Caribbean Without Borders

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Beyond the Can[n]on's Range

Edited by
María del Carmen Quintero Aguiló,
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EDITORS' NOTE

There are so many islands!
As many islands as the stars at night
on that branched tree from which meteors are shaken
like falling fruit around the schooner *Flight*.
But things must fall, and so it always was,
on one hand Venus, on the other Mars;
fall, and are one, just as this earth is one
island in archipelagoes of stars.
—Derek Walcott (1979) "The Schooner *Flight*"

In March of 2014, five graduate students from the University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus set out on a never-before-trodden journey that would lead them to this moment in time: the publication of papers presented at the Fifth Caribbean Without Borders graduate student conference on the languages, literatures and cultures of the region. Eager to further the international repute of this conference, we wanted to amplify the notion of "without borders" to the best of our abilities. Many ideas came to mind to no avail, for we were still focusing on a macroscopic level, setting boundaries within our scope. It was not until one of the members of the organizing committee proposed the subtitle: "Beyond the Can[n]on's Range" that we found our calling.

The purpose of that year's conference was to abolish the invisible borders that in olden times were established by the firing of a cannon ball out to sea. The place where the fiery, leaden sphere would land and plummet to the watery depths set the borders of a nation (Batra and Messier 2007, 5-6). In this same manner, to a certain degree, the literary canon has also worked, leaving places such as the Caribbean on the outskirts of "culture." We wanted to play on this pun as a means toward unity and the abolition of borders that, in turn, have kept the Caribbean in a fragmented state. With this conference as a call toward submarine, cultural, and transnational unity that went beyond the cartographic confines of nations and narrations, our plea was heard and answered by an amalgam of participants that stayed true to the chosen theme.

The wide array of presenters not only embodied the Caribbean, including the Indo-Caribbean and Caribbean Pre-Raphaelites, but also stretched around the globe far beyond the confines of the archipelago to

China and Africa, thus showing that the Caribbean *is* the world and the world *is* the Caribbean. Borders disappeared to make way for conversations that went beyond the can[n]on's range. The aim of the conference was achieved; voices were raised demanding not only that the canon become inclusive of the world, but also to enter in conversation with the product of its very own making: Caliban had answered Prospero.[1]

This collection of essays, selected from over forty papers presented in the two-day conference, is written in a variety of languages and variations within those very languages. In order to stay true to our borderless mission, we decided to retain this linguistic mosaicism. Papers are therefore presented in Spanish, American English, or British English. Some include references or excerpts from works that have been written in the diverse creole languages of the Caribbean and creative code-switching interactions of the region. The inclusion of notes to clarify certain terms is present in these pieces. Otherwise, the papers remain in their original language of inception.

The book is divided into five chapters that explore the many fields in to which "going beyond the can[n]on's range" may lead one to. Chapter one, titled "Beyond the Can[n]on: Literature without Borders," includes essays that contest, review and propose literary analyses that depart from traditional Western definitions and archetypes of literature.

In "Identity and Culture in Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*: Migration, Race, Colour, Sexuality, Gender, and Language," Anna Levi invites the reader to go beyond the literary confines that Western literary tradition has extended to its former island colonies (such as Trinidad) in the celebration of Caribbean identity, as perceived through the non-standard English language used in Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*. She concludes that through the characters' use of "nation language," they are asserting their presence and identity within the metropolis and therefore "colonizing" the city "in reverse," consequently destabilizing the master narrative and in turn creating their own.

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[1] Caliban and Prospero are amongst the characters in William Shakespeare's (1611) play, "The Tempest." In the play, Prospero claims Caliban's island for himself. Prospero believes that it is his duty to "civilize" and therefore give Caliban the gift of the English language as part of the civilizing mission of the West. The parallels between European imperialism and the subject matter of the play during the era of "discovery" were not coincidental in the view of certain scholars. The adoption of the Caliban-Prospero (Caribbean subject-metropolis) relation was first proposed by Martinican writers Frantz Fanon (1952) and Aimé Césaire (1969) in the book *Black Skin, White Masks* and in the postcolonial adaptation of the play by the same name, "*Une Tempête*," respectively.

From this point, of contesting the literary canon and its limitations by way of placing Caribbean peoples within the context of "mother country," we move on to a multidisciplinary approach. Chapter two, "Socio-Cultural Forms without Borders," ranges from anthropological studies about funeral rites in Puerto Rican underground "narco-cultures" to music, carnival, and gender studies in islands like Trinidad, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The chapter includes studies on diaspora in "Boricuas in Hawaii," by Ilsa López, as well as Rafael Solá's exploration into the controversial relationship between "big and small" islands in the Caribbean, attesting to the idea that the global is reflected in the insular and vice-versa.

In her paper titled "Language and Identity: Iris López's Study of 'Boricuas in Hawaii,'" López shares an anthropological study on the identity of Puerto Ricans in Hawaii using cultural and linguistic features. López describes the migratory movements during the period that led Puerto Ricans to Hawaii and the processes of transculturation and acculturation, which are seldom studied in terms of the diasporic history of Puerto Ricans. As evidenced in her paper, the Caribbean is not confined to its geographical location and is indeed without borders.

In "Isla Grande; Isla Pequeña: Relaciones Políticas entre Trinidad y Tobago," author Solá points out the different issues caused by the political relations between a big island ("Isla Grande") attached to a small island ("Isla Nena") in the Caribbean. They all share the same tendency: the biggest percentage of territorial extension and the majority of the population are found on the big island, while a small percentage corresponds to the small island. As a result, this tendency provokes the distribution of resources to the area with the majority of population, resulting in asymmetry of power between the big and small islands, further widening the gap between them. By providing the historical process that led Tobago to more political and administrative representation, the author elucidates upon an issue that has plagued and aided in the fracturing of the Caribbean in order to suggest possible solutions to this current issue.

From a more anthropological perspective, that also includes political and folkloric aspects, Luis Javier Cintrón Gutiérrez delves into the study of funerals and the concept of death in Puerto Rican "narco-culture," or the cultural world of drug lords. The analysis is based upon media coverage related to the assassination of Ángel Rodríguez Isaac, a.k.a. 'El Chacal' (The Jackal), the alleged owner of a drug ring located at a public-housing complex in San Juan, Puerto Rico's capital city. Issues of drug trafficking in Central America and the Caribbean have come to dominate this part of the world, and yet have not been studied up until now. This

ground-breaking essay is indicative of new developments in academia that attempt to delve into this unexplored territory.

Chapter three, "Humanistic Forms without Borders," includes authors that infuse "classical" humanities with alternative readings to canonical philosophical thought. Enrique Olivares's "Unpoliticized Beauty: The Pre-Raphaelites in the Caribbean" examines the somewhat serendipitous nature of art that has resulted in the substantial collection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings in the Ponce Museum of Art in the southern municipality of the island. Being a former colony of Spain and presently an unincorporated U.S. territory, it is quite unusual that British art, such as Frederic Leighton's (1895) *Flaming June*, has become a type of aesthetic staple in the Puerto Rican imaginary. The essay explores the possible reasons for this by tracing the history that this group of artists might have had with the British colonies and the subsequent journey from the West Indies to the Spanish Caribbean.

Chapter four, "Languages Without Borders," includes essays in the area of linguistics that investigate the effects of authoritative discourse in fields like academia, European languages, and East Indian groups in the Caribbean, as well as the social politics of revolutionary groups within the U.S. In their article, "To Each His Own: Deconstructing the Myth of Default Male Pronouns in the Caribbean," Sally Delgado and Gabriel Mejía demonstrate how European androcentric (i.e., male-centered) ideology, and the patriarchal nature of formal discourse, marginalize female agency and African heritage in the Caribbean through the use of the male pronoun as a default category. This paper shows how this myth emerged in both standardized Spanish and English by taking into account historical and ideological factors. Strategies are proposed to reinstate female agency and reclaim African heritage in standardized Caribbean languages.

Following this line of androcentric discourse, Alexis Montes explores the failures of the Black Panther Party (BPP) and its key leaders, such as Malcolm X, of the Black Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s "to properly address and devise a solution to the problem imposed by gender and sexism" (249). Montes' analysis begins with the autobiography of Elaine Brown, "the first and only female leader of the Black Panther Party" (249) and her experience with the *machismo* (sexist) mentality imbedded in the black militancy of the Black Power Movement. Although Montes criticizes the contradictions of the movement that advocated for black liberation while disregarding female oppression, he states that the inactions of the BPP cannot and should not lessen their effort to "combat against racism but rather, is meant to critically reflect on the weaknesses

of the radical movement" (253). Montes admits that in the Caribbean the "cultural black radical movement" has been "observed through the works of Aimé Césaire, Leopold Senghor and Leon Damas" (256). For the author, the male domination presented in the *négritude* movement is currently complemented with "alternative source[s] of feminist and critical Caribbean thought" (255), like the work of Suzanne Césaire. It seems then imperative, as Montes argues, that any black movement should "turn towards feminism and womanhood as a methodology and praxis…A feminist framework seems necessary to supplant the dated masculinist, determinist, and linear rubrics of twentieth-century social movements" (251).

The fifth and final chapter, titled "African Currents without Borders," returns full-circle to literary studies and the canon (with the inclusion of creative writing) that hark back to the pervasive, yet often neglected, presence of African forms in Caribbean literature. Carmen Milagros Torres in her paper "TUN-TUN-tun-tun: Giving a Voice to Afro-Puerto Rican Literature" writes about the lack of children's stories that pay tribute - and would therefore create awareness in - Puerto Rican children regarding the influences Africa has had in their heritage. Torres points out that the lack of Afro Puerto Rican literature is synonymous with the ongoing racial tension in the reality of contemporary Puerto Rico. According to Torres, this hidden racism is a rejection of Puerto Ricans' African heritage. Besides pointing out the lack of literary works on the matter, she introduces us to the lyrics of folkloric songs that permeate hidden racism. She then presents us with a solution by calling upon writers to address the issue through the writing of children's literature that reflects the reality of Afro Puerto Rico. It is also here that Torres shares with us her own creation: "The Ungrateful Coquí," the story of an Afro-Puerto Rican female, or the Caribbean adaptation of "The Princess and the Frog."

Highlighting the avoidance of African influences in diverse Caribbean peoples, Xavier Navarro analyzes the various manifestations of African cultural forms in Edwidge Danticat's collection of stories titled "*Krik? Krak!*" In his essay, titled "Primal Scream? Rebel Yell! Correlations Between Death and Nostalgia and the Preservation of *History* in the Haitian Storytelling Tradition: *Krik? Krak!*," Navarro explains how the characters across the collection are in a state of angst, as portrayed in their diverse rejections of non-western modes of epistemology and ontology. According to the author, it is the quest toward the acknowledgment of Africa, and therefore non-western models, which may lead them to salvation.

In sum, the twenty-seven essays cover the diversity that is present in the Caribbean and how its issues, beauties, creations, peoples, languages and cultures do not respond to borders. A clearly mapped line is therefore not present in these pieces in the traditional sense. We wanted to encompass the idea of "without borders" to the degree that they cease to exist in order to make way for an intertextuality that truly reflects the worldliness of the region.

The introductory excerpt, taken from Derek Walcott's (1979) poem "The Schooner *Flight*," exemplifies this book's mission, which is to see the world as one island within a greater space. There is more that unites us, than what sets us apart. The Caribbean, a closely-knit group of islands and countries of the Americas whose shores brush against the Caribbean Sea, has suffered far too long from the imperial malaise of "divide and conquer" to the degree that neighboring countries often do not know one another's names. We must cross our beaches, out to sea, and beyond the can[n]on's range. It is our hope that this book serves as the cannon ball that goes out, out into the sea of stars and sets the limits of this island we call the world.

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CHAPTER ONE:

BEYOND THE CAN[N]ON:
LITERATURE WITHOUT BORDERS

YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW: EXPLOITATION AND CONSEQUENCES IN JACQUES ROUMAIN'S *MASTERS OF THE DEW* AND MAYRA MONTERO'S *IN THE PALM OF DARKNESS*

MARITZA V. CARDONA ORTÍZ

People living in the Caribbean and around the world have an individual notion of what El Dorado is. In Shona N. Jackson's (2005) work, "Subjection and Resistance in the Transformation of Guyana's Mytho-Colonial Landscape," she suggests that "[Land] holds a place of both cultural significance and material promise in the postindependence national imagination" (85). Even though to many people nature is part of their culture and the history of it makes them proud, they consider it as a box of treasures for them to use at will. At times, once society finds something that can satiate its needs, they use it until nothing is left of it, not thinking about the consequences their actions may bring physically, economically, or spiritually. Using Jacques Roumain's *Masters of the Dew* (1978) and Mayra Montero's *In the Palm of Darkness* (1997), I suggest that society exploits nature in a cyclical manner without remorse, therefore having dire consequences that may even last a lifetime.

Roumain's novel, *Masters of the Dew*, opens with the character of Délira having a foreboding thought: "We're all going to die" (23). She feels that neither she, nor her husband Bienaimé, nor the community she lives in, has any hope to progress or survive in an almost post-apocalyptic land, principally because they do not have any water. Even though people can try to live with a limited amount of water, it is nearly impossible to have a community flourish if their source is nonexistent or non-potable. Water is an integral part of Délira and Bienaimé's community landscape, and with the absence of this element the landscape is weakened, turning their lives into a downward spiral. In Hellen Tiffin's (2005) essay, "Man Fitting the Landscape: Nature, Culture, and Colonialism," she comments that:

> An observer, an attitude to land, a point of view are implied, such that 'landscape' is necessarily a product of a combination of relationships between living beings and their surroundings. In the case of human beings, 'landscape' becomes a form of interaction between people and their place, in large part a symbolic order expressed through representation. (Roumain, 199)

The state of the landscape is symbolic for the physical and psychological health of a community. Tiffin symbolizes the land with the people who inhabit it. The land therefore becomes a mirror image to what people do to it. As the community tends to the land, they create a (sub) conscious bond with it. Interacting with the land is not only a means to survive, but also a way to maintain a psychologically healthy environment. An example of this is when Bienaimé has a flashback of his community and when they all participated in the coumbité, which is a unit of cooperative labor. In the flashback, Délira and Bienaimé lived in a healthy environment in which the landscape is alive:

> Into the field of wild grass they went, bare feet in the dew. Pale sky, cool, the chant of wild guinea hens in the distance. Little by little the shadowy trees, still laden with shreds of darkness, regained their color. An oily light bathed them. A kerchief of sulphor-colored clouds bound the summits of the mountains. The countryside emerged from sleep. In Rosanna's yard the tamarind tree suddenly let fly a noisy swirl of crows like a handful of gravel. (Roumain, 25)

The description of the landscape provided above reflects that there is an abundance of animals and trees. It is as if the community lived in a little piece of heaven. As Tiffin states, the landscape interacts with people. As the community wakes up to tend the land they show respect to it, therefore the land in turn provides them with the means to survive. There is harmony between humans and the land, and therefore they live plentifully. However, the community has changed for the worse. The connection that society and land had is broken and now only misery abounds:

> On the side of the hill there was a dull redness as the sun sank behind the woods. Soon nigh would shroud the bitter earth in silence, drowning their misery in the shadow of sleep. Then dawn would rise with the husky crowing of cocks and day would begin again, hopeless as the day before. (Roumain, 34)

There is a sharp contrast in the description of that same landscape. By using words such as "sank," "bitter," "drowning," and "hopeless,"

Roumain paints a dismal picture of the aftermath of the community. The animals are not happy or even healthy and even the sun sinks, as it did not have strength to shine and illuminate the community. From being their heaven, the landscape has turned into their personal hell. One has to ask two questions regarding this situation: how did the landscape change if there was harmony between man and land, and why did it change? Based on Tiffin's explanation that human and land are intertwined, it is understandable to assume that there was a break in the relationship between these two. If people stop tending to the land, do not respect it, or assume that the land will always provide, they will stop nurturing and caring for it, and in turn the landscape will do the same, reflecting the attitude man has adopted toward the land.

When Delira and Bienaimé's son, Manuel, arrives to his homeland after 15 years living in exile and working on a plantation in Cuba, he notices that much has changed, "When I left, there wasn't any drought. Water ran in the ravine, not much, to tell the truth, but always enough to do, and sometimes even enough for a little overflow, if it rained in the hills.' He looked around him. 'Seems like it's been cursed now" (Roumain, 37). The land is not what it used to be when he lived there. Even though Manuel comments that the land has been cursed, he is aware that the abused land is due to people's selfish acts, not a curse or a spell. As he keeps looking at his homeland, Manuel notices that there is a rupture between the community and nature. Just like nature is dry and rough, so are people. They are not as warm and friendly as they used to be, and Manuel deduces that it is because they have neglected the earth.

Since Manuel lived in exile for 15 years, it is easier for him to notice the drastic difference in the land in which he grew up, "I see that you have cleared the hills of trees. It's not God who betrays us. We betray the soil and receive his punishment: drought and poverty and desolation" (Roumain, 45). Manuel is conscious that the land will retaliate as a way to remind people that their actions bring consequences. They cannot conquer a piece of land. People can tend to it, but in the end the land will always reflect on people's actions, making it stronger than people consider it to be. Roumain also makes the landscape speak through Manuel. His actions, words, and thoughts are representative of the current landscape and the situation it goes through. People are usually concerned for themselves, and do not realize that the more fragmented the society is, the more difficulties will arise concerning ecological matters. In "Revaluating Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism," Glen A. Love (2005) states that "We have grown accustomed to living with crises, and to outliving them, or to resolving them in some manner or other with comparatively little harm to business

as usual" (226). However, when problems do not solve themselves and society cannot ignore drastic situations any longer, they are at a loss on how to fix them. This is one of the main problems for ecology. Society is accustomed to fixing whatever needs to be fixed – at the moment. The community is not aware of the many years nature needs to recuperate from the atrocities people do to it. As they cover up a minor portion of what they take/destroy, they leave a huge gap in the soil that can never heal itself or even recuperate for future generations. Society has disengaged themselves so much from their land that they no longer feel they are part of it, and believing that they own it, become strangers in their own home.

Manuel understands that nature is part of the community's life and history. He shortly discovers that the community has adopted an imperial and colonizing notion of what the land is. Manuel tells his friend about his life in Cuba, and how all the plantations belonged to a white American person called Mr. Wilson. Even though Mr. Wilson is the landowner of great plantations, he does not care for the land. He has many Haitians working on his plantations and they are basically slaves to him and to every other oppressor, "to kill a Haitian or a dog is one and the same thing, say the police" (Roumain, 50). However, Manuel keeps comparing the landscape of his hometown to that of the plantation in Cuba. In "He of the Trees," Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert (2005) comments that "In the Caribbean region, the relationship between man and nature was determined early in postencounter history by the ecological trauma represented by the establishment of the sugar plantation" (183). Even though the land is positively linked to the peasants, it turns into a nightmarish aspect when the peasants are abused and forced to work in the same land which is supposed to make them feel safe. The rupture of the psyche is evident when many people are forced to work on plantations in order to survive, making the rich man richer and forcing the poor man to live in poverty. This situation can be seen through Manuel's flashbacks regarding his work at the Cuban plantation. We can see that even though Manuel has left the sugar plantation of Cuba, his psyche is still at the plantation. He suffered several traumas there, living under tyrannical and imperialist notions, and it takes time for him to psychologically break from his postcolonial history in order to help in the ecological problems his land is having. Even though the community does not work at a plantation, they still have a slave-like mentality and are adopting at the same time a colonizing attitude towards the land, continuing a vicious cycle of abuse toward it. To them the trees on the mountains become their El Dorado, and they use it without any remorse. The colonizer constantly utilizes not only the land for their benefit, but also people, discarding them as well. It is sad

to see that in a way, the people in Manuel's community have inadvertently acquired an imperialist view of the land and are treating it as if it were a slave to them as well. People tend to use the land without giving anything in return, and many times they don't realize what they have done to it until it is too late.

The lack of education also propitiates the decimation of the land. As Manuel questions why the community destroyed one of the few valuable and precious things they had (nature), his friend tries to find a logical explanation to their actions: "What else could we do, brother? We cleared it to get new wood. We cut it down for framework and beams for our huts. We repaired the fences around our fields. We didn't know, ourselves. Ignorance and need go together, don't they?" (Roumain, 58) Nature is there to help humanity. However, one should pay respect to it while one utilizes its resources. The constant taking without paying it forward, or replacing what has been used, accelerated the land's erosion and decimation. The community was in need and took what they needed, but without having the proper education and even respect towards the land, they cut the link between it and them, causing at the same time a rupture for future generations to come. The colonizer is aware that a lack of knowledge about certain aspects will guarantee that the oppressed people will serve like cattle. By not providing proper education, the colonizer is aware that the colonized will be tied to them, therefore making their profits grow while creating a community's annihilation due to the lack of trees and water. Grove states that:

> The Caribbean sugar plantation grew at the expense of the dense and moist tropical forests that needed to be cleared to make way for the new profitable crop. This rapid deforestation led to soil depletion, landslides, erosion, and climatic changes that included significant decreases in levels of moisture and rainfall. (cited in Paravisini 2005, 184)

The Caribbean shares a notion of abuse and neglect towards the people and land. Plantations became the El Dorado for colonizers, while at the same time for many it became their deathbed. Grove states the consequences of having forests cleared out to create plantations. However, many people convince themselves that they cannot do anything to change and help nature. It is easier at the moment to destroy everything and hopefully pray for nature to heal itself. As magnificent as the land is, it is impossible for a full recuperation if the land is raped and stripped for material needs. If the peasants are not aware that they should replenish the land whenever they take something from it, eventually the land will be barren and people will need help. The problem is that they will not have

the help they need in order to alleviate their problems, and the colonizer will make sure that the community remains ignorant in order to keep using and abusing them. The colonizer, like Mr. Wilson, will make sure to 'help' them by offering a job with barely enough pay, so that they remain ignorant and in need, thus perpetuating a sickening cycle of unawareness and exploitation to man and land.

In *Masters of the Dew* the community is desensitized about their ecological problems. Even though there was a drought, and they knew that the reason for it was the cutting of trees from the mountains, the community just shrugged their shoulders and prayed for a better future. Manuel knows that if he mends the fractured state and sentiments of the community and they become whole again, they will also be able to heal the land and live in harmony again. Eric Prieto (2005) comments in, "The Use of Landscape," that "In this sense, getting back to nature means seeing things as they truly are, developing a specifically Caribbean sensibility attuned to local realities" (237). This is what Roumain does with Manuel; he's sensitive to the situation of the land and community, especially because he has had his own unpleasant experiences living in exile, and is aware of the danger that the community and land are going through. This awareness of the landscape makes him think of the irrigation system to save the people who are part of his history.

However, hate has grown strong and has poisoned not only the land, but has polluted the peasant's soul as well. Tragically, Manuel is murdered as an act of jealousy and selfishness. Even though this crime could have been brought to justice, Manuel asks people to forgive and to work together to bring peace and prosperity to the community. He deduces that the land started to get weaker once blood was shed and hatred was born, "...hate and revenge will live among the peasants. The water will be lost" (Roumain, 158). The love that a man has of his land will be the cure for the 'cursed' landscape: "Tell [Larivoire] the will of my blood that's been shed – reconciliation – reconciliation – so that life can start all over again, so that day can break on the dew" (158).

The peasants took everything they could from the mountains, exploiting it and leaving it naked, and gave nothing in return. Sadly, it was not until Manuel, a man who loved and understood nature, died that the community understood that they need to be united and respect the land in order to have a prosperous future. Roumain's purpose in the novel was to convey the thought that one cannot abuse and exploit the land without giving anything in return. The land's resources, like the trees in the mountains, are finite and everything in the land is connected to each other.

While people keep using the land for selfish reasons, they inadvertently harm themselves and the land.

In Mayra Montero's novel, *In the Palm of Darkness*, the author explores how not only societies' actions, but also the abandonment of ancient beliefs as well, have dire consequences to nature, and therefore to them as well. Victor Grigg, an American herpetologist, is sent to Haiti by a fellow colleague to look for the elusive and nearly extinct specimen of the "blood frog." From that moment on, Haiti's landscape has turned into Victor's El Dorado. At first glance, it appears that Victor is interested in finding the frog to help discover the reason for its near extinction, but when one delves deeper in the reading, one can see that the story is not what it seems. The author studies Victor's thoughts and actions, and helps us to understand how sacred places have been soiled with blood due to vicious gangs in Haiti.

The novel has two narrators: Victor, and his guide through the mountains of Haiti, Thierry. The novel is interestingly split in two perspectives: that of the colonizer, and of the colonized. Through Victor's selfish narration, the reader only gets to know about some of his studies and his sordid and platonic relationship with his wife. Meanwhile, while reading Thierry's stories, one learns not only about how his past is entwined with the landscape, but also about his spiritual beliefs and how Haiti is deteriorating due to the detached feelings the community has with the land. Through the narration of both characters, one can understand how they really feel about nature. While Thierry respects it, and in a way almost respectfully fears it, Victor thinks of it as something that he can possess, just like the blood frog and any other specimen he may encounter. When Victor first meets Thierry, he judges him solely on appearance and almost immediately discards him, "...and I concluded that in the field at midnight, setting out on the difficult treks of an expedition, this man would not be of much use to me" (Monero, 19). Victor has a selfish and superficial attitude and immediately thinks badly about Thierry. Victor looks down on him, even thinking that Thierry does not know anything about the elusive frog and just wants his money. To Victor, Thierry is representative of the Other. Thierry is just part of the unknown that may or may not be used to Victor's advantages. By Thierry being the Other in Victor's mind, one can see how he has no interest in knowing anything about Haiti, the land, and deep down, even the much coveted frog. Starting with Thierry's dark skin and his clothing, Victor cannot feel any connection to Thierry, and therefore has to make shallow theories concerning Thierry's "real" intentions. However, Thierry proves him wrong when he corrects his drawing of the frog. It is interesting to note

that even though Victor is a herpetologist and wants to get hold of the animal, he did not accurately know the description of the blood frog. This demonstrates that the colonizer's mindset is already set to have preconceived notions of others, even though they do not know them and think of themselves as accepting.

After drawing the frog, Thierry shares a couple of memories from the past with Victor. Through them one gets to learn that sadly, misfortune has happened not only in Thierry's life, but to his community as well. When Thierry was younger, flora and fauna abounded in Haiti and the land offered resources for them to survive. However, just like in Roumain's *Masters of the Dew*, the water started to dry up, leaving the community in distress:

> You want to know where the frogs go. I cannot say, sir, but let me ask you a question: Where did our fish go? Almost all of them left this sea, and in the forest the wild pigs disappeared, and the migratory ducks, and even the iguanas for eating, they went too. (Montero, 11)

Instead of wondering if one of the reasons why the blood frog is nearly extinct is due to the drought, Victor does not care about this. All he wants to know is the whereabouts of the frog so he can possess it, take it away from Haiti, and leave immediately once and for all. One can also see a resemblance concerning animals between Montero and Roumain's novels. While in Roumain's work, the animals are sad, malnourished and about to die, in Montero's novel many have simply disappeared, leaving the community in distress. The juxtaposition of thoughts between Victor and Thierry is evident when the Ecologist does not care for the land like Mr. Wilson in *Masters of the Dew*; and when Thierry, a peasant like Manuel in Roumain's novel, cares not only for the land and its people, but is considered a true expert in it as well.

Montero makes sure to create a clear distinction between the colonizer, who does not care about the landscape, or the society in which he is visiting at the moment, and the native person, who understands how much power the landscape has over people. Poirier comments that "Caribbean writing has always been deeply engaged with the landscape, with the creation of geographically rooted narratives where the environment takes a central role in determining the possible ideologies available to a character" (cited in Paravisini 2005, 187). The landscape is entwined with Thierry's character, thus making him the perfect guide not only to Victor, but to the reader as well. Being connected to the land, Thierry understands how the society's actions are affecting the land as well. While he was with Victor on the Mont des Enfants Perdus, they find human remains.

Victor, having a one track mind, does not care so much for the bodies; he just wants to find 'his' frog: "Nothing very serious can happen to a man when all he looks for, all he wants, is a harmless little frog" (Montero, 41). Thierry, however, not only understands that this is a violation to the land, but also that they could not stay there anymore due to a gang that uses the mountains to traffic illegal items: the attachés of Cito Francisque. The mountains are supposed to be a place where wild flora and fauna abound, and magical and religious things occur naturally. The wild mountains are the heart of Haiti. The landscape represents the pureness of a society and the promise of life. The new generation does not think of it as such, and is violating it, not by cutting down the trees like in *Masters of the Dew*, but using it as an illegal burial ground for murdered people. As the land becomes tainted by man's hands, it turns into a nightmarish place for the community. They no longer can see the landscape as a pure place; they see it as the final (un)repose of many people. The community cannot find peace in the mountains; for many are certain that once taken there their lifeless bodies will be left there. The attachés of Cito Francisque yet again fragment the connection between land and man, creating an imbalance in nature where there is no sustenance for humanity, and simultaneously creating a decline in the ecosystem of the place.

Thierry knows how to pay respect to the land. He is aware that there are certain things man should do in order to keep the land in harmony with society. Thierry calls this action the Law of the Water. We can see, once again, how essential water is in *Masters of the Dew* and *In the Palm of Darkness*. Thierry understands that nature is more powerful than man, and if one does not use it respectfully, nature will retaliate, and that is what is currently happening in the mountains of Haiti, "Since they [nature and water] are not fed, they are always hungry, and since they are hungry, they swallow up everything they can. A man must take precautions when he comes close to these great, lonely pools" (Montero, 75). Thierry also adds, "Go and gather your frogs, I am not telling you not to, but be careful of looking into the eye of water, of stopping to talk to the woman who spreads her clothes on the shore. The woman is black, but her children may be mulattoes. If they call to you, say nothing and hurry on, for they are not of this world" (75). Folklore is an important aspect in community. It helps to understand the land's history and culture. For many folklore is what makes the land special, and without it their culture would be disjointed and incomplete. That which may seem foolish, and even childish, to Victor, is a way of life for Thierry. In fact, it is Thierry's respect for the land and for folklore that allows him to become aware that these are normal things one should do in order to live harmoniously with

the land. He also however sadly realizes that there are fewer people practicing their faith and respecting the land. Instead they are killing their brothers, spilling victim's blood on the soil, therefore disrupting the balance of nature. In *Masters of the Dew* the imbalance was caused by a horrible drought, while in *In the Palm of Darkness* it is the extinction of many amphibians and the decline of many animals.

Thierry is not the only person in the novel who is aware of the dire situation between society and the landscape. Even some of Victor's colleagues are conscious about what is truly happening with the fauna in Haiti. Dr. Boukaka, a fellow friend of Victor, prophetically says, "'They're all going to leave us,' ... 'I know you're looking for the grenouille du sang'" (Montero, 93). Dr. Boukaka has a better understanding of the ecological system than Victor, and offers details of what is happening to the fauna of the place. "'They're leaving or they're hiding,' he insisted. 'Or they're simply letting themselves die. Nothing is clear, nobody wants to talk about it'" (Montero, 94). Many people believe that nature is not alive and it is something that is beneath humans. What many fail to comprehend is that even though nature may seem vulnerable to society, because they unapologetically take what they want, in the long run nature will always affect man because we cannot live without it. Nature is embedded in folklore, history and beliefs and therefore tends to remind humans who was in this world first, with so many ecological disasters such as droughts, floods, landslides and the extinction of animals. Dr. Boukaka shares a story with Victor about frogs to make Victor understand the situation that the land is going through:

> They say that Agwe Taroyo, the god of waters, has called the frogs down to the bottom. They say they have seen them leave: Freshwater animals diving into the sea, and the ones that don't have the time or strength to reach the meeting place are digging holes in the ground to hide, or letting themselves die along the way. (Montero, 95)

Since Victor has a solely scientific mind, this is just a story. But for the native people of Haiti this story is the truth. Spiritual people like Thierry or Dr. Boukaka are aware that nature is alive and communicates itself with the flora and fauna. One has to be in tune with the natural world to comprehend this. That's why even though Victor deals with fauna, he cannot accept or fully understand the story. It does not fit with his colonizing belief, in which he must take what he wants at whatever cost. It is interesting to see that Dr. Boukaka tells Victor, almost as a terrible forewarning, "'The great flight has begun,' he repeated. 'You people invent excuses: acid rain, herbicides, deforestation. But the frogs are

disappearing from places where none of that has happened'" (Montero, 96). Dr. Boukaka is telling Victor that he should stop to think scientifically for a moment and become aware of his surroundings. Victor has seen the mountains in a deplorable state and he witnessed human remains on the mountains. He cannot, however, accept that nature is getting affected just like his frogs are. Victor also cannot understand the link between animals and religion, even though Thierry constantly talks to him about animals and his beliefs. Animals and Vodou have been linked since the Haitian Revolution. Paravisini states that "The links between religion and the uprising were established early through the slaves' belief in the powers of their legendary leader Makandal to predict the future and transform himself into various animals – attributes conferred by the lwa, or spirits..." (188) Animals are embedded in Haitian history and religion and through these beliefs they understand that animals are to be respected, just like people and religion. Sadly, it takes more than a local doctor to open Victor's colonialist mind.

Victor finally finds the very last blood frog in Haiti and decides to bag him and leave for good. Even though Victor wonders about the disappearance of many frogs, he still takes the last frog of its species in existence and basically causes the extinction of that frog. However, just like Thierry had warned him about the Law of Water, nature retaliated because nobody paid respect to it. Victor stole the last frog specimen the land had, becoming the person who made yet another animal species extinct in the world. Victor became responsible for creating yet another tear between nature and humans, stripping and killing what can be considered the land's children. Almost in a poetic and prophetic way, the water swallows Victor and Thierry, and along with them the last blood frog in existence. Victor had several warnings about the land retaliating from Thierry and Dr. Boukaka, yet he decided to ignore them and to put their stories and opinions aside. Nature claimed what belonged to it, again retaliating against society and their exploitation of the land. Montero's purpose for having Victor and Thierry drown in the river water was to turn the water in to a crucial character who ended up being more powerful than any man in the novel. One cannot disrupt the order in nature, especially exploit and abuse the land, without having any consequences. Montero extends the link between humanity's spiritual relations to the natural world to human vulnerability in environments that are pushing species to the verge of extinction (Paravisini, 193). One can see nature, in this case water, as the enemy as it disrupts human life. However, one should take notice of everything that the population has done to it throughout history, and of all the warnings society has had concerning the ecosystem such as the

disappearance of many animals, climate change and the malnourishment of the land.

Masters of the Dew and *In the Palm of Darkness* are representative of how disruptive man can be to nature. Nature has a cyclical life. Flora and fauna live and die and provide for man. However, by man utilizing it without any balance they disrupt the cycle, creating a chaotic dysfunction between them and nature. Antonio Benítez Rojo (1996) explains that "[about chaos] within the (dis)order that swarms around what we already know of as Nature, it is possible to observe dynamic states or regularities that repeat themselves globally" (2). He later on adds that "Chaos looks toward everything that repeats, reproduces, grows, decays, unfolds, flows, spins, vibrates, seethes; it is as interested in the evolution of the solar system as in the stock market's crashes, as involved in cardiac arrhythmia as in the novel or myth" (3). In a way, Chaos, and nature have a way of linking themselves globally. As nature's life cycle repeats itself in the Caribbean, it becomes a way of life for people. As man becomes aware of this, they become linked to it, thereby becoming part of it. As a part of it, like Thierry and Manuel's community once was, they will make sure to promote nature's well-being.

In the Caribbean one can see that people want to feel connected to the land. However, the rupture of ideology between colonized and colonizers leads one to also see that the land has suffered enough and it is trying to survive as it can, whether it is to forcefully create a balance between man and nature or claiming back what it feels rightfully belongs to it. In *Masters of the Dew* people with colonizing ideas, decimated the land by cutting all the trees on the mountain and spilling blood on the land with hatred and contempt. In *In the Palm of Darkness* we can see that the sense of entitlement, politics, and crime also affect nature. These two novels were written in the 1970s and '90s, yet much has remained unchanged. Since then numerous species have become extinct, natural disasters have increased in frequency, and precious forests are still being stripped of their riches to create more industries to keep globalizing the world, hurting the flora, fauna, and also society. The land has beautiful treasures, but it is not for man to own or destroy. This is the lesson that both authors want to convey. It was not until it was too late that the characters from both novels realized that it was a mistake to take everything from the land and not give anything in return. In both novels, the authors Roumain and Montero made sure to create awareness that there will be repercussions to every action one takes upon nature.

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