argues that distinguishing the fundamental and irremediable loss of language from historically rooted material losses allows, "for an emancipatory politics for the ethnic-racialized subject who must take up her rightful place in the chain of the signifier in order to luxuriate in and suffer the full range of losses that a human subject stands to endure in the world" (241). In other words, the politics of loss that Viego's scholarship announces emerges precisely in distinguishing losses that can be redeemed from those that cannot, and learning to embrace the irrevocable loss of subjectivity in language as that which makes us human and ultimately unknowable.

If Antonio Viego heralds Lacan's theorization of the constitutive loss of the subject in language as fundamental not only to the precipitation of the subject but also to antiracist strategies in Latina/o Studies more broadly, scholar, photographer, and musician María DeGuzmán comes at the issue of loss in Latina/o Studies from a different angle addressing the psychological effects of historical, material losses Latina/os commonly face. In her essay "Darkness, My Night," included in the collection *Bridging* edited by Analouise Keating and Gloria González-López in celebration of the life and work of Gloria Anzaldúa, DeGuzmán demonstrates how Anzaldúa re-configures typical symbolic associations and binary oppositions of light and darkness at the crossroads of the colonizer and the colonized by reading Jung's idea of the Shadow—"the 'unacceptable' and/or unsocialized aspects of ourselves"—in intersection with the Aztec concept of *inframundo*—"a world lying within, amidst, and still beyond this

world or social order.”⁸ In a struggle similar to African Americans reclaiming blackness in the face of racism and LGBTQ communities reclaiming queerness in response to homophobia and transphobia, DeGuzmán explains that Anzaldúa rearticulates “her melancholia or a constellation of Shadow, darkness, shadows, and night” from a set of negative symbolic valences evoking death, danger, uncertainty, and numbness to a new set of associations with:

confronting our fears, our insecurities, our defensiveness, our vulnerabilities, and recognizing in ourselves and the other what exceeds social categories and ingrained ways of thinking/feeling/acting, particularly when what exceeds has been negatively valued or stigmatized. It entails a terrifying openness to possibility and the willingness to act on possibility against the socio-economic, historical, and psychological odds that largely spell injustice and harm for the many for the sake of the few who manage to acquire privilege and “security” in their social system. (215-216)

Through this reading of Anzaldúa’s critical, aesthetic engagement with tropes of darkness and night, DeGuzmán sketches an ethics of night complementary to Viego’s politics of loss.

DeGuzmán’s Anzaldúan ethics of night depathologizes melancholia by recognizing the creative power traditionally associated with melancholy before the term became subsumed into depression in contemporary clinical terminology. Through Anzaldúa, DeGuzmán challenges us to recuperate intersectional losses that people minoritized and marginalized by various combinations of class, ethnicity, “race,” gender, sexuality, ability, and/or legal status encounter but which mental health professionals often fail to take into account. Through this de-pathologization of melancholia and recuperation of the effects and affects of intersectional, historical, material losses, DeGuzmán via Anzaldúa “dignifies their/our experiences of loss” and “empowers those who feel pain, shame, anguish, and sorrow to understand the strength, energy, and creativity latent in these ‘negative’ emotions and, therefore, to use these emotions to effect social change” (217).

"This Future Sucks"

The inspiration for this coda began with a chance encounter. While walking home from teaching at UNC-Chapel Hill, I saw a piece of graffiti (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1: "This Future Sucks." November 13, 2014. McCorkle Place, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC

Someone had scrawled the message in a golden yellow paint pen on the brown back of the metal campus map that greets students and visitors to the university. I distractedly snapped a photo with my phone intrigued by the message but not fully understanding exactly why just yet.

Deciphering the text now, reading this graffiti via this image that I off-handedly snapped, I would venture that the set of characters at the top of the tag hemmed in by asterisks represent the moniker of the tagger, what I read to be a stylized "IRL," with drippings from the paint running down to almost link the three letters with the curved stroke that underlines them. "IRL" could

perhaps be an alternative spelling of the name Earl, initials, a nickname, or some other reference. It also evokes for me the abbreviation of “in real life,” an expression popular in “leet speak”—written dialect developed in internet chat rooms and on online multiplayer gaming platforms—that refers to something in the real rather than in the virtual realm, offline rather than online. “IRL” for gamers and other online communities often presents the potential to pierce the anonymity of Internet conversations and the facade of roles played or avatars inhabited online. IRL invites an interlocutor to discuss who one “really” is, such as what one does for a living, one’s romantic entanglements or domestic arrangements, and finally often presents the possibility of meeting up in the flesh. IRL also evokes other uses of “real” both popular and theoretical: the African-American idiom, “keeping it real,” for example, which means to remain authentic, truthful, and faithful to one’s self and to one’s experience, or Lacan’s order of the real beyond symbolic representation and imaginary identification.

Under the heavily suggestive and stylized baggage of this tagger’s nom de plume, the graffiti reads, “This future sucks.” Though perhaps the graffiti’s author coined the phrase independently, the tag echoes the title and lyrics of the 2011 song “This Future Sucks” by the Elgin, Illinois-based punk band The Brokedowns. Over the course of its verses and chorus, the song distills its disillusionment into this eponymous refrain:

Not so high and mighty now
Not so quick to see the ceiling for the clouds
Was it always this bland?
Or is it blander now?
Different hunger
Different hunger
You were younger
What a bummer

Ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba
Our brains are broken glass
And all the glue they give to you won't help you put it back

Na na na na na na
No returns, no refunds
This future sucks
This future sucks

How'd they find us out this far?
Sprawled out on our backs trying to count the stars...
Were they always this dim?
Or are they getting dark?
You're just number
Getting number
What a bummer
Take a number

*Chorus repeats*⁹

These lyrics, written by Kris Megyery, frame the song's angst within contemplative reflections on the heavens, the sensorial, the historical, and the mind. Each verse opens with descriptions of looking to the skies, "to see the ceiling for the clouds," and "to count the stars." These acts of celestial contemplation, looking to clouds as objects of creative free association and to stars as quantifiable references for navigation and astronomy, are common practices that often stand in for human endeavors, creative and analytical. Yet while the two verses deploy relationships between spectatorship and the firmament as substitutes for the arts and the sciences, the limits of human perception and enthusiasm ultimately frustrate these lofty undertakings. The clouds are bland; the stars are dim, but the underlying causes of this degradation of the senses are suspect both subjectively, "You were younger... You're just number," and historically, "Was it always this bland? / Or is it blander now? (...) Were they always this dim? / Or are they getting dark?" Despite these uncertainties the chorus does not tergiversate. Human understanding is irrevocably broken; totalizing visions of the world are shattered. And finally the song understands this present humanity has fashioned for itself as the dystopian fallout of an irreversible capitalist transaction. "No returns, no refunds / This future sucks."

I would like to pause to reflect on possible interpretations of this temporally convoluted sentence, “This future sucks,” as an extremely condensed piece of speculative fiction, as a science fiction micro-story in one sentence, and as a signpost at the crossroads of my comings and goings at UNC-Chapel Hill. “This future sucks.” The sentence reads as if it were the negative verdict of a time traveler from the past who has come to critique “this” present as but one future among many other possible futures. As such, the tag and refrain operate under a similar temporality as this dissertation, which, in large part, is a critique of the present, a future only made possible by particular histories of injustice: the silencing of the Haitian Revolution and the marginalization of Haiti in the Caribbean, the Americas, and the world. Similarly to the time-bending observation of IRL and the Brokedowns, the artists, writers, and intellectuals I have discussed in these pages critique the present to imagine alternative Caribbean futures in which Haiti is not marginal, the Haitian revolution is not silenced, and the Caribbean borderlands connect rather than divide Haiti, the Hispanophone Caribbean, and their diasporas.

Yet IRL’s tag not only epitomizes the kinds of critical temporalities celebrated in this dissertation, the graffiti strategically intervenes within a symbolically overdetermined space. McCorkle Place is not only the primary pedestrian entrance and exit to the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, but also the historical center of the campus, the home of the university’s first building, Old East, as well as two of the monuments most strongly associated with the institution, the Confederate Monument, also known as “Silent Sam,” and the Old Well. As such, the plaza is a crossroads where the disparate political, economic, and educational interests of diverse stakeholders invested in the university today converge with the many historical ghosts that haunt the institution, the town, the state, the region, the nation, and the world. Within this

context, on the flip side of a map tailored to present the campus and university on a Cartesian coordinate system as a logical, legible space, IRL intervenes by scrawling, “This future sucks.”

As often is the case with graffiti, the location of the tag on this map in this symbolically charged plaza is as provocative and suggestive as the tag’s content itself. IRL writes, quite literally on the dark side of the university’s official story, a counter-narrative articulated from a hidden, obscured, un-silenced space. There is no room for IRL’s critique on the shiny, outward-looking façade the university offers visiting tourists, recruits, parents, and alumni; IRL’s critique must be viewed from within, as one leaves the campus, like a reminder that all the well-groomed lawns and beautiful buildings cannot hide the institution’s history or its imperfections. While it might be easy for some to discount the tag as nihilism or vandalism, I read IRL’s graffiti as a protest decrying the failure of the university to live up to its utopian ideals, its mission as society’s steward of humanity’s loftiest values and endeavors, its role as cradle of the arts and of the sciences.

Cuban-American scholar José Esteban Muñoz opens *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009) with the ever-quotable Oscar Wilde’s quip that, “A map of the world that does not include utopia is not worth glancing at.”¹⁰ IRL’s tag flips the script on Wilde. “This future sucks,” is definitely not the utopia Wilde requires of good cartography. Yet considering the mission of public institutions of higher learning such as UNC-Chapel Hill, a map of a university ideally should already chart a utopia of sorts. When that map of the university does not include utopia, critiques such as IRL’s tag become necessary. Though dystopia and utopia are often opposed in binary, I believe that slippery horizon, that shimmering border where dystopian despair melts into utopian hope, and vice versa, burns bright in acts like IRL’s caustic appraisal of this future that is now. Now, months after I first observed the graffiti on the back of

the map at the pedestrian entrance to McCorkle Place, a fresh coat of brown paint hides the tag (Figure 4.2). The obscured letters now look like welts or scars left on dark brown skin after a beating or a branding.¹¹ Despite efforts to silence IRL's critique, its letters lay dormant hibernating under the thin veneer of propriety the university groundskeepers tenuously struggle to maintain. This future sucks.

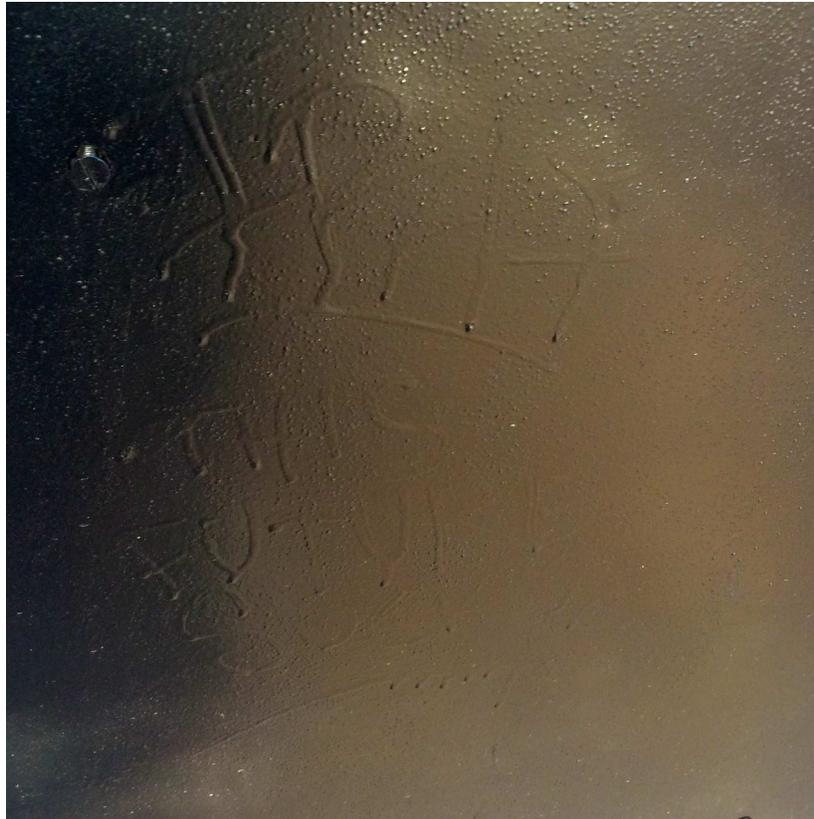


Figure 4.2: "This Future Sucks, Painted Over." February 4, 2015. McCorkle Place, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC

McCorkle Place, Crossroads of the Americas

Through its placement, IRL's tag intervenes simultaneously in two symbolic spaces, the map of the university and McCorkle Place. Both the map and the plaza chart representations of space and time. The map plots the architecture and topography of the campus in two dimensions, while McCorkle Place projects the past in three dimensions through its constellation of monuments that memorialize the history of the university and the state. The presence of these

layered representations, of these map and monuments, speaks to McCorkle Place's role as a crossroads at UNC-Chapel Hill and in North Carolina, a place where paths converge, where the individual and collective interests of diverse groups meet and often conflict. The American poet Yusef Komunyakaa writes that:

The crossroads is a real place between imaginary places—points of departure and arrival. It is also the place where negotiations and deals are made with higher powers. In the West African and Haitian traditions of Legba it is a sanctified place of reflection... The crossroads is a junction between the individual and the world.¹²

McCorkle Place was named for the Presbyterian minister Reverend Samuel E. McCorkle who “wrote the original bill to request a charter from the North Carolina General Assembly,” in 1784, which eventually led to the founding of UNC-Chapel Hill.¹³ As an important point of pedestrian entry and exit to the campus McCorkle Place punctuates comings and goings at the university. Beyond marking these quotidian rhythms, McCorkle Place is also a symbolic space marked by monuments, memorials, and even the graves of the university's first president Joseph Caldwell and his wife Helen. The smaller sandstone obelisk that originally marked the Caldwell graves in McCorkle Place now stands nearby in Old Chapel Hill Cemetery over the final resting place of four African Americans “that served the university”: November Caldwell, a man enslaved by Joseph and Helen Caldwell, known euphemistically as Doctor on campus; Wilson Caldwell, November's son and slave to another UNC president, David Lowry Swain, who Wilson accompanied on foot to surrender Chapel Hill to Union troops during the Civil War; and David Barham and Henry Smith, two men of whom I found no other record.¹⁴

During my time at UNC-Chapel Hill, this plaza, which is literally a graveyard, has been, almost without my realizing it, the setting for private and public encounters to mourn personal losses and traumatic histories. In 2012, a year after my sister Aimee lost her husband Michael,

when she and her family came from Texas to North Carolina to visit, we walked across McCorkle together enjoying its bittersweet summer beauty while her children ran and played in the grass. A year later in 2013 after the highest court in Guatemala overturned Efraín Ríos Montt's guilty verdict and eighty-year sentence for genocide, I joined Dr. Emilio del Valle Escalante and others at McCorkle Place to, "dignify and celebrate the lives of the Maya Ixil Peoples in Guatemala who had the courage to speak up and testify against the dictator."¹⁵ Every year since I arrived in Chapel Hill hundreds of people gathered there together to raise awareness of the racist histories of the Confederate Monument and of the names of many of the streets and buildings on campus. I remember these private tributes and public demonstrations at McCorkle Place.

A gateway to the university, a space that greets and bids farewell, where loved ones and strangers come together to remember, a plaza where personal and collective losses converge and diverge, McCorkle Place is also space of conflict and negotiation. Its monuments cannot reconcile the conflicting losses of all of the diverse peoples whose interests meet at this crossroads. As a contested space, McCorkle Place records some histories while it silences others. IRL's intervention in this plaza, at this crossroads, underlines how the version of the past publicly memorialized in McCorkle Place underwrites an unsatisfactory present echoing a long tradition of protests in McCorkle Place that have struggled to un-silence the plaza's hidden histories and to reveal the university's unpaid debts to the dispossessed and to the enslaved. A contested, symbolic space of protest and remembrance, a site of knotted, conflicting memories, a crossroads of the Americas hidden in plain sight in a small, quaint college town, McCorkle Place rematerializes the crucible of the colonial encounter writ in time and space.

McCorkle Place's Deafening Silence

If McCorkle Place today is but another iteration of coloniality's fractal borders, a crossroads connecting diverse populations with diasporic connections to almost every corner of the globe, the plaza's colonial history, like that of much of the Americas, connects the paths of three primary groups: American Indians, European colonists, and enslaved laborers of African descent. The way McCorkle Place represents these three populations speaks volumes about the kinds of losses each group experienced in the colonial encounter. Indigenous North American peoples have no representation in the plaza's symbolism. McCorkle Place's symbology completely silences and erases North Carolina's first peoples. The overwhelming majority of McCorkle Place's monuments, memorials, and names commemorate Anglo-American colonizers of North Carolina, and to this day, slavery remains the most controversial, often-debated history haunting the square due to the prominence of the Confederate Monument and the foundational role enslaved people of African descent played in the establishment, construction, and maintenance of UNC-Chapel Hill prior to the US Civil War.

While slavery's crucial role in the establishment, construction, and maintenance of the UNC-Chapel Hill is today the most controversial and often debated history haunting McCorkle Place, it is vital to remember that before Europeans and Africans arrived in the Americas other peoples lived for thousands of years on the land on which McCorkle Place and UNC-Chapel Hill stand. Though most of the local tribes who lived nearest to where the university is today have disappeared, these peoples existed and their names remain hidden in plain sight in the area's local toponyms. Shakori Hills, Saxapahaw, the Haw River, the Eno River, and Occonechee Mountain all bear the names of the American Indian tribes that lived in the areas surrounding what is today Chapel Hill. Because their lives and ways of life were so utterly and rapidly

destroyed, not enough is known about the Shakori, the Sissipahaw, and the Eno beyond that they lived in the area and spoke Siouan languages. It is thought that in the wake of the Yamasee War, the remnants of these tribes decimated by the diseases, violence, and enslavement that accompanied the advance of European colonization joined other tribes under the leadership of the Catawba, the Occaneechi, and the Lumbee. The Catawba Indian Nation filed for Federal Recognition in 1973, counts over 2800 in their enrolled membership, and is the only officially recognized Indian Nation in South Carolina.¹⁶ Though one of the smallest tribes in the US, the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation won the official recognition of North Carolina in 2002 and began buying back tribal lands in Alamance County, North Carolina in 2004.¹⁷ The Lumbee Tribe are the most numerous American Indian group in North Carolina, the largest east of the Mississippi, and the ninth largest Native American tribe in the US numbering over 50,000.

The Real “Silent Sam”

Enslaved workers built the original stone wall that circumscribes the plaza to keep grazing animals off the campus. The image (Figure 4.3) below shows the wall and the entrance from Franklin Street, Chapel Hill’s main thoroughfare.



Figure 4.3: “Northwest Entrance.” February 4, 2015. McCorkle Place, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC

The plaza and the majority of the university's public, open air spaces are surrounded by similar walls built in the style of those originally erected by enslaved people laboring under the direction of a faculty member of the university. As the second edition of the University's report by the Task Force on Landscape Heritage & Plant Diversity recounts:

Wall building was started in 1838 by professor Elisha Mitchell with a crew of slaves, according to campus historian Archibald Henderson. Mitchell, a New Englander, remembered the stone fences of home. The rock walls that he helped construct over the next six years are still being copied in town and on campus today, more than 160 years later. (1-9)

The university acknowledges that enslaved laborers built not only these walls but also those of every university building constructed before the Civil War.¹⁸ Just beyond this stone wall and two historical markers—one making the contested claim that UNC is the first public university in the United States, the other commemorating 1968 student protests that overturned a state law banning controversial speakers on campus—visitors find the map of the campus permanently installed in the sturdy metal signage that IRL tagged (Figure 4.4).

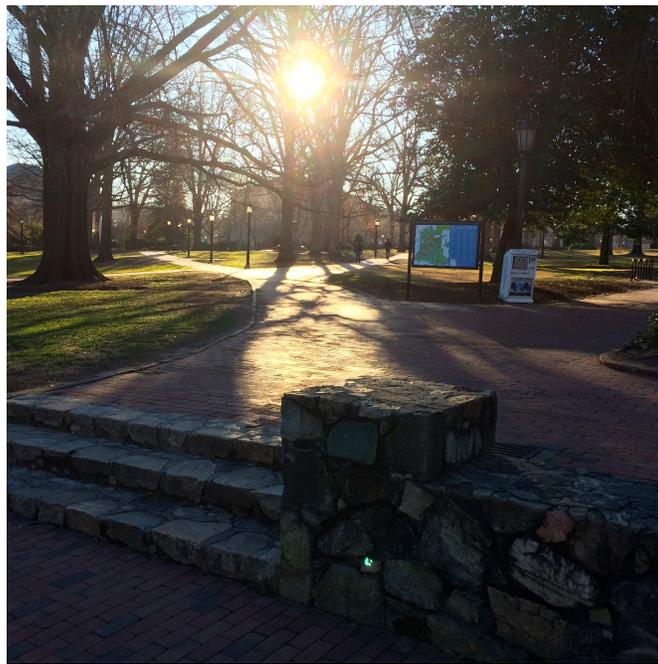


Figure 4.4: “Campus Map.” February 4, 2015, McCorkle Place, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC

Continuing into campus and taking the path to the left of the map, visitors encounter the Confederate Monument, most often referred to as Silent Sam (Figure 4.5). According to lore, the statue is silent because the rifle is unloaded, a connection that draws perverse but not uncommon equivalences between words and weapons, speaking and shooting, voice and violence, a detail symptomatic of a web of entrenched, obsessive investments in free speech, the right to arms, and violence in the US.



Figure 4.5: “Confederate Monument.” February 4, 2015. McCorkle Place, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC.

Though other memorials to both Union and Confederate soldiers elsewhere similarly portray soldiers with unloaded weapons, the insistence on the Confederate soldier's silence in renaming this memorial "Silent Sam" inverts the history of slavery in the US, transforming slavery's defenders into silenced victims, while the truth, of course, is quite the opposite. Slave-owning societies silenced the enslaved denying them the most basic legal rights to education, to speech, and to arms. Rather than history, "Silent Sam" reflects the nostalgic fantasy of a former slave-owning society symbolically claiming a victimhood it never granted to the human beings it treated as mere property. The nickname "Silent Sam" occludes the monument's more problematic official name, the Confederate Monument, and transforms the ugly history of slavery and the Civil War into an alliterative campus mascot, a perverse tourist attraction for family photos.

Since its unveiling the Confederate Monument has served as a shrine to the Confederacy and its values; white supremacy figured chief among the ideals the wealthy North Carolinian industrialist Julian Shakespeare Carr extolled in his dedication of the statue at its unveiling ceremony. Through hyperbolic comparisons with famous figures from across European literature and history, Carr—namesake of Chapel Hill's western neighbor, the town of Carrboro—lauds the heroism of the Confederate soldiers living and dead and the contributions of the United Daughters of the Confederacy who commissioned the statue. Carr equates the Confederacy's veterans with Hector's Trojans, Leonidas's Spartans, and Caesar's Roman phalanx.¹⁹ He compares the, "mothers and daughters, the wives and sweethearts," of the Confederate soldiers with Niobe, Penelope, Boadecia, Helen of Troy, Joan of Arc, and Queen Elizabeth (94-97). Hyperbolic as the rhetoric may seem, Carr was not alone in comparing the defeat of the Confederacy with famous lost causes from antiquity. To the beginning of his speech, Carr or

perhaps his secretary literally cuts and pastes four lines from British poet Philip Stanhope Worsley's translation of Homer's *Iliad*, which Worsley dedicated to Robert E. Lee. The lines selected read:

Thy Troy is fallen,—thy dear land
Is marred beneath the spoiler's heel—
I cannot trust my trembling hand
To write the things I feel. (93)

Readers today can certainly fault Carr for mixed metaphors and long-winded oratory, but his references to high culture and grandiose history only thinly mask a much more disturbing hatred boiling just below the surface of his speech's gaudy veneer.

As the lines from Worsley's translation presage, Carr barely contains his emotions as he speaks of the Confederacy's defeat and reveals his profound investment in white supremacy as his monologue reaches its climax:

The present generation, I am persuaded, scarcely takes note of what the Confederate soldier meant to the welfare of the Anglo Saxon race during the four years immediately succeeding the war, when the facts are, that their courage and steadfastness saved the very life of the Anglo Saxon race in the South—When “the bottom rail was on top” all over the Southern states, and to-day as a consequence, the purest strain of the Anglo Saxon race is to be found in the 13 Southern states—Praise God. (104)

Grandiose comparisons to ancient heroes aside, here Carr reveals what he understands to be the greatest accomplishment of Confederate soldiers: the violent reassertion of white supremacy in the US South in the wake of the Confederacy's defeat. Though the punctuation of the transcription of Carr's speech muddles the message somewhat, the phrase, “the bottom rail was on top” clearly refers to the fear that after abolition, slaves would overthrow their masters, that African Americans might have some modicum of respect, power, and equality in the US South. The expression famously appears in an anecdote about a former slave who fought for the Union Army and after the Confederacy's defeat greeted his former master, a Confederate soldier held

prisoner. The black Union soldier reportedly said, “Howdy Massa. Bottom rail on top, this time.”²⁰

The anecdote of this former slave encountering his former master as a prisoner of war and Carr’s use of the expression “bottom rail on top” evoke the fears of the spread of slave revolt that the Haitian Revolution sparked among slaveholding nations and the repressive measures taken to avoid “another Haiti.” Though slavery would be abolished in the wake of the Confederacy’s defeat, the war’s white southern veterans like Carr would never surrender their fealty to white, Anglo-American supremacy. Carr argues that the Confederate veterans returning home from the Civil War reinstated the dominant racial hierarchy of the Antebellum South during Reconstruction, and thus “saved the very life of the Anglo Saxon,” preserving the “purest strain” of whiteness in the US South. Moreover, Carr figures himself an exemplar of such Confederate veterans who heroically preserved white supremacy and white purity in the wake of abolition by sharing a disturbing personal anecdote of his own violent act of racially motivated terror. Carr recounts how:

One hundred yards from where we stand, less than ninety days perhaps after my return from Appomattox, I horse-whipped a negro wench until her skirts hung in shreds, because on the streets of this quiet village she had publicly insulted and maligned a Southern lady, and then rushed for protection to these university buildings where was stationed a garrison of 100 Federal soldiers. I performed the pleasing duty in the immediate presence of the entire garrison, and for thirty nights slept with a double-barreled shot gun (sic) under my head.²¹

The reference to Appomattox, the battle in which Ulysses S. Grant defeated Robert E. Lee, dates the anecdote to the end of the Civil War, roughly the summer of 1865. The distance and location Carr describes from the Confederate Memorial would place his crime in the vicinity of the Old Well, the official symbol of UNC-Chapel Hill, near the university’s first, original, still-standing building, Old East, where the Union soldiers Carr describes would have been quartered. Carr, it

seems, chased the woman across McCorkle Place as she fled to the university seeking protection. Carr brags that he publicly brutalized this woman despite the Federal soldiers' presence, describing a horrific scene that associates not only the Confederate Memorial, but the Old Well, Old East, and McCorkle Place, the historical heart of UNC-Chapel Hill's campus, the first public university in the United States to open its doors, with this primal scene of trauma, this act of racial terror, this violent and horrific crime unpunished, ordinary, and banal in its day but contrary to the values of any university, any place of learning today.

I have been unable to find an official record of Carr's crime, most likely because violently beating a black woman in public was not considered and thus not recorded as a crime in 1865 in North Carolina. Whether one takes Carr's account of his actions at his word or not, Carr argues that the Confederate Memorial commemorates efforts of Confederate veterans to protect white supremacy and Anglo Saxon purity through violence exemplified in Carr's brutal beating of an unarmed woman. Fact or fiction, the anecdote recounting the crime illustrates Carr's belief that white supremacy must be policed through state-sanctioned violence wrought upon black bodies and inextricably links the origins of the Confederate Memorial at UNC-Chapel Hill to these retrograde, racist beliefs. Carr's anecdote also underlines once again the irony of calling the Confederate Monument "Silent Sam." While the statue might be called silent today, Carr and others who terrorized African Americans through racially motivated violence and lynchings were certainly not silent. Unlike the soldier depicted in the monument, Carr slept with a loaded shotgun in his bed and publicly boasted at an official university function about committing a heinous, brutal crime. Carr's act of racially motivated terror, his brutal attempt to police white supremacy and to ensure that the South's free people of color and emancipated slaves would never imagine themselves the equals of "Anglo Saxons" is but part of a larger culture and longer

history of lynching that has claimed the lives of thousands if not millions of black people in the US from the time of slavery to the present.

Unsung Founders

Exposing how the racist ideology of Julian Carr infuses the history and symbolism of the Confederate Monument at UNC Chapel Hill reveals how fundamental white supremacy has been in McCorkle Place. This monument prominently and publicly displayed, greeting students and visitors alike at the gateway to the university is concrete, physical evidence of the historical complicity of UNC-Chapel Hill in white supremacist racial hierarchies policed through physical violence enacted upon black bodies. What is more, McCorkle Place is not unique; it is a crossroads connected to countless other crossroads in the Americas where memorials to the slave-owning elite stand. Given current events of the past year, it is difficult not to connect this history and culture of racial terror that Carr advocates and that the Confederate Monument memorializes with the wave of beatings and killings of black and Latina/o people by police officers and civilians including Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida; Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York; Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri; Jesus Huerta in Durham, North Carolina; Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio; Ezel Ford in Los Angeles, California; Jessie Hernandez in Denver, Colorado; Antonio Zambrano-Montes in Pasco, Washington; Eric Harrison in Tulsa, Oklahoma; Walter Scott in North Charleston, South Carolina; and many, many others elsewhere across the US. These killings along with the recent discoveries of the bodies of the Haitian immigrant “Tulile” Claude Jean Harri in Santiago, Dominican Republic on February 4, 2015 and of the African American man Otis Byrd in Claiborne County, Mississippi on March 8, 2015, both found hanging by their necks from trees in public, are stark reminders that sadly this history

of institutionalized racial terror is one of the most basic, fundamental legacies of coloniality that repeats with difference across the United States and the Caribbean borderlands.

Amidst growing national protests in the US catalyzed by these killings, the Alabama-based non-profit Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) produced a report titled *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror* (2015). The report tracks “racial terror lynchings,” or the unpunished murders of minorities carried out with impunity and the implicit or explicit support of local government and police to instill terror in minority communities.²² The report calculates that from 1877-1950 in the states with the most racial violence—Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia—white supremacists killed a total of 3,959 people in racial terror lynchings, seven-hundred more than previously calculated (4-5). The EJI report argues that this culture and history of racial violence and lynching not only motivated much of the massive African American migrations from the rural South to urban spaces in northern and western US cities in the first half of the twentieth century but also profoundly shaped the administration of criminal justice in the US nationwide (3).

The EJI’s claim that violent practices of racial terror dating from the Antebellum and Reconstruction profoundly and fundamentally distort institutions of US law enforcement to this day nationwide are supported by the US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division’s *Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department*. The investigation condemns, in Missouri, a state not even included in the EJI report, clear predatory patterns of racist and discriminatory law enforcement in Ferguson’s police department and municipal court system, both of which treated the town’s overwhelmingly majority African American population as a source of revenue rather than as citizens to be protected, repeating in new forms the perverse American obsession with

commodifying and monetizing black lives.²³ Yet in the US systemic racism and discrimination are not confined merely to inequalities in the treatment of African Americans by law enforcement, the judiciary, or the prison system. The EJI found that:

Many of the communities where lynchings took place have gone to great lengths to erect markers and monuments that memorialize the Civil War, the Confederacy, and historical events during which local power was violently reclaimed by white Southerners. These communities celebrate and honor the architects of racial subordination and political leaders known for their belief in white supremacy. There are very few monuments or memorials that address the history and legacy of lynching in particular or the struggle for racial equality more generally. Most communities do not actively or visibly recognize how their race relations were shaped by terror lynching.²⁴

In commemorating those who oversaw the violent enforcement of white supremacist social hierarchies rather than their victims, the Confederate Monument in McCorkle Place at UNC-Chapel Hill, then, is but part of a larger pattern of representational violence that goes hand in hand with physical violence and legal violence against black and brown bodies in the US.

As a symbol of slavery, the Confederacy, and white supremacy, the Confederate Monument has often been a focal point for racist and anti-racist demonstrations at UNC-Chapel Hill. Articles and letters both in support and critical of the monument in the university's student newspaper *The Daily Tar Heel* date to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Notably, on 10 April 1968, the day after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 which barred discrimination in housing, students "looking for [trouble]" draped a Confederate Flag on the monument in Chapel Hill, and despite pleas from other students, campus police refused to remove the flag.²⁵ Students began gathering en masse at the Confederate Monument in anti-racist protests after the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles, California in 1992; similar demonstrations have become annual events since I have attended the university.

In response to over a decade of protests and student organizing, in 2005 UNC-Chapel Hill finally erected The Unsung Founders Memorial (Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6: “Unsung Founders Memorial.” February 4, 2015. McCorkle Place, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC.

The sculpture is one of the few monuments in states with high numbers of lynching that, as the EJI tepidly puts it, addresses the “struggle for racial equality more generally.” UNC-Chapel Hill’s class of 2002 commissioned the piece and raised half the funds for its construction. After an open call for submissions, and visits to campus by the four finalists, a committee of students, faculty, and administrators selected South Korean artist Do-So Suh to create the Unsung Founders Memorial. Erected and dedicated on 11 May 2005, the memorial stands in front of the Alumni Building near the Confederate Monument on McCorkle Place.

Art historian Renée Ater who includes the Unsung Founders Memorial as part of her ongoing book project *Unsettling Memory: Public Monuments to the Slave Past in the United States* writes that:

Suh created three hundred small bronze figures, which hold in their upraised arms a round granite table. Suh racialized these figures through physiognomy and dress: all of the figures have distinctive Negroid features. The women are modeled wearing handkerchiefs or short hair and dressed in long skirts. The men are depicted in three ways: dressed in jacket, shirt, and pants (freeman), attired in a simple shirt and pants (laborer), or bare chested and barefoot (slave). Inscribed on the highly polished surface of the table, which resembles a pool of water, are the words: "The Class of 2002 honors the University's unsung founders—the people of color, bond and free—who helped build the Carolina that we cherish today." Surrounding the low-to-the-ground memorial are five seats made from local granite, allowing members of the university community and visitors to sit and contemplate slavery and UNC history, or to use the surface of the monument as a table. Suh sculpted the seats to resemble the rough-hewn stone grave markers of slaves and free persons of color found in the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery, not far from McCorkle Place.²⁶

The Unsung Founders Memorial has had a mixed reception at the University. Critics note the monument conspicuously avoids using the word slavery in its language and argue that the sculpture dehumanizes in sameness, namelessness, miniaturization, objectification, and proximity to the ground the very people it is meant to memorialize, transforming the unnamed into a functioning table and their unmarked gravestones into seats.

I must admit that I personally am profoundly conflicted about the piece. On the one hand, I understand and sympathize with these criticisms levied against the memorial; on the other, I also understand that Suh intentionally subverts the traditional expectations of monumental sculpture and public memorials both in this piece and in his other works. As an artist, Suh certainly makes bold, provocative choices. Rather than portraying the unsung founders through a singular, larger than life, fictional, symbolic hero à la "Silent Sam," an artistic choice more appropriate to nineteenth rather than twenty-first century aesthetics, Suh depicts a collectivity of small figures. Rather than listing the few available names of slaves and free people of color who helped build, maintain, and run the university and who happened by chance to be included somewhere in the historical record, Suh opts to make all of the unsung founders nameless. I

respect that Suh and the selection committee opted for these riskier strategies that do not elide in a romantic or heroic recuperation of the past the real losses still palpable today in the wake of slavery's history at the university specifically and in North Carolina, the United States, and the Americas more broadly. At my most generous moments, I understand that perhaps the most troubling interpretations of Suh's memorial—the sculpture's disturbing silences, its dehumanizations, and its objectifications—are precisely the point and suggest, similarly to Antonio Viego, that certain losses can never be redeemed, that a monument memorializing slavery at UNC-Chapel Hill must necessarily reflect the ugly truths of the past so many would like to forget. Nevertheless, each time I walk by the Unsung Founders Memorial in McCorkle Place and see someone mindlessly eating lunch, smoking a cigarette, or staring into their smartphone seated on one of the stone seats reminiscent of the unmarked graves of slaves in the Old Chapel Hill Cemetery at a table the weight of which crushes these sculpted, nameless forms like Atlas, I cannot help but feel that a violence has been committed anew to the memories and legacies of UNC's unsung founders.

Hurston Hall

Continued demonstrations demanding a plaque in McCorkle Place to contextualize the Confederate Monument's troubling history as a symbol of white supremacy and racial terror are perhaps the strongest sign that the Unsung Founders Memorial has not succeeded in fully or appropriately addressing legacies of slavery at UNC-Chapel Hill. If anything, during the 2014-2015 academic year demonstrations at the Confederate Memorial have been invigorated by the #BlackLivesMatter movement in response to numerous police killings of African Americans and grew bigger than I have ever seen them. The largest demonstration occurred directly outside my classroom as I taught and catalyzed a tense but necessary conversation amongst my students

about the history of slavery at the university, in North Carolina, and in the US, after which several of my students chose to leave class to join the protest.

The discussion of the Confederate Monument this year has further been enriched by a larger conversation about the history of slavery at the university with undergraduate students researching and critiquing the names of various buildings and streets on campus and demanding that the university rename Saunders Hall, a building originally named after a chief organizer of the North Carolina Ku Klux Klan. Students demonstrating at a recent UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustee's meeting even carried a mock up of a historical marker renaming the hall, which they have proposed as the 2015 class gift to the university (Figure 4.7).

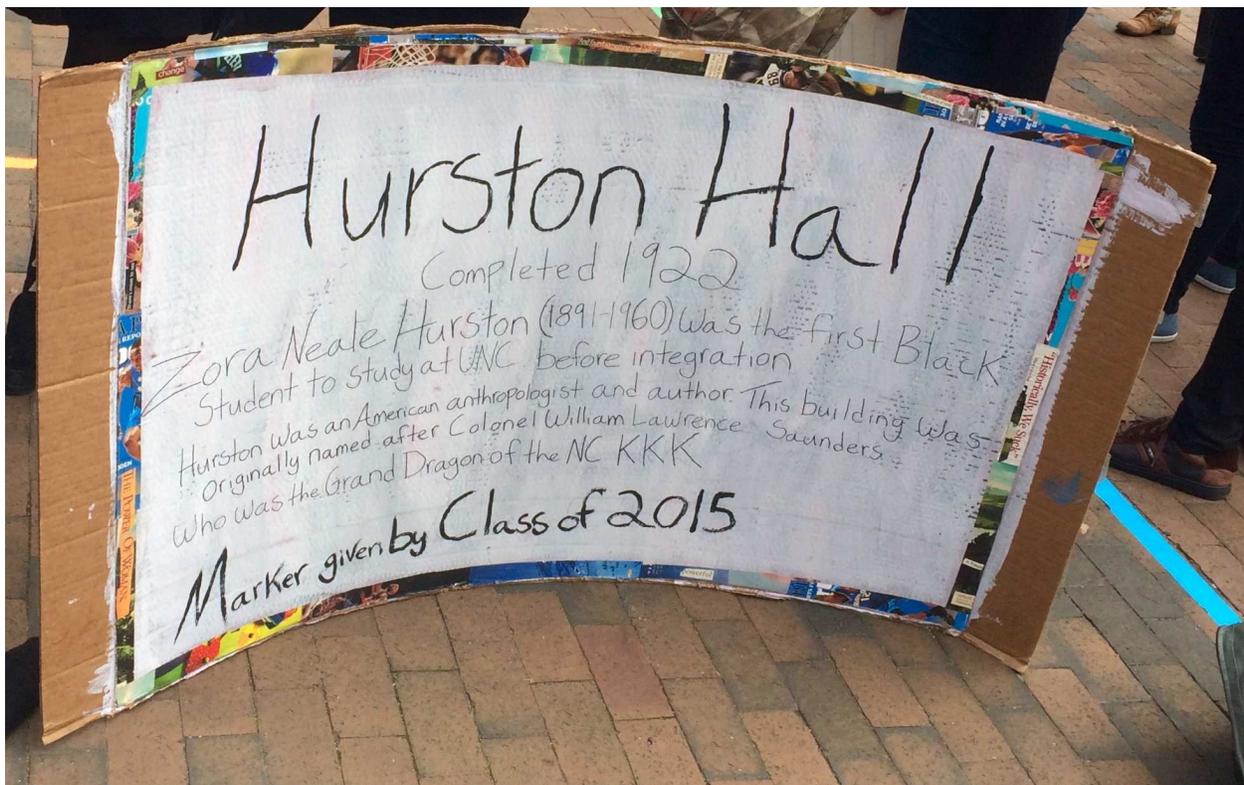


Figure 4.7: "Hurston Hall." March 25, 2015. The Pit, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC.

As the image above shows, students propose the building be renamed Hurston Hall in honor of Zora Neale Hurston, the African American folklorist, anthropologist, and novelist who for a brief

time was an unofficial student at UNC prior to integration and who wrote her most famous novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* while living and researching vodou in Haiti. Renaming Saunders Hall after Hurston would deservingly honor a former UNC student and important American intellectual whose work exemplifies the core values of the university. Similarly to proposals for a plaque contextualizing the history of the Confederate Memorial in McCorkle Place, students have proposed this historical marker be placed outside Hurston Hall to commemorate the building's previous namesake so that uglier aspects of the university's history are not forgotten.

These activists, our students, inspired my research into McCorkle Place, opened my eyes to the rich, sedimented layers of history of this plaza, the historical heart of UNC-Chapel Hill's campus, and made me understand McCorkle Place as a historical hemispheric crossroads of the Americas. In doing so I have found alternative narratives that I believe deserve permanent commemoration on our campus. For example, not far from the Confederate Memorial and Hurston Hall stands the Chapel of the Cross, an Episcopalian church that gave Chapel Hill its very name. In 1977, the queer civil rights activist, lawyer, author, and the first ordained African American woman in the Episcopalian church Pauli Murray became the first woman to give the Eucharist at the Chapel of the Cross. In the nineteenth century, before the Civil War, Murray's mixed-race grandmother Cornelia Smith attended the very same church with Cornelia's aunt, Mary Ruffin Smith. While Mary sat close to the minister, Murray's grandmother Cornelia sat on the balcony, segregated from her own family because she was illegitimate and technically a slave. Cornelia's father Sidney Smith, a UNC alumnus and prominent member of North Carolina's antebellum slave-owning political elite, had raped and impregnated Cornelia's mother Harriet, the Smith family's slave and Mary's personal servant.

After recounting this story and the discovery that her paternal grandfather was actually an emancipated former slave rather than a free person of color in her autobiography *Proud Shoes*, Pauli Murray writes, “It had taken me almost a lifetime to discover that true emancipation lies in the acceptance of the whole past, in deriving strength from all my roots, in facing up to the degradation as well as the dignity of my ancestors.”²⁷ Murray’s words, which still ring true at UNC today, strongly evoke María DeGuzmán’s Anzaldúan ethics of night that recuperate the melancholia of minoritized peoples facing historical losses, especially those considered shameful, as potential sources of strength and motivation in struggles towards social justice. Murray, like Anzaldúa and DeGuzmán, thus provides an empowering example for individuals marginalized and minoritized in multiple, intersectional ways.

Taking my cue from the historical marker students proposed for the newly renamed Hurston Hall, I would propose that this quotation from *Proud Shoes* serve as an integral part of a new historical marker for Silent Sam. Like Murray, UNC-Chapel Hill and North Carolina need to derive strength from all its roots, from recognizing the dignity of those who struggled against slavery and racism as well as the degradation of those perverted by their unjust cruelty, because as Murray’s biography and family tree demonstrate so clearly, the lines between the two have so often been intimately blurred. During their lifetimes, neither Hurston nor Murray were accepted to UNC-Chapel Hill because of race. I can think of perhaps no better way for the university to move forward today than finally to give Zora Neale Hurston and Pauli Murray their much deserved place on campus.

Imagined Crossroads of the Caribbean Borderlands

IRL’s tag in McCorkle Place alongside the Confederate Monument and the Unsung Founders Memorial stages a site-specific contestatory intervention in time and space. The

convoluted temporality of IRL's protest questions dominant historical narratives that underwrite the inevitability of the present and intervenes in a symbolically charged space where diverse peoples, histories, and borders converge. At a crossroads forged in the uneven colonial encounter of the Americas, IRL's critique of the present as a future yet to be redeemed demands a critical reevaluation of history. In its implicit call to return to the past to re-envision the future, IRL's criticism provides the opportunity to un-silence histories that McCorkle Place has yet to commemorate, and in the process IRL's tag helps me imagine a future in which the plaza remembers different stories for different futures such as Zora Neale Hurston's unofficial studies at the university and Pauli Murray's multi-generational familial tragedy she reclaimed and dignified through art, writing, activism, and religious practice.

Yet, McCorkle Place is but one of the Americas' many crossroads, one fractal iteration of New World coloniality in space-time. Many other more famous public spaces, La Plaza de la Revolución in Havana, or Congo Square in New Orleans, for example, and, still other more modest, lesser known places provide countless crossroads, sites of knotted memories for similar site-specific interventions exploring the silenced histories that haunt the Caribbean borderlands. Furthermore, as this dissertation has shown, these crossroads need not be physical; literature, music, and art create virtual and imagined spaces of memory where the dreams, histories, and losses of diverse people interconnect. As I have written this coda and much of this dissertation, for inspiration I have often stared into the crossroads of two pieces of art I have the pleasure of owning, Mario Marzan's *Sinter Method: Dive and Reappear no.1* (Figure 4.8) and Izel Vargas's *Handle on the Past* (Figure 4.9). Both hang in my home; both were created by friends. I first met Mario, now an associate professor in UNC-Chapel Hill's Art Department, as he was finishing a post-doctoral fellowship at UNC and as I was beginning my PhD. Izel was one of Mario's first

MFA students at UNC, but Izel and I did not meet until Mario and I co-curated North Carolina's first group Latina/o art exhibit titled "Necessary Fictions" at Durham's Golden Belt Room 100 Gallery in the summer of 2010. Along with the art of Suzy Bielak, Francis Marquez, and Josue Pelot, "Necessary Fictions" featured four photographs by my dissertation advisor María DeGuzmán, several of Izel's paintings, and a video piece Mario created with Izel's collaboration. Later when I became the first graduate assistant to UNC's Carolina Latina/o Collaborative, Mario's and Izel's work would be among the first artwork the organization featured in its small gallery.

Beyond these fruitful professional connections, my friendships with Mario and Izel helped me connect the Caribbean's diasporas and the Southwest's borderlands in deeply personal, affective ways. As a Cuban-Dominican growing up in Dallas, Texas isolated from other Cuban and Dominican communities and surrounded by diverse peers who most of the time did not know what to make of me, I often felt rootless, as if I was from nowhere and everywhere at once. Mario and Izel's experiences, each in their own unique manner, illuminated and grounded my own. Mario born and raised in Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico, moved with his family to Cleveland, Ohio in his youth, and attended Bowling Green for undergraduate and Carnegie Mellon for his MFA. Izel, born in Alamo, Texas in the Rio Grande Valley on the US-Mexico border, received his BA from Gloria Anzaldúa's alma mater, the University of Texas-Pan American, and completed his MFA in Studio Art at UNC-Chapel Hill at the same time I was finishing my MA in Comparative Literature just across campus. Mario and Izel were among my first professional peers who also happened to be Latinos and friends. Their biographies echoed elements of my family's history both in the Caribbean and in the US-Mexico borderlands, but through Puerto Rico and the Rio Grande Valley they also introduced me to new places. Learning

about Mario and Izel's stories, their struggles, and their art helped me not only better understand my own experiences but also formulate concepts and forge connections between Caribbean Latina/o and Chicana/o experiences that have been key to this dissertation.

More specifically, Mario's and Izel's art resonates with how I read IRL's intervention in McCorkle Place because both of these artists borrow techniques from graffiti to create imagined spaces in which constellations of symbolically loaded images interrogate and problematize ideas of memory, loss, and home. Their art, in terms of its treatment of space, symbolism, and history, functions in a manner similar to that of McCorkle Place and of other public spaces, as crossroads where complex memories and histories intersect and knot. Furthermore, in comparing the work of Mario and Izel, my relation to their art as spectator and our personal relationships to one another as friends create still more layers of complex crossroads where geographical, cultural, and affective connections converge. Certainly the art of each of these artists evoke different origins and spaces. Mario's work conjures the Caribbean while Izel's art echoes the US-Mexico borderlands. Yet the connections made through their personal relationships as former mentor and student and now colleagues and friends as well as their shared affinities expressed in their work exemplify the types of encounters and strategic alliances between Puerto Ricans and Chicana/os that led to the historical emergence of US Latina/o Studies and to the re-articulation of the Caribbean as borderlands, the former phenomenon being one this dissertation has particularly strived both to un-silence and to enact. Finally their art has not just decorated my home; it has served as meditative mirrors in which I have contemplated key theoretical quandaries and research questions, inspiring and empowering this project, and modeling creative solutions and generative fields of possibility that helped me imagine Latina/o Studies scholarship in new ways.

Sinter Method: Dive and Reappear no.1 (Figure 4.8) is one example from multiple series of abstract pieces working through a similar iconography that Mario Marzan began creating on twenty-four inch by forty-eight inch wooden paneled boxes in 2007.



Figure 4.8: *Sinter Method: Dive and Reappear no.1*. by Mario Marzan. Acrylic, Gouache, Ink & Graphite on Panel, 2009. Image used with the artist's permission.

“Sinter method” refers to the geological process by which solids become fused through heat and pressure without melting. Marzan selected this piece for the first art exhibit at the Carolina Latina/o Collaborate in its inaugural year in the fall of 2009. It was also exhibited in the winter of 2011 at the Rogue Community College’s Wiseman Gallery as part of an exhibit that explored environmental crises related to water such as the increasingly polluted oceans and waterways, the melting polar ice caps, the rising sea levels, and the growing severity of hurricanes and typhoons due to climate change.

In interviews and conversations Marzan has described the color palette he uses in his art as profoundly Caribbean, as heavily influenced by the brilliant pastel hues common to both the architectural and natural environs of Puerto Rico. Marzan’s reference to buildings and nature as

inspiration for color in his art holds true in terms of iconography as well. As can be observed above, the piece layers disjointed images evocative of natural and architectural forms against an empty space in muted beige. The green gaseous clouds of the background in the top right of the piece parallel the chiaroscuro storm clouds in its top left, while three lightning-like jagged rays—one in black graphite, another in a thicker brown gouache, and a third in an even thicker, yet less opaque dripping orange spray paint—traverse the painting horizontally creating a multilayered crooked horizon that separates the piece’s upper and lower sections like the dark silhouettes of mountains at night. Yet along that horizon where one might expect land, houses tumble in the bright spume of a crashing electric blue tsunami-like wave surging from below. A hurricane has inundated terra firma and overturned the order of things. In the foreground, a cloud of coral pink bubbles reminiscent of fish roe floats out of frame nonplussed by the destruction below and echoes the reef-like interlinked circles of dark maroon and turquoise hidden behind the anarchy.

Though highly abstracted in *Sinter Method: Dive and Reappear no. 1*, the very real, very concrete phenomenon of hurricane depicted in the painting often serves as master metaphor for loss, migration, and diaspora during this period of Marzan’s artistic production. In an “Artist Statement” from 2011, Marzan writes:

My work examines hurricanes and their paths as means by which to interpret cultures from the Caribbean, Gulf Basin and US South. As areas affected by similar storm systems, these regions may resultantly share environmental, historical and cultural determinants, raising the question: What patterns emerge when we examine a broader region across national or linguistic borders? While such an approach may be applied to multiple sites, my work focuses on the island of Puerto Rico, where I was born and spent most of my childhood. This site provides an entry point from which to consider similarly affected regions and populations in the US and the fluid boundaries between these geographical areas.

Responding to the constantly shifting landscape and architecture of the island of Puerto Rico, my work depicts alternative realities, invented and inspired by the cycles of deconstruction and reconstruction produced by storms and hurricanes and affecting coastal regions. My work is a response to the changing landscapes of the area, suggesting the storm’s power to alter not just the physical

terrain, but also individual psyches and the broader cultures of such affected regions.²⁸

The overwhelming reality of the hurricane, its frightening potential to destroy, to wreak havoc, and to upend the order of the world along paths flowing transnationally from the tropics north, provides Marzan a powerful, symbolically charged, regionally specific, and historically rich site-specific set of imagery that elegantly evokes historical losses strongly engrained in the ecology, migratory patterns, and diasporas of Puerto Rico. Though *Sinter Method: Dive and Reappear no. 1* is my favorite piece of its period, I must admit the piece is but one example of many beautiful paintings in a similar style that Marzan produced at the time, as if he needed to repetitively recreate the hurricane's cycles of deconstruction and reconstruction, not to find the best expression of this imagery and symbolism in a singular, masterful image, but to work through all the possible iterations of the images and meanings of the metaphors. In Marzan's art, the hurricane itself became the crossroads.

Working in a pastel color palette similar to Marzan's but uncharacteristic of Izel Vargas's generally darker oeuvre, Vargas's *Handle on the Past* (Figure 4.8) creates a fragmented space populated by hermetic, polysemic iconography pulled from South Texas's landscape and set against the backdrop of the US-Mexico borderlands' big skies. Created on a recycled seventy-two inch by thirty-six inch piece of recycled vinyl material used for indoor/outdoor signage, the piece hangs loosely with billowing folds on wide-eyed industrial grommets designed to accommodate large nails, screws, or hooks. The title references lyrics from the Baltimore-based band Beach House's song "Gila" off their album *Devotion* (2008): "Sure, you've got a handle on the past. It's why you keep your little lovers in your lap." The lines critique the motives of an alienated interlocutor who controls perceptions of the past for personal gain and speak to the

painting's interrogation of memory, history, and their (ab)uses. Featured both in the "Necessary Fictions" exhibit in Durham, North Carolina in the summer of 2010 and at the Carolina Latina/o Collaborative at UNC-Chapel Hill in the fall of 2010, *Handle on the Past*, like Marzan's *Sinter Method: Dive and Reappear no. 1*, works with recurring symbols the artist explores across multiple works.



Figure 4.9: *A Handle on the Past* by Izel Vargas. Acrylic, Collage on Banner, 2009.
Image used with the artist's permission.

At the center of the painting a chart drawn in graphite of the exposed chambers of a human heart reflexively set within a wooden frame re-casts the hallowed iconography of the Devotion of the Sacred Heart in the profane imagery of medical textbooks. Like a crossroads, the entire cast of icons surrounding the work's symbolic and spatial center springs forth from this scientific, precise wound, the carefully dissected ventricles of this heart that is at once sacred and profane, earnest and self-aware. This centrality of the open heart in the painting echoes Anzaldúa's formulation of the border as open wound. On each side of the central, vertical axis that intersects the heart and splits the work in two like a border, an assemblage of symbolically

loaded images hangs together suspended. Across this vertical central axis, crossing this border, clouds float freely wherever the winds blows above, while Monarch butterflies, famous for their annual migration from Mexico to Canada and facing ever-growing risks of extinction, peak out from a palimpsestic shred, dead and pinned to the past below. Other images, text, and the general movement of the painting also connect its left and right halves. A staircase on the top left of the piece leads down through one constellation of symbols to another stairway leading up through the other collection of images on the right. These staircases form a wheel, a circle, or a cycle around the wounded, beating heart at the painting's center. Similarly, the words "authentic" and "hielo," with their concave and convex text paths mirror one another, in English and in Spanish, forming an undulating wave, another, different sort of cycle as well.

A menacingly skeletal anthropomorphic tooth crowned with ghostly rooted tree trunks dominates the right half of *A Handle on the Past*. Though Vargas draws the imagery of the tooth and of the frosty word "hielo" from signage common south of the US-Mexico border, here logos advertising a dentist's services and ice for sale, both of these images also stand in for darker preoccupations. "Hielo," ice, evokes the acronym ICE, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, while the macabre details, the rib cage and empty eye sockets, overlaid onto the cartoonish tooth associate the figure with death and the all-too-common practice of resorting to dental records to identify the bodies of dead migrants and murdered women found along the US-Mexico border. To the left of the heart at the painting's center, the stylized text "authentic" recalls again the rhetoric of advertisements hawking Tex-Mex cuisine but also the gothic font scripts tattooed into flesh, silkscreened onto clothing, and painted onto cars, marking these surfaces as reflections of "authentic" identities whether Tejana/o, Hispana/o, Chicana/o, Latina/o, pocha/o, chola/o, etc. The word "authentic" joins two arcs of white stars to frame in a

semi-circle a pair of hands that echo those of Jesus from typical iconography of the Devotion of the Sacred Heart (Figure 4.10).



Figure 4.10: “Sacred Heart of Jesus Statue, Church of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.”
Columbus, OH, 10 October 2014. Photograph by Wikimedia user Nheyob. Licensed under Creative Commons.

Fragmented, disembodied, and decentered, one hand points to the heavens while the other to where Jesus’s wounded, open heart would normally be. The assemblage of the script, stars, and hands float below a graphite drawing of an eye framed within a orange arrow pointing up, an image reminiscent of the all seeing eye on the US one dollar bill, and above a minimalist pink house, a recurring figure in Vargas’s work pulled from the lyrics of rock musician John Cougar Mellencamp’s hit song “Pink Houses” from the 1983 album *Uh-Huh*. The song’s verses describe a variety of Americans of humble means, recreating in miniature the socioeconomic hierarchical reality of the US in racialized and gendered terms—“a black man with a black cat living in a black neighborhood,” “a woman in the kitchen cleaning up the evening slop,” and “a young man in a t-shirt listening to a Rock and Roll station”— before ripping into its chorus:

Oh but, ain't that America for you and me.
Ain't that America, something to see, baby.
Ain't that America, home of the free, yeah.
Little pink houses for you and me.

If the chorus pinpoints the quaint, naïve small-minded materialism at the heart of the American dream, the song's final verse finally reaching the upper echelons of the US economy adds tourism and substance abuse to its critique of American consumer culture describing capitalism's "winners and losers" working tirelessly in skyscrapers to pay for a "vacation down at the Gulf of Mexico" and for the "thrills, the bills, the pills that kill." Yet in a manner similar to how Ronald Reagan's 1984 presidential campaign co-opted Bruce Springsteen's 1984 hit "Born in the USA" despite Springsteen's ironic use of jingoistic nationalism in the chorus only as ironic counterpoint to the verses' scathing criticisms of the US war in Vietnam and subsequent abandonment of Vietnam veterans, the subtleties of Mellencamp's "Pink Houses" seems largely lost on US audiences and politicians. In the 2008 presidential campaign, North Carolina native John Edwards ran on a platform of fighting poverty and used "Pink Houses" as his theme. Mellencamp also performed the song as part of President Barack Obama's inaugural festivities in Washington, DC in 2009.

Through its two intertwined imagistic assemblages visually and topologically evocative of a yin and yang, *A Handle on the Past* presents a critique of the inextricable interconnectedness of capitalism and human migration. On the left Vargas places images associated with the US, English, the accumulation of wealth, and the American dream set against a bright, clear blue sky; on the right, he places images associated with Mexico, Spanish, criminalization, and death set against a dark, murky backdrop. Yet the painting is not a simple binary opposition; as one's eye follows the piece's cyclical motion around the open, wounded heart at its center, the gaze grazes symbolic snapshots of what might be lost—and gained—crossing the US-Mexico border: life,

liberty, identity, wealth... Izel Vargas's *A Hold on the Past* revolves around these site specific losses, this wounded heart at the crossroads of the Americas, these inverted doppelgangers reflected across the "open wound" of the US-Mexico border.

Under Erzulie, *Sounds of the South*

On Sunday, September 19, 2010, my partner Meagan and I attended a concert at the Hayti Heritage Center in Durham, North Carolina. Commissioned by Duke Performances, the event was part of an ambitious and unique project celebrating local and regional histories of the US South through music. Over three days, Duke Performances recorded three live performances led by local experimental folk trio Megafaun who invited ten friends and fellow musicians from Wisconsin, New York, and Virginia to reinterpret Alan Lomax's famous collection of field recordings *Sounds of the South*. The event proved profoundly resonant for both my partner and for me, bringing us both to tears as it wove loose threads common to both our lives together in a special place, on hallowed ground, at a crossroads where together we faced through music the good, the bad, the beautiful, and the ugly of the US South.

Music has always been important to me and proved a decisive factor in my decision to move to North Carolina. When I moved from Austin, Texas to Chapel Hill, North Carolina in 2004 to begin my Masters degree in the Program in Comparative Literature at UNC-Chapel Hill, the opportunity to make music was a key motivation. Two years earlier, one of my closest friends David Karsten Daniels had joined two of his classmates from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Daniel Hart and Alex Lazara, in a scheme to move to North Carolina's Triangle to try to make it as professional musicians. The three had carefully considered different markets and US tour routes and chosen North Carolina as a relatively inexpensive area in close proximity to numerous university towns as well as most major cities on the US eastern seaboard.

Once in Durham, David, Daniel, and Alex joined Duke Divinity School graduate student Perry Wright to form the independent record label and arts collective Bu Hanan Records. As I finished my undergraduate work at University of Texas at Austin and applied to graduate schools, these friends invited me to join them in North Carolina and offered to help record, release, and promote my music. The combination of UNC-Chapel Hill and Bu Hanan Records presented as ideal of an arrangement as possible for me at that moment in my life.

Through my involvement with Bu Hanan, and with the help of many people like Lara Khalil, Sara Morris, Dylan Thurston, David Crawford, Joshua Snyder, Eric Haugen, and Erin Wright, whose collective labor made everything we accomplished together possible, I achieved many personal goals I had set for myself as a musician. We performed in almost every state in the US and in much of Canada. We played sold out shows in New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, and our home base, Chapel Hill. We signed a record deal with a well-respected international label, Fat Cat Records, and I returned to Austin, Texas to play a packed South by Southwest showcase. Yet as is often the case in collective creative endeavors, the vicissitudes of life and the changing needs of individuals eventually eroded the connections that bound the collective until it no longer made sense to continue together. We experienced that awkward, group break up that musicians in bands know all too well as David and Daniel returned separately to Dallas, Texas, Alex accompanied his partner to Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Perry and I remained in the Triangle but grew increasingly invested in other projects. While I still make music privately, the failure of that collective tempered my relationship to creating music with a bittersweet reticence previously not present, and after an onstage panic attack in 2009, I indefinitely withdrew from performing publicly.

Despite the dissolution of Bu Hanan Records and my decision to put my music on hold, my time performing still connects me to a community of musicians in North Carolina, and going to see *Sounds of the South* at Hayti activated a series of memories about my connections with the musicians performing in the concert. Megafaun, the band that organized the concert was formed out of the breakup of a prior band, DeYarmond Edison, which I first discovered at a Fourth of July barbecue hosted in a musician's backyard in Raleigh in 2005. I had just finished a set with David's band in a beautifully-lit, old garage with an enormous US flag as the stage's backdrop when the host introduced me to someone named Justin and said his band would be playing next. The quartet—Joe Westerlund, Justin Vernon, and brothers Phil and Brad Cook—had recently moved from Eau Claire, Wisconsin to Raleigh, North Carolina and begun a weekly residency at the now defunct Bickett Art Gallery honing a repertoire of early folk, country, and blues music featuring four part harmony, banjo, guitar, standup bass, piano, and a minimal trap kit for percussion. Despite playing standards at that barbecue, they blew the audience of local musicians and artists away providing the perfect conclusion to a lovely evening. There was something special about their approach to this well-worn material that in the wrong hands could be tired or rote; they did not play perfectly, but rather breathed life with all its imperfections into these old songs, hearing and feeling and communicating the songs from way back, touching that ineffable thing that made the songs matter to previous generations that sang them. They made the music live again.

The next year, in 2006, Justin Vernon moved back to Wisconsin and began a solo project named Bon Iver while the remaining three musicians from DeYarmond Edison, Phil and Brad Cook, and Joe Westerlund formed the band Megafaun in Durham. Under the moniker Bon Iver, Vernon would release two hit records and collaborate with Kanye West, the Blind Boys of

Alabama, and others before eventually winning a Grammy for best new artist in 2012. Despite the end of DeYarmond Edison, the band's former members remained friends, and in 2010, Megafaun reunited with Justin Vernon to perform *Sounds of the South* at Hayti. Megafaun also enlisted the talents of Brooklyn-based singer songwriter Sharon Van Etten and an experimental eight-piece jazz band from Richmond, Virginia led by Mathew E. White named Fight the Big Bull. While Van Etten crafts stark folk songs with haunting vocals and pared down guitars, Fight the Big Bull explores the sounds of Southern street jazz inspired by but far from New Orleans. At that time I had never heard of Sharon Van Etten, but while I was still performing, we had played a show in Chapel Hill with Fight the Big Bull, and after David Karsten Daniels returned to Dallas, he recorded his album *I Mean to Live Here Still* with Fight the Big Bull as his backing band.

Because of this personal history linking me to the performers, I was both excited and nervous to see old acquaintances perform Alan Lomax's *Sounds of the South* at the Hayti Heritage Center. In the wake of the collapse of Bu Hanan Records and my decision to take an indefinite hiatus as a musician, feelings of shame and embarrassment had become closely associated with anything related to musical performance. Nagging questions made attending local concerts unappealing. Would I see musicians or journalists I knew? Would they ask me about my music or my former collaborators? Or worse perhaps, would no one even remember me? Though it is difficult to admit, these petty insecurities haunted me. Now I understand they were the manifestation of a loss inexplicable at the time because the types of relationships formed between musicians who tour, perform, and record together are intense, unique, and not easily verbalized through common narratives or vocabularies used to describe friendship, romance, family, and profession. Bandmates and musical collaborators can have relationships at

the interstices of these categories. I had lost a family of sorts, but also business partners and creative interlocutors with whom I shared intimate, often non-verbal insights, a unique community that helped me realize myself more fully as a musician and as a human being, special relationships approaching levels of trust, collaboration, and mutual dependence that made us at once better and stronger together and yet vulnerable to one another. These losses were at the heart of my insecurities as I walked into the Hayti Heritage Center with my partner Meagan.

The Hayti Heritage Center, formerly St. Joseph's African Methodist Episcopal church, stands at the heart of the historical Hayti district, an African American community founded by emancipated slaves and free people of color who migrated to Durham, North Carolina to work in the booming tobacco industry at the end of the Civil War. At its height of economic vibrancy, Booker T. Washington famously described the Hayti district as "Black Wall Street." St. Joseph's was erected in 1891, a century after the Haitian Revolution began, and replaced a series of less permanent structures. Donations from the church's congregation and local white philanthropists, most notably tobacco magnate Washington Duke, funded the building's construction. In thanks for his philanthropy, Washington Duke's crystalline white image still looks out over the church pews from his perch within the building's largest stain glass window. Though Hayti is pronounced with a long "I" in its second syllable and adopts an earlier orthography now no longer used for the first independent Caribbean nation, this community's name nevertheless pays homage to Haiti and the emancipation Haitians won for themselves and for us all, a fact underlined by the *veve* of Erzulie Freda that adorns the top of the Hayti Heritage Center. During that concert, there, under the crossroads of Erzulie Freda, the Haitian *lwa* of love, Meagan and I shared a special moment together. She from Arkansas and I from Texas, but there, at that crossroads, in that music, our common experiences as Southerners and my past as a musician

converged in songs and histories of the US South and of the Global South, of the Hayti district and of Haiti. There, under the crossroads of Erzulie Freda, the Haitian *lwa* of love, Meagan and I shared a transformative connection to one another as borders between us fell away and a new realm of possibilities, another fractal iteration of the Caribbean borderlands came into focus, un-silenced in song, in the *Sounds of the South*.

ENDNOTES: CODA

¹ Martínez, D., Reineke, R. C., Rubio-Goldsmith, R., Anderson, B. E., Hess, G. L., Parks, B. O. “A Continued Humanitarian Crisis at the Border: Undocumented Border Crosser Deaths Recorded by the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner, 1990-2012,” 11.

² Guterres, Antonio. “High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, Protection at Sea. Opening remarks by Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.”

³ Quoted in Ater, Renée. “The Challenge of Memorializing Slavery in North Carolina: The Unsong Founders Memorial and the North Carolina Freedom Project,” 141.

⁴ Nora, Pierre. “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoires*,” 19.

⁵ Rothberg, M., Sanyal, D., & Silverman, M. “Editors’ Note: *Noeuds de mémoire*—Multidirectional Memory in Postwar French and Francophone Culture,” 2.

⁶ Rothberg, Michael. “Between Memory and Memory: From *Lieux de mémoire* to *Noeuds de mémoire*,” 7.

⁷ Viego, Antonio. *Dead Subjects: Towards a Politics of Loss in Latino Studies*, 6; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁸ DeGuzmán, María. “Darkness, My Night: The Philosophical Challenge of Gloria Anzaldúa’s Aesthetics of Night,” 215; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

⁹ Grossman, Eric. Guitarist and backing vocalist of the Brokedowns. Email, 24 February 2015.

¹⁰ Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, 1.

¹¹ My advisor María DeGuzmán shared this insightful observation while reading an earlier draft of this coda.

¹² Komunyakaa, Yusef. “Crossroads,” 5.

¹³ “McCorkle Place,” accessed 16 April 2015.

http://gradschool.unc.edu/funding/gradschool/weiss/interesting_place/landmarks/mccorkle.html

¹⁴ “Joseph Caldwell Monument,” accessed 15 April 2015.

http://museum.unc.edu/exhibits/public_art/caldwell_monument/

¹⁵ Del Valle Escalante, Emilio. Email, 10 May 2013.

¹⁶ “Catawba today,” accessed 10 March 2015. <http://catawbaindian.net/about-us/catawba-today/>

¹⁷ “Homeland Preservation Project,” accessed 10 March, 2015. <http://www.obsn.org/homeland-preservation-project>

¹⁸ “Old East, ca. 1797. Pen and ink sketch by John Pettigrew,” accessed 12 March, 2015. <http://museum.unc.edu/exhibits/slavery/old-east-ca-1797-pen-and-ink-sketch-by-john-pett-1/>

¹⁹ Carr, Julian. “Unveiling of Confederate Monument at University,” Scan 108; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

²⁰ Burns, Ken. “The Universe of Battle,” *The Civil War*. McPherson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 862. Litwack, Leon F. *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*, 489.

²¹ Carr, Julian. “Unveiling of Confederate Monument at University,” Scans 104-105.

²² Equal Justice Initiative. “Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror,” 4; hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

²³ US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. *Investigation of Ferguson Police Department*, 2.

²⁴ Equal Justice Initiative. *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*. 5.

²⁵ Cornell, W., Arndt, J., Posti, W., Gardiner, P. “Flags on ‘Silent Sam’ Were Racism Symbols,” *Daily Tar Heel*, 11 April 1968, 3.

²⁶ Ater, Renée. “The Challenge of Memorializing Slavery in North Carolina: The Unsung Founders Memorial and the North Carolina Freedom Monument Project,” 146.

²⁷ Murray, Pauli. *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family*, 62.

²⁸ Marzan, Mario. “Artist Statement,” accessed 15 April 2015. http://www.drawingcenter.org/viewingprogram/share_portfolio.cfm?pf=1633

REFERENCES

- Abramovitz, Janet N. *Unnatural Disasters*. Washington, DC: Worldwatch Institute, 2001. Print.
- Accilien, Cecile & François, Anne. "Islands without Borders." *Reimagining the Caribbean : Conversations Among the Creole, English, French, and Spanish Caribbean*. Ed. Sandra Messinger Cypess. Lanham, MD : Lexington Books, 2014. Print.
- Alcàzar, Joan del & Lopez Rivero, Sergio. *De compañero a contrarrevolucionario : La Revolución cubana y el cine de Tomás Gutiérrez Alea*. Valencia: Universitat de València, 2009. Print.
- Alea, Tomás Gutiérrez, dir. *Memorias del subdesarrollo*. Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográfica, 1968. Film.
- Alexandre, Sandy & Howard, Ravi. "My Turn in the Fire: A Conversation with Edwidge Danticat." *Transition: An International Review*. 12.3 (2002): 110-128. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Allen, Jafari S. *¡Venceremos?: The Erotics of Black Self-making in Cuba*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Print.
- Alvarez, Julia. "Gloria Anzaldúa, que en paz descanse." *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Gloria Anzaldúa. 3rd ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007. Print.
- Alvarez, Julia. *A Wedding in Haiti: The Story of a Friendship*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2012. Print.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. "El Mundo Zurdo." *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Eds. Gloria Anzaldúa & Cherríe Moraga. 2nd ed. New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983. Web. 5 May 2015.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. "now let us shift...the path of conocimiento...inner work, public acts." *this bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation*. Eds. Gloria Anzaldúa & AnaLouise Keating. New York: Routledge, 2002. 540-78.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 3rd ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007. Print.
- Aparicio, Frances R. "Latino Cultural Studies." *Critical Latin American and Latino Studies*. Ed. Juan Poblete. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. 3-31. Print.
- Ater, Renée. "The Challenge of Memorializing Slavery in North Carolina: The Unsung Founders Memorial and the North Carolina Freedom Project." *Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space*. Ed. Ana Lucia Araujo. New York: Routledge, 2012. 141-156. Print.

- Baker, Geoffrey. *Buena Vista in the Club: Rap, Reggaetón, and Revolution in Havana*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Print.
- Baur, John E. "International Repercussion of the Haitian Revolution." *The Americas* 26.4 (1970): 394-418. Web. 16 April 2015.
- Bender, Thomas. "Ideas & Trends: The Age of Revolution; Founding Fathers Dreamed of Uprisings, Except in Haiti." *New York Times* 1 July 2001. Web. 16 April 2015.
- Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. "13 – The nineteenth century Spanish American novel." *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*. Ed. Roberto González Echevarría and Enrique Pupo-Walker. Vol. 1. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Print.
- Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. 2nd ed. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996. Print.
- Berger, James. *After the End: Representations of Post-apocalypse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999. Print.
- Bérubé, Michael. "Public Academy." *The New Yorker*. 9 Jan. 1995: 73-80. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Bosch, Juan. *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro: El Caribe, frontera imperial*. Ciudad de La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1981. Print.
- Bould, Mark. "The Ships Landed Long Ago: Afrofuturism and Black SF." *Science Fiction Studies*. 34.2 (2007): 177-186. Web. 9 May 2012. □
- Boynton, Robert S. "The New Intellectuals." *Atlantic Monthly*. March 1995: 53-70. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Buck-Morss, Susan. *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009. Print.
- "The Universe of Battle." *The Civil War*. Dir. Ken Burns. PBS, 1990. Web. 12 April 2015.
- Camarota, Steven A. "Fact Sheet of Haitian Immigrants in the United States." Center for Immigration Studies. Jan. 2015. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Campos Johnson, Adriana Michèle. "La Peregrinación de Bayoán: Writing (and Failing) in the House of Pilgrims." *Chasqui*. 30.1 (2001): 64-80. Web. 12 May 2012.
- Carr, Julian Shakespeare. "Unveiling of Confederate Monument at University. June 2, 1913." *Julian Shakespeare Carr Papers*. Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Folder 26, Scans 93-112. Web. 12 February 2015.

- “Catawba Today.” *Catawba Indian Nation*. Catawba Nation, n.d. Web. 10 March 2015.
- Cepeda, María Elena. “‘Columbus Effect(s)’: Chronology and Crossover in the Latin(o) Music ‘Boom.’” *Discourse*. 23.1 (2001): 63-81. Web. 7 June 2015.
- Chaar-Pérez, Khalil. “‘A Revolution of Love’: Ramón Emeterio Betances, Anténor Firmin, and Affective Communities in the Caribbean.” *The Global South*. 7.2 (2013): 11-36. Web. 10 June 2015. □
- Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage, 1991. E-pub.
- Cornell, W., Arndt, J., Posti, W., Gardiner, P. “Flags on ‘Silent Sam’ Were Racism Symbols.” *Daily Tar Heel*. 11 April 1968: 3. Web. 12 March 2015.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum*. 1989: 139–168.
- Cruz, Angie. *Let It Rain Coffee*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005. Print.
- Cruz Soto, Marie. *Inhabiting Isla Nena, 1514-2003: Island Narrations, Imperial Dramas And Vieques, Puerto Rico*. Dissertation, University of Michigan. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI, 2008.
- Danielson, Marivel T. *Homecoming Queers: Desire and Difference in Chicana Latina Cultural Production*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2009. Print.
- Danticat, Edwidge. *Krik? Krak!* New York: Vintage Books, 1996. Print.
- Danticat, Edwidge. *The Farming of Bones*. New York: Soho Press, 1998. Print.
- Danticat, Edwidge & Díaz, Junot. “The Dominican Republic’s War on Haitian Workers.” *New York Times*. 20 November 1999. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Danticat, Edwidge & Díaz, Junot. “Junot Díaz.” *Bomba*. 101 (2007): 89-90, 92-95. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Dash, J. *Culture and Customs of Haiti*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001. Print.
- Dash, J. Michael. “Nineteenth-Century Haiti and the Archipelago of the Americas: Anténor Firmin's Letters from St. Thomas.” *Research in African Letters*. 35.2 (2004): 44-53. Web. 12 May 2012.
- Dayan, Joan. *Haiti, History, and the Gods*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995. Print.

- Decena, Carlos Ulises. *Tacit Subjects: Belonging and Same-Sex Desire Among Dominican Immigrant Men*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Print.
- DeGuzmán, María. "Darkness, My Night: The Philosophical Challenge of Gloria Anzaldúa's Aesthetics of Night." *Bridging: How Gloria Anzaldúa's Life and Work Transformed Our Own*. Eds. AnaLouise Keating & Gloria González-Lopez. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011. 210-217. Print.
- DeGuzmán, María. *Buenas Noches, American Culture: Latina/o Aesthetics of Night*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012. Print.
- Derby, Lauren Hutchinson. "Haitians, Magic, and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900 to 1937." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 36.3 (1994): 488-526. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Dery, Mark. "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose." *South Atlantic Quarterly*. 92 (1993): 735-78. Print.
- Dessalines, Jean-Jacques. "Liberty or Death. Proclamation. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Governor General, to the People of Hayti." *Balance and Columbian Repository*. 19 June 1804. Web. 22 April 2015.
- Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2007. Print.
- Díaz, Junot. "Apocalypse: What Disasters Reveal." *Boston Review*. 1 May 2011. Web. 4 Feb. 2012.
- Drezner, Daniel W. "Public Intellectual 2.0." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 55.12 (2008): n/a. Web. 16 May 2015.
- Dubois, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004. Print.
- "Earthquakes with 1,000 or More Deaths 1900-2014." US Geological Survey. n.d. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Escobar, Arturo. "Beyond the Third World: Imperial Globality, Global Coloniality and Anti-Globalisation Social Movements." *Third World Quarterly*. 25.1 (2004): 207-230. Web. 16 April 2015.
- Ette, Ottmar. "Islands, Borders and Vectors: The Fractal World of the Caribbean." *Caribbean Interfaces*. Ed. Lieven d'Hulst. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2007. 109-151. Print.
- Equal Justice Initiative. *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*. 2015.

- Fanon, Frantz. *Les Damnés De La Terre*. Paris: Gallimard, 1991. Print.
- Ferrer, Ada. *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2014. Print.
- Fick, Carolyn E. *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*. 1st ed. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990. Print.
- Figuroa, Víctor. "Between Africa and Puerto Rico: Haiti and Lyric Self-Fashioning in the Poetry of Luis Palés Matos." *Latin American Literary Review*. 35.70 (2007): 74-87. Web. 13 June 2015.
- Fischer, Sibylle. *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. Print.
- Fumagalli, María Cristina. "'Isla Abierta' or 'Isla Cerrada'?: Karmadavis's Pre- and Post-Earthquake Hispaniola." *Bulletin of Latin American Research*. 32.4 (2013): 421-437. Web. 12 May 2015.
- García, David F. *Arsenio Rodríguez and the Transnational Flows of Latin Popular Music*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006. Print.
- García Peña, Lorgia. "Un-bordering Hispaniola: □ David Pérez's Performance Actions of Haitian- Dominican Solidarity." *Afro-Hispanic Review*. 32.2 (2013): 57-70. Web. 12 May 2015.
- Geggus, David Patrick. *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002. Print.
- Gelpi, Juan G. "Ana Lydia Vega: ante el debate de la cultura nacional de Puerto Rico." *Revista Chilena de Literatura*. 42 (1993): 95-99. Web. 12 June 2015.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993. Print.
- Glover, Kaiama L. *Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Postcolonial Canon*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010. Print.
- González, José Luis. *Puerto Rico: The Four-Storeyed Country*. Trans. Gerald Guinness. New York, NY: Marcus Wiener Publishing, 1993. Print.
- González Pérez, Aníbal. "Ballad of the Two Poets: Nicolás Guillén and Luis Palés Matos." *Callaloo*. 31 (1987): 285-301. Web. 10 June 2015.
- Grieco, Elizabeth. "The Dominican Population in the United States: Growth and Distribution." Migration Policy Institute. Sept. 2014. Web. 15 May 2015.

- Guterres, Antonio. "High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, Protection at Sea. Opening remarks by Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees." United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 10 Dec. 2014. Web. 16 April 2015.
- "Homeland Preservation Project." *The Voice of the Occaneechi Nation*. Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation, n.d. Web. 10 March, 2015.
- Hutcheon, Linda. "Postmodern Paratextuality and History." *Texte*. 5 (1986): 301-312. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Hutton, Clinton A. *The Logic & Historic Significance of the Haitian Revolution & The Cosmological Roots of Haitian Freedom*. Kingston, Jamaica: Arawak, 2005. Print.
- "Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department."
- James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. 2nd ed., rev. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. Print.
- Johnson, Sara E. *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. Print.
- "Joseph Caldwell Monument." *A Virtual Museum of University History*. University Library and Center for the Study of the American South at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, n.d. Web. 15 April 2015.
- "Junot Díaz reads Edwidge Danticat." Narr. Deborah Treisman. *New Yorker Fiction Podcast*. *New Yorker*. 15 Dec. 2009. Web. 15 May 2015.
- "Junot Díaz reads How to Date a Brown Girl (Black Girl, White Girl, or Halfie)." Narr. Deborah Treisman. *New Yorker Out Loud Podcast*. *New Yorker*. 2 June 2007. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Knabb, Richard D., Brown, Daniel P., & Rhome, Jamie R. "Tropical Cyclone Report Hurricane Katrina." National Hurricane Center. 20 Dec. 2005. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Knabb, Richard D., Brown, Daniel P., & Rhome, Jamie R. "Tropical Cyclone Report Hurricane Rita." National Hurricane Center. 17 March. 2005. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Komunyakaa, Yusef. "Crossroads." *Ploughshares*. 23.1 (1997): 5-6. Web. 16 April 18, 2015.
- La Fountain-Stokes, Lawrence M. *Queer Ricans : Cultures and Sexualities in the Diaspora*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009. Print.
- Litwack, Leon F. *Been in the Storm so Long : the Aftermath of Slavery*. New York, NY: Knopf, 1979. Print.

- Lopez, Mark Hugo, González-Barrera, Ana & Cuddington, Danielle. "Diverse Origins: The Nation's 14 Largest Hispanic-Origin Groups." Pew Research Center, 19 June 2013. Web. May 2015.
- Lorde, Audre Geraldine. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984. 110-113. Web. 26 April 2015.
- Lyons, Bonnie & Danticat, Edwidge. "An Interview with Edwidge Danticat." 44.2 (2003): 183-198. Web. 15 May 2015.
- "Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror." Montgomery, AL: Equal Justice Initiative, 2015. Print.
- Mandelbrot, Benoit B. *Fractals : Form, Chance and Dimension*. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1977. Print.
- Mártinez, D., Reineke, R. C., Rubio-Goldsmith, R., Anderson, B. E., Hess, G. L., & Parks, B. O. "A Continued Humanitarian Crisis at the Border: Undocumented Border Crosser Deaths Recorded by the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner, 1990-2012." *The Binational Immigration Institute*. University of Arizona, June 2013. Web. 16 April 2015.
- Matibag, Eugenio. *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint: Nation, State, and Race on Hispaniola*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Print.
- Matthewson, Tim. "Jefferson and the Nonrecognition of Haiti." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*. 140.1 (1996): 22-48. Web. 16 April 2015.
- Matus, Jill. *Toni Morrison*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998. Print.
- Marzan, Mario. "Artist Statement." *Artist Registry*. The Drawing Center, 23 Dec 2010. Web. 14 April 2015.
- "McCorkle Place." University of North Carolina Graduate School, 2004. Web. 16 April 2015.
- McPherson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988. Print.
- Mignolo, Walter. *Local Histories/global Designs : Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton, NJ; Woodstock, NY: Princeton University Press, 2012. Print.
- Mir, Pedro. *Tres leyendas de colores : Ensayo de interpretación de las tres primeras revoluciones del Nuevo Mundo*. Dominican Republic: Editora Nacional, 1969. Print.

- “Miscegenation.” *Race and Racism in the United States: An Encyclopedia of the American Mosaic*. 2014. Web. 9 May 2015.
- Moraga, Cherríe. “Theory in the Flesh.” *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Eds. Gloria Anzaldúa & Cherríe Moraga. Second ed. New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983. Web. 5 May 2015.
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York: Knopf, 1988.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press, 2009. Print.
- Murray, Pauli. *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family*. New York: Harper & Row, 1978. Print.
- Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. “Bridging Islands: Gloria Anzaldúa and the Caribbean.” *PMLA*. 121.1 (2006): 272-278. Web. 3 February 2012.
- Nesbitt, Nick. *Universal Emancipation: the Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008. Print.
- Nesbitt, Nick. “The Idea of 1804.” *Yale French Studies*. 107 (2005): 6-38. Web. 7 November 2012.
- Nesbitt, Nick. “Turning the Tide: The Problem of Popular Insurgency in Haitian Revolutionary Historiography.” *Small Axe*. 27 (2008): 14-31. Web. 21 April 2015.
- Nora, Pierre. “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoires*.” *Representations*. 26 (1989): 7-24. Web. 16 April 2015.
- Novak, Amy. “‘A Marred Testament’: Cultural Trauma and Narrative in Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones*.” *Arizona Quarterly*. 62.4 (2006): 93-120. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Nwosu, Chiamaka & Batalova, Jeanne. “Haitian Immigrants in the United States.” Migration Policy Institute. 29 May 2014. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Obejas, Achy. *Ruins*. New York, NY: Akashic, 2009. Print.
- “October 17, 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake.” US Geological Services. n.d. Web. 5 May 2015.
- “Old East, ca. 1797. Pen and ink sketch by John Pettigrew.” *A Virtual Museum of University History*. University Library and Center for the Study of the American South at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, n.d. Web. 12 March, 2015.
- Pedreira, Antonio S. *Insularismo: Ensayos De Interpretación Puertorriqueña*. San Juan, PR: Editorial Plaza Mayor, 2001. Print.

- Pérez, David. "El origen del caos." Centro León. n.d. Web. 12 May 2015.
- Pérez, Emma. *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999. Print.
- Pérez-Miñambres, Matias "'Tun tun de pasa y grifería': Perpetuación de estereotipos euroetnologicocéntricos en el discurso poético afroantillano de Palés Matos." *Chasqui*. 22.2 (1993): 73-84. Web. 11 June 2015.
- Poblete, Juan. *Critical Latin American and Latino Studies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. Print.
- Pulitano, Elvira. "An Immigrant Artist at Work: A Conversation □ with Edwidge Danticat." *Small Axe*. 36 (2011): 39-61. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Quijano, Aníbal and Immanuel Wallerstein. "Americanness as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world-system." *International Social Science Journal*. 44 (1992): 549-557. Web. 16 April 2015.
- Ramírez, Catherine S. "Deus ex Machina: Tradition, Technology, and the Chicanafuturist Art of Marion C. Martinez." *Aztlan*. 29.2 (2004): 55-92. Web. 11 June 2015.
- Reinhardt, Thomas. "Two Hundred Years of Forgetting: Hushing up the Haitian Revolution." *Journal of Black Studies*. 35.4 (2005): 246-261. Web. 9 November 2014.
- Reyes-Santos, Irmay. "'On Pan-Antillean Politics': Ramón Emeterio Betances and Gregorio Luperón Speak to the Present." *Callaloo*. 36.1 (2013): 142-157. Web. 14 June 2015.
- Roberg, Jeffrey L. & Kutruff, Alyson. "Cuba: Ideological Success or Ideological Failure?" □ *Human Rights Quarterly*, 29.3 (2007): 779-795. Web. 15 June 2015.
- Rodríguez, Emilio Jorge. *Haiti and Trans-Caribbean Literary Identity*. Trans. María Teresa Ortega. Philipsburg, St. Maarten: House of Nehesi Editores, 2011. Print.
- Romberg, Raquel. "'Today, Changó is Changó': How Africanness Becomes a Ritual Commodity in Puerto Rico." *Western Folklore*. 66.1-2 (2007): 75-106. Web. 14 June 2015.
- Roorda, Eric. *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945*. N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998. Print.
- Rothberg, Michael. "Between Memory and Memory: From *Lieux de mémoire* to *Noeuds de mémoire*." *Yale French Studies*. 118/119 (2010): 3-12. Web. 16 April 2015.

- Rothberg, M., Sanyal, D., & Silverman, M. "Editors' Note: *Noeuds de mémoire*—Multidirectional Memory in Postwar French and Francophone Culture." *Yale French Studies*. 118/119 (2010): 1-2. Web. 16 April 2015.
- Saldívar, José David. "Conjectures on "Americanity" and Junot Díaz's "Fukú Americanus" in The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao." *The Global South*. 5.1 (2011): 120-136, Web. 15 May 2015.
- Soto-Crespo, Ramón E. *Mainland Passage: The Cultural Anomaly of Puerto Rico*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009. Print.
- Scott, David. *Conscripts of Modernity: the Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. Print.
- Ship, Jesse. "Twin Shadow Can't 'Forget' Musical Non-Acceptance Due to Race." *Spinner*. 19 Jan. 2011. Web. 5 May 2015.
- Slotkin, Richard. Foreword. *Planet of the Apes as American Myth: Race, Politics, and Popular Culture*. By Eric Greene. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1996. Print.
- Socolovsky, Maya. "Deconstructing a Secret History: Trace, Translation, and Crypto-Judaism in Achy Obejas's *Days of Awe*." *Contemporary Literature*. 44.2 (2003): 225-249. Web. 12 June 2015. □
- Stinchcombe, Arthur L. "Class Conflict and Diplomacy: Haitian Isolation in the 19th-Century World System." *Sociological Perspectives*. 37.1 (1994): 1-23. Web. 16 April 2015.
- Torres-Saillant, Silvio. "The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity." *Latin American Perspectives*, 25.3 (1998): 126-146. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Torres-Saillant, Silvio. "Blackness and Meaning in Studying Hispaniola: A Review Essay." *Small Axe*. 19 (2006): 180-188. Web. 11 June 2012.
- Torres-Saillant, Silvio. "One and Divisible: Meditations on Global Blackness." *Small Axe*. 29 (2009): 4-25. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995. Print.
- Turits, Richard Lee. "A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic." *Hispanic American Historical Review*. 82.3 (2002): 589-635. Web. 15 May 2015.
- Twin Shadow. *Forget*. 4AD, 2010. MP3.
- Ulysse, G. & Fischer, S. "Sibylle Fischer." *BOMB*. 90 (2004-2005): 68-73. Web. 2 July 2012.

United States. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. *Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department*.

Vega, Bernardo. *Trujillo y Haití*. Santo Domingo, República Dominicana: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1988. Print.

Vega, Ana Lydia. *Encancaranublado y Otros Cuentos De Naufragio*. Ciudad de La Habana: Ediciones Casa de las Américas, 1982. Print.

Velez, Diana L. "We Are (Not) in This Together: The 'Caribbean' Imaginary in 'Encancaranublado' by Ana Lydia Vega." *Callaloo*. 17.3 (1994): 826-833. Web. 12 May 2012.

Viego, Antonio. *Dead Subjects: Towards a Politics of Loss in Latino Studies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. Print.

Williams, Eric. "Four Poets of the Greater Antilles." *Caribbean Quarterly*. 8.1 (1962): 4-12. Web. 12 June 2015.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Eng.: Oxford University Press, 1977. Print.