

Re-Thinking the Human Centered Planet: Place, Affect, and the Multispecies World in  
Contemporary Caribbean Poetry

Caroline Mary Whitcomb  
Winnetka, Illinois

Bachelor of Arts, Kenyon College, 2014  
Master of Arts, University of Virginia, 2018

A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty  
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Spanish, Italian & Portuguese

University of Virginia  
May, 2022

## **Abstract**

Why does art matter in the midst of disaster? This dissertation project focuses on three contemporary Caribbean poets (Nicole Delgado, Kei Miller, and Thais Espaillat Ureña) and the ways in which their poetic subjects' reactions to environmental change at a local level transform their relationship to their respective homelands. In voicing changing relationships to place, even and especially as these landscapes visibly deteriorate, each of these poets examines how contemporary environmental violence reaches back to echo colonial legacies of violence in the Caribbean. What emerges in their work, then, is a way of reckoning with, redefining, and imagining autonomous futures in their respective homelands. This is especially significant in a region with a complex geopolitical history in which place and belonging have historically been contested and parsed out over racial, political, economic, and diasporic lines. The Caribbean poets I study are important not just because they seek to undermine imperial narratives about the people and environments of many nations in the Greater Antilles, but because they contribute to larger, deeply political and culturally relevant conversations about all archipelagic cultures living under the dual shadows of climate change and global imperialism.

## Acknowledgements

Many people in Charlottesville have shaped my experience of this place because of their friendship, generosity, camaraderie, and kindness. First and foremost, this project would not have been possible without Charlotte Rogers's careful guidance, patient mentorship, keen interest, and thoughtful feedback. I am thankful for her years of support on this project and the many others we have worked on together.

I am grateful to all of my teachers, especially Ariell Bachman, Kurt Weiler, Dan Hartnett, Kate Hedeem, Linda Metzler, Thomas Hawks, Adele Davidson, and Ellen Mankoff, for sharing their love of literature and teaching me to read, write, and think in two languages.

I wouldn't have made it through graduate school without the Spanish graduate student community. Thanks for listening, for sharing materials, answering questions, and making comps review bearable. To Sarah Rabke and Thallya Díaz, for a thousand evenings of patient friendship and joyful exuberance. To Catherine Addington—I couldn't have done this without you, and I can't think of another person I would have had a better time doing it with.

Thanks to Elise Foote for the encouragement and all of the patient listening during Wednesday writing group. This dissertation would not be what it is without her excellent company, thoughtful suggestions, and advice.

To my family, my parents Bob and Susan Whitcomb, for encouraging a lifetime love of learning and for their unconditional support and encouragement. To my brother, for still thinking I'm cool even though I just spent six years reading books.

Most of all, I'm grateful to my husband Daniel Rodríguez Segura for his patience, love, and support over the last five years. Here's to a lifetime.

## Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter I.....	12
Creative Placemaking and Community Futures in Nicole Cecilia Delgado’s <i>Días naturales</i>	
Chapter II.....	35
Affective Kinship and Multispecies Relationships in Kei Miller’s <i>In Nearby Bushes</i>	
Chapter III.....	61
“Pirated” Copies: Laser Cats, Recombinant Forms, and the Poetry of Possibility in Thais Espailat Ureña’s <i>¿Tienes quién te cuide la mula?</i>	
Conclusion.....	81
Works Cited.....	84
Images.....	94

## Introduction

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017, Hurricane María struck the Caribbean and Gulf coasts with the strength of a category four hurricane. For Florida Keys based visual artist Sally Binard, the immediate aftermath of the 2017 hurricane season revealed what normally remains hidden: “everything that was on the inside of a person’s home was on the outside... and everything that was on the inside of a person was also on the outside” (“Coasts in Crisis,” Sept. 19, 2019). The catastrophic storms had inverted any connection that Binard felt to the place she called home, both physically and emotionally—her sense of place, and her own role in it, was unrecognizable.

This project focuses on relationships to place after and amidst disaster. The topic of chapter one is Nicole Cecilia Delgado’s volume of poetry *Días naturales* (2018). Written in the wake of Hurricane María’s devastation of Puerto Rico, *Días naturales* questions the boundaries between human and non-human ecology, the materiality of poetry and nature, and the relation between text and image. Most importantly, in the last line of the collection, Delgado addresses the “vínculo... entre palabra / y acción” (19). *Días naturales* is deeply philosophical, asking its reader to consider how humans and the living non-human world can inhabit one another, coexist, learn, and re-build. Poetry itself answers many of these questions, and it is through this medium that she suggests that human and non-human actors may begin to build a way forward after environmental and social disaster through a recognition of their mutual ecological materiality. If Delgado’s poetic voice explores this interconnectedness, the Jamaican writer Kei Miller, the subject of chapter two, features a poetic subject struggling to place itself in a shifting landscape that continuously unearths colonial violence and destruction. Preceding a description of ecological devastation, he asks: “If sometimes it is possible to hear trees breathing, can you also hear / them catch their breaths before the violence of place?” (37). Both Miller’s and Delgado’s

poetic subjects demonstrate a concern with articulating connections between place and self, human and non-human, subject and local ecology. In the Caribbean, these connections are complicated by the region's history of colonialism, enslavement, and environmental exploitation, and by its uncertain future amid a rise in social volatility, global sea levels, ocean temperatures, and storm frequencies. Thais Espaillat Ureña's poetic subject sees the looming disaster of climate change clearly, their poetic voice paralyzed or despondent at the thought of the sea rising to engulf their home. The only way to cope, they find, is by creating new ways of relating to their surroundings that allow them to imagine an abundant future co-created with nonhuman beings.

This dissertation reframes previously marginalized areas of poetic production by placing them at the center of academic inquiry. In focusing on poets from different places in the Caribbean, such as Delgado (Puerto Rico), Kei Miller (Jamaica), and Thais Espaillat Ureña (Dominican Republic), this project seeks to contribute to a larger conversation about the ways in which contemporary cultural production is adapting to articulate a changing relationship to our ecological environment on both local and global scales (Clark, Farrier, Griffiths).

Poetry is especially apt as a medium to understand the ways in which our affective reactions and emotional vocabulary conform to changing ecological landscapes because of the way it uniquely presents space and place: "the lyric poem is the point of intersection between place and a specific moment or moments" (John Burnside, quoted in Schmitt-Kilb, 139). Poetry as art form allows the poetic voice as well as the reader, through their mediation, to consider place differently and articulate a variety of affective reactions and relationships with their surroundings. The constraints of its form also force both poet and reader to decelerate and consider their surroundings, the act of doing so as much "an imperative of poetry as a political demand" (Schmitt-Kilb 138). Thus, in examining contemporary poetry that engages with its

surrounding environment, scholars are able to perceive a more nuanced, varied and complex sense of “place” than they might through other mediums like narrative or drama.

As many important critical voices have noted, our sense of place on local scales is rapidly changing due to the threat of climate events. Literature that addresses romantic notions of sublimely beautiful, transcendental ecology engages in nostalgia for a now lost, idealized world that no longer accurately represents our current ecological reality (Ghosh, Clark, DeLoughrey). We are as a species and as a result of climate change in the midst a crisis of culture that is changing our relationship with our physical world: Timothy Clark calls this a “crisis of value” whose constantly shifting iterations continuously articulate different relationships to both new and inherited world literature and culture (14). The changes in weather patterns and local landscapes as a result of global climate change have brought environmental collapse into our everyday lives, often unsettlingly and in unexpected moments, with small reminders of the accelerating deterioration of the planet that sustains our survival. This is especially true in the Caribbean where island nations are some of the places most at risk, globally, for flooding due to sea level rise and increasingly damaging weather events (Leatherman and Simms).

The timescale of climate disasters like category five storms or habitat loss due to tourism and extractive capitalism extends much further backward, and much farther into the future, than the casual observer might believe. The widespread recovery in forests in Puerto Rico after Hurricane María, for example, was successful despite sudden defoliation and fallen trees. In other places, however, like mangrove habitats and for local pollinators, the longstanding effects allow the timeline of the hurricane to extend much farther into the future, shaping ecosystems for decades and perhaps generations. Likewise, many regions in the Caribbean have been shaped by brutal histories of colonialism, enslavement, and environmental exploitation. Because of this, the

violent effects of catastrophic storms and the slow violence of climate change also reach back to echo these histories, socially, economically, and environmentally. Postcolonial locales thus feel the effects of these disasters differently than many places in the Global North: they have been subjected to “systematic dispossession through the spread of the free market doctrine” for over four hundred years (Carrigan 117). The worldwide rise in the number of disasters per year (including hurricanes, wildfires, drought, extreme temperatures, etc.) since 1900, and in particular since around 1940, from twenty to four hundred makes attention to disaster in places like the Caribbean even more urgent and necessary (Carrigan 118).

Likewise, there is no easy delineation of the line between “violence” and “disaster” as it relates to the damage caused by climate change. Definitions of violence become complex in places that have suffered from the violence of colonialism, often for hundreds of years, and which continues into the present moment under neoliberal capitalism. Rob Nixon’s groundbreaking study extensively examines the widespread and insidious “slow violence” at work in the anglophone global south as a consequence of policies and practices that “discount” poor citizens or developing nations politically, ecologically, and culturally (2). This type of violence, which he defines as contrary to that of a hurricane (“explosive and spectacular in space, erupting into instant sensational visibility” (2)), is “incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales” (2). However, I would like to propose that hurricanes and other forms of habitat and environmental change, in addition to enacting this sensationalized, spectacular narrative of violence, are also enacting slow violence on high-impact regions like the Caribbean as a result of climate change.

As I observe in examining the nested problems and domino-effect on ecosystems and social and political infrastructure in the wake of natural disasters, “violence” is not limited to one



place, institution, or even species in the wake of a meteorological event. Violence, in this dissertation, is both incremental and calamitous: it is caused by humans, and it takes its toll on human and nonhuman agents alike at a scale that presents as spectacular damage but whose repercussions play out slowly over time. In the poets that I examine as a part of this project, the ecological toll is interlaced with and as equally important as the human one in the wake of violent events.

Nixon has written much about the representational challenges of this kind of violence, and other recent critical voices in Latin American studies have expanded his ideas about the apprehension of slow violence, focusing on Latin American art that “resists [neoliberal] amnesia related to ecological violence” (Kressner et al 4). Spanish-America and all other postcolonial places in the Caribbean, as Kressner and her colleagues observe, have been providing cheap labor and resources to the Global North for more than 500 years (4). In many ways it is because of this exploitation that the Caribbean has in turn developed a rich social, intellectual, and literary history of counter-discourses and social movements that call out abuses of power and protest disenfranchisement actively and assertively. I agree with Kressner’s categorization of Latin American ecologically-minded artists as “activists” in arguing that this activism continues into the contemporary moment through the poets I examine as a part of this project: they work at the intersection of anticolonial and anticapitalist protest in examining the wrongs done to both human and nonhuman environments by neoliberal policies and multinational companies.

These scholars are able to do their work examining contemporary representations of ecological violence only because it has long been a concern in Latin America and in the Caribbean literature and cultural in particular. I would like to briefly trace the legacy and definitions of violence in Caribbean literature and cultural studies in order to situate my poets in

a grounded, distinct literary tradition in the region. As Guillermina de Ferrari notes, “the very need for a theory of the Caribbean...speaks of a lack of history prior to its history: the Caribbean is an invention of history that takes as its point of departure the absence of history” (18). For many writers and thinkers in the region, a history of violence in the Caribbean begins, as Barbadian poet and scholar Kamau Brathwaite describes, with the “original explosion” of the Middle Passage (McSweeney 2005), and the violence of the transatlantic slave trade and colonization. Writers like Brathwaite and Derek Walcott truly depict this hollow beginning as “sensational” violence in their poetic work to heighten the reverberations of its impact across time and space.

As a way to explain trends in Caribbean literary production and thought, Edouard Glissant’s theories in *Poetics of Relation* similarly discuss the violence of colonization and the slave trade, and the hollowness of origin that gapes at the center of Caribbean letters. In his discussion of origins and foundational mythologies, Glissant coins the term “filiation,” which he uses to mean a kind of progress forward or backward engendering from a specific origin—place, racial identity, culture, religion. In Western civilization, he argues, filiation is the dominant narrative which works linearly, which, if threatened, results in tragedy. Glissant maintains that filiation is violent because it is based upon the exclusion of the other (52). These foundational western narratives of (which in his references is mostly European and Christian) of an origin that provides legitimacy are part of what drive European ideas of colonial expansion into the rest of the world being of “absolute value:” a linear narrative of ascendancy and progress, of expansion and discovery (56). This narrative of “hidden violence” against the other not only implicates human beings, but also the Caribbean landscape: Glissant speaks at length about the phenomenon of the plantation across the Gulf of Mexico and beyond, in which, to “fantasize

legitimacy,” colonists pushed the images and descriptions of landscape to the extreme, heightening “the gentleness and the beauty of it,” to “blot out the shudders of life, that is, the turbulent realities of the Plantation, beneath the conventional splendor of scenery” (70). Ecological landscape, in much of Caribbean letters, is then a participant in colonial fantasies of legitimacy, which native writers subvert by “conceiv[ing] of landscape as basically implicated in a story, in which it too was a vivid character” (Glissant 71). Including the landscape as a character and charging it with agency is not new but foundational to Caribbean literature as a way to resist, question, and oppose the tradition of over-bucolisizing landscape as a “disguised apology” (Glissant 70), and re-establish a relationship to landscape that had been severed by Plantation life. As Lizabeth Paravisini Gebert observes, and which is certainly true for the poets I discuss in this project, “Caribbean writers refuse to depict the natural world in terms that erase the relationship between landscape and power” (100).

Many other scholars of postcolonial literature and the environmental humanities build on the ideas I’ve discussed above: cultivating an understanding of the history of imperialism and globalization and their role in contemporary environmental issues is now ubiquitous in postcolonial environmental humanities and other branches of Global South studies.<sup>1</sup> Glissant’s ideas are central to articulating why inherent narratives of exclusion and cultural forms can also possess a “hidden” violence, of filiation, and how more contemporary authors that he references like Derek Walcott, Kamau Brathwaite, Jamaica Kincaid, and even William Faulkner, are concerned with re-imagining these landscapes, narrative structures, and forms in ways that push back against their antecedents that exclude experiences of the other: the spiralist literature of the

---

<sup>1</sup> See DeLoughrey, et al. *Caribbean Literature and the Environment*. UVA Press, 2005; Clark, Timothy. *The Value of Ecocriticism*. Cambridge UP, 2019. Also the work of: Timothy Morton, Ericka Beckman, Amitav Ghosh, Scott Slovic, Kessler et al, and Rob Nixon, among others, as mentioned above.

Caribbean is one example, Walcott's re-writing of epic as pan-Caribbean in the *Omeros*, Brathwaite's experimental poetics, Faulkner's fragmented stream-of-consciousness. Key to Glissant's concept of filiation is its linguistic rendering: it gains power as verbal agent, through art and myth and narrative, story and sacred text. There is a textual dimension to the violence of filiation that is important and specific to the Caribbean—it is more conscious than most, as a cultural space that has been the victim of so much linguistic violence, of exactly how much damage words can do, both to humans and nonhumans alike. One need only examine the chronicles of the “discovery” of the New World and works like Angel Rama's *La ciudad letrada*, or the discussion of the history of scientific and horticultural knowledge in chapter two of this project, to see the textual dimension of colonial violence at work.

The same could be argued, then, of the western ideas of the “domination” or “taming” of natural spaces: filiation exists now as the narrative that global human “progress” is the unending accumulation of capital at the expense of the environment. A plethora of contemporary cultural critics and scholars have declared that the change or reversal of this narrative is the most important task of this contemporary moment as humans worldwide struggle to address climate change.<sup>2</sup> Environmental violence takes many forms: hurricanes, as I have discussed, but also resource extraction, chemical dumping, tourism, including climate change and the slow violence it enacts upon vulnerable bioregions worldwide. However, the works that I will discuss in this project, as complex and innovative works of art, are not reductive in the kinds of violence, environmental or otherwise, that they engage with in their subject matter. To best describe the ways in which different kinds of violence imbricate one another, I would like to turn to Amanda

---

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Clark, in *The Value of Ecocriticism* (2019) posits this based on a survey of contemporary environmental humanities scholarship, as does Amitav Ghosh in *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016).

Kearney's work on trauma theory and her concept of "place harm," which, by virtue of being so broad a term, is able to contain within it the many agents and victims implicated in acts of violence that damage a specific place, both human and nonhuman, and the ensuing consequential cultural violence. Kearney's work is crucial in how it views place as a living cultural entity of which the ecological environment is an inextricable part, and place violence as a confluence of many different, human-caused forces. When I use the word violence in this project, it is with Kearney's ideas of place violence and "cultural wounding," in mind, in which place violence is "achieved through deliberate and sanctioned acts such as colonization (neocolonialism, war, genocide, ethnic cleansing... epidemics, destruction of environments, taking of lands, forced removal and enslavement" (2). I include the creeping effects of chemical damage and pollution, poverty and disenfranchisement, and climate change that are part of the slow violence that Rob Nixon covers in his work in my use of the word violence. I also consider what Kearney calls "cultural wounding" to be a part of my use of the word violence as "the violation of persons and their cultural lives through insult and injury, motivated by the desire to destroy or significantly harm this culture and its bearers" (2). I consider Glissant's violence of filiation to be one example of cultural wounding.

With the goal of developing a non-anthropocentric notion of place, I would like to reconsider it in tandem with Kearney's ideas and Jane Bennet's political ecology of vibrant material assemblages in suggesting that place, as a living cultural artifact, exists at the confluence of material, political, cultural, spiritual, historical, and biological entities which are both living and nonliving. Bennett's theory of assemblage argues for a vibrant (read: alive, imbued with action as an "actant," which she draws from Latour) agency of things, both human and nonhuman. These assemblages, a term which she co-opts from Deleuze and Guattari,

reconceptualize part and whole dynamics into agents of “mutual dependence with friction and violence between parts” (23). A key component Bennett’s notion of assemblage, for my own purposes, is its materiality and its inherent disorder: the friction and violence, “volatile,” but a “somehow functioning whole” (23). Not governed by any central head, they are made up of affects and bodies just much as nonhuman material objects, plants and animals, and human actors. What is crucial in this notion of place in tandem with the poets I discuss is a confluence and kinship of many bodies working together—often a community, a whole made out of different parts that work toward the same goal.

The intersection of place and violence, and the fact that different kinds of violence are deeply imbricated with one another is key to the work of the poets I discuss in this project. Delgado’s *Dias naturales* explores the many kinds of violences that continue and endure after a catastrophic event like Hurricane Maria even amidst a resurgence of place, including the over 4,000 dead from the storm and those who died as a result of lack of government assistance, as well as economic collapse and forced migration of young people into the diaspora (Kishore et al, 2018). This includes the capacity of language to construct and build as well as call out, act against, and observe physical, social, environmental, and cultural violence.

The poetic subject of Kei Miller’s *In Nearby Bushes* (2019) struggles to place itself in a shifting landscape that continuously unearths colonial violence and destruction that is constantly equated and compared to contemporary violent crimes, the cumulative environmental damage of climate change, the cultural violence of colonization, neocolonialism, and the tourism and multinational industries at work in Jamaica. Miller is deeply aware of the “violence of place:” those exact words are featured in the third section of his work. The violence of language is pivotal to Miller’s articulations in his collection: words are cutting, and they can make a

decomposing body beautiful just as much as they can unveil the sinister violence of stories and histories metonymically found in the landscape itself.

Thais Espaillat Ureña's poetic voice in *Tienes quién te cuide la mula?* (2020) similarly wonders what to do in the face of disaster. They are paralyzed by the current moment: the looming threat of climate change is often in their thoughts. The social inequity and place violence of climate change and its affective consequences drives the poetic voice to develop imaginative new ways of interacting with their environment that challenge representational status quos and offer new possibilities for connection even in the face of apocalypse.

Rather than collapsing the differences between these poets and their geographically diverse experiences with climate and ecology, this project gathers strength in its focus on poets of different regions in the Caribbean. It creates a network of affective articulations from which to draw upon in discerning a larger picture of how the climate crisis is affecting the region from a more global perspective. I contend that, in order to face the rising tide, the poets I discuss in this project begin to re-think and develop different emotional ties to their nonhuman surroundings. They create kinships and multispecies relationships as part of a network of solidarity which enables them to recognize, confront, and resist how the effects of climate change interact with and perpetuate historical legacies of colonialism and enslavement in their respective nations. In doing so, they are able to articulate a necessary cultural shift in how human beings live, think, and relate to our surroundings if we would like to imagine a future on this planet.

## Chapter One

### Creative Placemaking and Community Futures in Nicole Cecilia Delgado's

#### *Días naturales*

Nicole Cecilia Delgado's 2018 poetry collection *Días naturales* begins with a question:

Frente al monte

que vuelve pronto

a ser verde

qué podemos

hacer nosotras

para habitarnos?

Standing in front of a mountain whose re-greening of the landscape takes center stage and leaves the speaker's thoughts on the sidelines, the poetic voice watches and wonders. In conversation with the reader, and also with the mountain referenced in the poem, Delgado's answer to how human reader and poet and nonhuman mountains, trees, birds, rocks and debris can "inhabit" one another, reciprocally, as the use of the reflexive implies, cuts deeply into the heart of the relationship between culture and environment in Puerto Rico in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Written in the wake of Hurricane María's impact on Puerto Rico in 2017 and made by hand in Delgado's Risograph print workshop, La Impresora, *Días naturales* is Delgado's reimagination of how to be and exist in a place that has suffered after so many catastrophes present and historical. It is one of many creative works that came into existence after Hurricane María and Hurricane Irma that sought to redefine and reimagine, protest, witness, cope, and recognize how the hurricanes affected the lives of so many Puerto Ricans, and how it



fundamentally changed their relationship to the place they called home.<sup>3</sup> It differs from many of these other works, however, in the questions it asks about the reciprocal nature of place as a collective, collaborative endeavor between humans and the ecological environment, and in doing so materially, both in the physical object of its construction and through linguistic means. *Días naturales* works to recover notions of place after the catastrophic place violence of Hurricane María through temporal and linguistic ordering, renewed attention to the actors in place both human and ecological, and retrospective recognition and reflection. In doing so, it is able to recover a notion of place as a vital cultural assemblage, and as a collaborative effort between human and nonhuman actors. It envisions a future in which these actors work and exist reciprocally, and where art itself is a pivotal conduit for mutual success, reflection, and collaboration in creating place. Not only is the collection a stand-alone poetic achievement, but the circumstances of its composition—as an artist book published by an independent, Spanish-language local press, as a response to a catastrophic storm that demonstrated the vulnerability of all coastal cultures amid rising sea levels and the consequences of global climate change, and as a book by a Caribbean author living under U.S. jurisdiction—demonstrate how *Días naturales* engages in deeply urgent global concerns in new, innovative ways. In this chapter, I hope to demonstrate how *Días naturales*' re-imagination of place in Puerto Rico participates in not only local but global conversations about how we can live now in the midst of so many world-scale catastrophes: kindly, collaboratively, creatively, and in solidarity not only with our human peers but with our nonhuman environments.

### **Hurricane María and Place Harm in Puerto Rico**

---

<sup>3</sup> For other examples of creative responses to Hurricane María and its aftermath see: selections in Bonilla and Lebrón, 2019; the 2017 [Focus on Puerto Rico](#) showcase (Miami); and the multidisciplinary arts event and exhibit [Coasts in Crisis: Art and Conversation After Recent Hurricanes](#) (Charlottesville, 2019), among many others.

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017, Hurricane María, in the wake of its younger sister-storm Irma, struck the island with the strength of a category four hurricane. Initial reports indicated only a handful dead, but three years later the estimated toll rises above 5,000 not just from the storm but from its fallout.<sup>4</sup> María knocked out power throughout the island, and left its citizens vulnerable to the elements and without fundamental infrastructure and social services not only in the weeks after, but for many people up to a year or more (Mazzei and Rosa, Chappell). Puerto Ricans across the island are still living with the aftermath.

Part of the persistent human cost was due to the ecological damage of the hurricane that disrupted infrastructure and ecosystems island-wide. Winds and rainfall downed trees and reduced vegetation coverage, leading to hotter, and wetter environments around the island that washed sediment into coastal estuaries, elevating them for up to four months after landfall and ultimately eroding coastal water quality and disrupting native ecosystems (Miller et. al, 2019). The debris of trees and vegetation along with material possessions, flotsam, and improvised garbage dumps from lack of government services lingered in the streets. Electricity failed and along with it the pumps that kept floodwaters as well as sanitary runoff from flooding neighborhoods, polluting beaches, estuaries, and rivers. There were over 100,000 landslides during and after the storm due to exposed bare soils along roads and communities and exposed agricultural soil combined with the excess rainfall. Though experts initially estimated that 98% of Puerto Rico's adult trees were downed from the storm, further research has shown that though much of the forests were defoliated, few trees were actually irreversibly damaged, and the forests remain alive and well. Pollinators that relied on foliage for food and shelter, however, suffered

---

<sup>4</sup> The Puerto Rican government's failure to accurately count the dead, even up to a year after the hurricane, continues to be a controversy involving state leaders and failures at multiple levels of government both on the island and in Washington (See Newkirk, 18 Aug. 2018).

from habitat loss. (Lugo 36-38). Mangrove trees were damaged considerably not only in Puerto Rico but throughout the Caribbean: 72% of mangroves that were damaged by the 2017 hurricane season did not recover or resulted in mortality (Taillie et al. 2020). This has significant effects on coastal and marine wildlife which rely on mangrove ecosystems to survive—their habitats had also been violently, possibly permanently, interrupted. Hurricane María’s violent impact on the island disrupted both human and nonhuman life in myriad ways. However, more broadly and as Bonilla and LeBrón have shown, the storm also revealed entrenched inequities that have a different timescale than the neat and time-specific narrative of the hurricane might imply.<sup>5</sup>

Catastrophe by any definition is a dis-ordering and defamiliarization of place: it is “an event producing a subversion of the order or system of things” (“Catastrophe”). In the second half of the twentieth century, the word has become associated with something uncontrollable, a “radical moment of interruption” (Aradau and Munster, 4). Nelson Maldonado Torres notes that in the context of Hurricane María, the difference between crisis, disaster, and catastrophe are important, and have implications for understanding Caribbean thinking (Bonilla and LeBrón, 413). He argues that crisis, etymologically related to the word critique by way of meanings having to do with choosing, judging, and deciding, is not adequate. Nor is the term disaster, which implies that “a decision as already been taken and the outcome revealed (414).

Catastrophe, by contrast, is “not about a decision or about fate, but about a dramatic turn of events, a ‘reversal of what is expected’ (as in drama) as well as ‘an overturning; a sudden end.’”

---

<sup>5</sup> Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol LeBrón, eds. *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm*. Haymarket Books, 2018. Bonilla and Lebrón talk in detail in their introduction and published conversation with Naomi Klein about what Hurricane María revealed, among them, “centuries of colonialism, decades of economic crisis, and deep forms of structural and infrastructural neglect” (47). Bonilla argues that this has left Puerto Ricans vulnerable to exploitation and accustomed to abandonment from social safety nets provided by the state.

(416). Mark Anderson notes that it is not only a disruption of order and routine, but enacts a sudden reconfiguration of identity, both personally, and of place (1).

Hurricane María can be considered this kind of catastrophe: one that suddenly overturned the landscape and the experience of place for both humans and nonhumans in a way that made it deeply unfamiliar in a short amount of time. For human victims of catastrophic storms, then, disordering, overturning, and rupture take place at the physical/material, and as a result, have drastic affective consequences. Bladow and Ladino see a connection between the living physical environment and its nonhuman material elements as “agents in shaping affect” (8). I have already discussed how I view place as a living cultural artifact which exists at the intersection of different material, political, cultural, spiritual, historical and biological entities, both living and nonliving in the introduction. I use the words physical and material interchangeably in referring to things both living and nonliving that you can see, touch, hear, or manipulate, in place. These material place elements and their condition deeply shape how humans and nonhumans experience place, both physically and emotionally.<sup>6</sup> This is particularly true in drastic changes to the physical environment, where the “flashbulb memory” of how we feel or where we are during a shocking event stays with us for long after the event is over (Bladow and Ladino, 2). When this happens in place, like our neighborhood or school or even our country, the sudden disruption of emotional and physical familiarity becomes not only an individual but a collective shock. Bonilla and LeBrón make this visible in the accounts from survivors of Hurricane María that they include in their volume, many of which detail the shock of finding their own senses of place decimated by the storm.

---

<sup>6</sup> See Hector Hoyos, *Things With a History*, Columbia UP, 2019 for more on how this takes place in a specifically Latin American context of extractivism, coloniality, and global imperialism.

Accounts from survivors of the hurricane talk about sheltering in the smallest spaces of their houses, only able to see what was visible outside of their windows. On emerging after the storm passed, people were shocked to see their world turned upside down:

... I rode my bicycle from where I live on the outskirts of San Juan to the university, where I have worked for more than thirty years. That's when I saw how it was. Traffic completely chaotic. Lampposts, trees, whatever, in the middle of the street. I arrived at the front of the university, which was closed, and I saw the buildings for the first time, because they had had trees in front before, and now they weren't there. I remember going into Río Piedras, which is the sector of San Juan where the university is, and feeling the silence. It was not because there weren't people around; in fact, there were. But there were no birds, and it's the most uncanny feeling you can have, because that's the sound of death. Everything was dying (Lalo 129).

The physical ordering of Eduardo Lalo's world has turned over, quite literally: the places he once knew as familiar, the university where he's worked for decades, is still recognizable but more different than it's ever been; the trees gone, the world silent because the birds have disappeared. Lalo's essay about his hurricane experience, "Narrating the Un-nameable," is one example of how the physical and material breakdown of order, routine, and normalcy has a significant impact on survivors that is manifested both linguistically and affectively. As Lalo says, the "uncanny[ness]" (129) of the hurricane's aftermath resists description—it is an experience that is hard to narrate, and difficult to name. "You could put into words all the government's irresponsibility and its corruption. And people do that every day. But you cannot use words to capture pain, especially collective pain" (Lalo 130).

Lalo is only one of many who struggles linguistically to describe both individual and collective feelings following Hurricane María. Beatriz Llenín Figueroa's creative piece, *This was meant to be a hurricane diary* speaks similarly: "A month on, but it has been years. Decades. This is a pain without time. So many of us don't even have the spaces (homes, plazas, community centers) where we used to cry anymore. This is also a pain that cannot be written. So many bubbles of falsehood have burst that there is no language to encompass them" (137). The total lack of language to describe what is a lingering and deep collective pain is also due to and compounded by centuries of colonial occupation and subjugation in Puerto Rico. LeBrón and Bonilla frame Hurricane María and the contextual entanglements that exacerbated its impact, like the debt crisis and lack of basic infrastructure after the storm, as only one in a series of catastrophes that make up the story of Puerto Rico. This is why catastrophe and its definitions are so pivotal for understanding, as Maldonado Torres says, a Caribbean way of thinking: Puerto Rico has since the sixteenth century has participated in a "normalization of catastrophe, evident in the form of continued dehumanization, expropriation, slavery, (and its aftermaths), and genocide, otherwise known as coloniality" (Maldonado Torres 418). These nested catastrophes make for a significantly more painful, emotional impact for survivors of Hurricane Maria: it was not only a brutal ripping away of lives, livelihoods, and communities, but the response-time and lack of functional infrastructure that led to just as much if not more suffering was a reminder to Puerto Ricans of their continued colonial status as second-class citizens under U.S. sovereignty. Llenín Figueroa continues, in her creative piece, to describe the lie of Puerto Rico's status as a U.S. "commonwealth," their "miserable history of enslavement, exploitation, discrimination, dependency, corruption, self-sabotage. After the hurricane, I discover, to my ineffable pain, that the highways, gasoline, cell phones, cement light posts, shiny signs and billboards of tax-exempt

corporate chains—that all these things can disguise the misery, and in fact have disguised it for a long time, even though we ‘knew’ they didn’t” (127-128). Her account speaks to how Hurricane Maria’s physical damage worked to unveil a deep-seated collective pain in the wake of the storm in which centuries of political history came to the fore as emotional toll.

### **Community and Kinship: Grassroots as Ars Poetica at La Impresora**

Collective endeavor and a sense of kinship and community are key to the recovery of place and the project of its future in *Días naturales*. Though few other human figures appear directly in the volume besides the poetic voice, she often uses “nosotros” or other forms of the first-person plural to indicate collective affects, feelings, and endeavors. In this collective mindset, like in the “habitarse” from the first poem in the collection, she often includes the ecological environment as an interlocutor. In that first poem as in the last in the collection, in asking how to inhabit each other reciprocally and how to move forward collectively toward a shared future, Delgado asserts that place, too, is something that must be re-built, re-imagined, and re-made. This takes place creatively and in tandem with the nonhuman environment as she re-makes Puerto Rico in microcosm in *Días naturales*.

Fundamentally, Delgado’s efforts to include a kinship with the environment and sense of community as a part of her collection are also part of her larger creative endeavors as one half of La Impresora. Delgado began La Impresora in 2016 and shortly after was joined by Amanda Hernández, another poet from Puerto Rico. The two women work out of their own Risograph print workshop, where they print and bind bespoke editions of poetry, comics, and mixed media books by hand for a variety of artists and authors across the island and in the diaspora. A collaborative endeavor between two artists, their project started as an experiment in publishing handmade, carefully designed editions. Since then they have expanded their offerings, publishing

full-length editions of poetry, individual poems, and a series of first-time publications for new voices in poetry.

The history of avant-garde art and literature in Latin America from the 1920s onward—its focus on typographical experimentation, pamphlets, and often self-funded magazines publishing new work and ideas continues today in a community of smaller independent presses focusing on handmade or unique editions (Drucker). Though there exists no current academic study or compendium of artist books and independent presses in Latin America, this doesn't mean handmade books are scarce—on the contrary.<sup>7</sup> Delgado is part of a small but growing community of artists and writers making and selling books made by hand, or printing in innovative ways that take an interest in the material object. These small press and handmade endeavors are innovative and essential to literary life and circulation in Latin America because they are able to bypass the imperialism of a larger global publishing industry that consistently sidelines non-English language texts and authors. Handmade editions are one of a kind, serving as their own work of art rather than just a mass-produced paperback. They allow marginalized voices an accessible place in literary life rather than serving as a barrier to entry, and make their product affordable to a wider range of readers.

The small press and handmade movement experienced a revival twenty years ago with the rise of Cartonera Publishing, a loose collective of writers, artists, and makers who began creating books out of discarded materials in Argentina in 2001. Made of cheaply printed paper and cardboard covers painted or drawn by hand, the Cartonera movement quickly caught on throughout Latin America as an experiment in making and distributing cheap, accessible editions

---

<sup>7</sup> Other contemporary examples include but are not limited to: [Azul de bolsillo](#) (Colombia), [Imprenta rescate](#) (Argentina), [Taller de ediciones económicas](#) (Mexico), [Can Can Press](#) (Mexico), [Editorial Kindberg](#) (Chile), [Libros de Guayama](#) (Barcelona, pan-Caribbean)



that served the communities where they were made: there are Cartonera publishers in Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico, and throughout the Caribbean (*Cartoneras*). The spread of this movement allowed Delgado's interest in artist books and Risograph and her community of makers to grow: in her 2021 essay "A Mano / By Hand" she describes how she and another Puerto Rican poet, Xavier Valcarcel, used the Cartonera movement as a model when they created Atarraya Cartonera in 2009. Making books out of cardboard and elevating new writers allowed them to "explore more accessible avenues of publication. The Puerto Rican publishers were collapsing under the weight of the recession and those that remained were closed circles most responsive to institutional interests, charging the authors large sums while excluding them from the editorial process" (12).

Of particular relevance to artist books in Latin America as well as Delgado's journey to La Impresora is Ulises Carrión's "El arte nuevo de hacer libros." A Mexican writer and conceptual artist, he is lauded as Mexico's great theorist in the conceptual art movements of the 1970s and thinker on the book as physical object. His essay is a manifesto on the relationship between text and object: not only is the writer responsible for the text itself, but for the entire process of bringing that text to the reader (Carrión 33). This is visible in much of Delgado's own work, largely written, printed, designed, bound, and even distributed by her own hands. His work, along with Mexico's community of small presses and book artists like Ambar Past allowed Delgado to form a community of artists and writers, and to learn about new techniques and tools in the bookmaking process.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Ambar Past is an American poet who has lived in Chiapas since in the 1970s. She runs Taller Leñateros, a bookmaking workshop where local Tzotzil Maya-speaking indigenous women write, create, and bind writing in their native language using recycled and natural materials and techniques.

Delgado brought this sense of community into La Impresora when she returned to Puerto Rico: outreach has been a cornerstone of her work since the project began. La Impresora regularly holds workshops, organizes pop-ups and readings, and teaches others how to work with Risograph and bind their own books. They include the environment as part of that community: their editions are made using environmentally friendly materials, and soy-based ink.<sup>9</sup> La Impresora is also the headquarters of the Feria de Libros Independientes y Alternativos de Puerto Rico. Delgado says in an interview: “Esta creo que es uno de nuestros servicios más importantes a la comunidad literaria en Puerto Rico, porque ha ayudado a crear redes, formas alianzas y brindar un espacio no institucional para el intercambio y circulación de nuestros materiales” (López-Pérez, “Poeta Nicole Delgado”). In building a space for nontraditional publishing that merges art with poetry, Delgado and Hernández have also built a community of visual artists and poets, and bring new people into that community through their new voices series.

La Impresora’s work to build a holistic community that learns, creates, and strives toward a more ecological future is especially notable given that they sit on the sidelines of the global poetry and publishing scene. As an independent, Spanish-language, Puerto Rican press, their work sits outside of the mainstream publishing outlets, which in the U.S. is overrun by English-language material and a few privileged translated foreign-language editions per year, still fewer by Puerto Rican authors, and none of them handmade. The very deliberate work that it takes to produce editions at La Impresora, which are hand-cut and bound when printed, and the accessibility of their product, both in terms of production and consumption, are essential to an ethos that serves the community where it lives first. In elevating Puerto Rican authors, encouraging readership in their own community, and nourishing that community through her

---

<sup>9</sup> See <https://cargocollective.com/laimpresora> for more information

work, Delgado's grassroots efforts both in her poetry and her larger platform as part of La Impresora is not just a reclamation of place in Puerto Rico after disaster, but a reclamation of the arts themselves, and a recognition of how to build a creative future, together.

**After the Storm: Temporal, Linguistic, and Material Ordering in *Días naturales***

Community, both with human and nonhuman beings is central to Delgado's poetic project in *Días naturales*. The collection "takes place," so to speak, retrospectively: it is an exercise in after. There are no violent descriptions of hurricane damage, no sudden shock like the personal essays I quoted earlier. Written by Delgado during a stay at a friend's homestead in Cabo Rojo for clean-up work a month after María, the collection alludes to the hurricane's physical damage as well as deeply troubling issues like the mounting death toll, migration into the diaspora, and the breakdown of the electric grid and its consequences, but they are rarely the primary focus in individual poems. Instead, the poetic voice works to order a disordered world materially, temporally, and linguistically in order to reimagine place after catastrophic place violence. By insisting on more than human notions of time, material, and language, Delgado is able to reconceive place along lines of kinship with her surrounding environment.<sup>10</sup>

Re-ordering first takes place at the temporal level: it takes on new meanings and rhythms now that human-centered time has been banished along with the electric grid, an intact built environment, and a functional economy. What is left is ecological time, natural time: días naturales. The sun on the cover marks the beginnings and the ends of these days, with certain poems dated, marking how long it's been since the hurricane. Time is measured in natural rhythms: the sunrise and sunset, the hurricane season and its waning. The poems themselves

---

<sup>10</sup> For more on human/environmental notions of kinship, see Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke UP, 2016. And also Heise, Ursula. *Imagining Extinction: The Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.

seem written day by day, often beginning with “Esta tarde” or describing an evening moment. The progression of the poems themselves often feels chronological, anchored by the second poem in the volume, dated “sábado 18 de noviembre de 2017” (2). Two months out from Hurricane María, and the poetic voice expresses relief and joy at the resurgence of the natural world:

Cuánto asombro  
 si vuelve a asomarse  
 el bienteveo  
 entre los árboles  
 de la casa

Cuánto alivio siente el cuerpo  
 si los gallos cantan (2).

It is at the bottom of this same poem that the date is written, but it works only to mark how long it’s been since the hurricane passed. For the poetic voice, the real measure of time since the hurricane is the renewed tangibility of the natural world: the amazement at the return of the bienteveo, the relief in hearing the roosters crow again.

Not only does the new growth mark time in the volume, but the rhythm of the days and the seasonality, or un-seasonal appearance of natural phenomena, also work to order time environmentally instead of on a human-centered schedule. The rhythms of the moon cycles make several appearances, waxing and waning: “La luna nueva es la oscuridad / de la semilla / El huracán / fue exactamente en luna nueva” (9). The appearance of thousands of dragonflies after the hurricane sticks out to the poetic voice: they are like “una estampida / Nadie sabe si llegaron

de otra parte / o si nacieron de las inundaciones” (14). Lurking behind her wonder at the stampede of dragonflies is a recognition of the natural world as an independent entity: it is not controlled or fully understood by her. Nonetheless, they are working toward the same goal: resurgence. While Delgado’s references to natural phenomena work metaphorically in ways that I will discuss later on, they also work to destabilize a notion of time that centers around human activity. Re-ordering the temporal experience is one step toward mutual recognition and co-habitation, as the poetic voice expresses in the first poem of the collection. Living reciprocally involves respect and understanding, recognition and willingness to experience new rhythms of living, and the forced change in rhythms caused by Hurricane María has opened the poetic voice up to this new kind of attunement, a connection that is foundational for recovering place and imagining its future.

New rhythms and notions of ordering time also allow the poetic voice to reconsider material and linguistic ordering, and their intersection. The third poem in the collection introduces poetry and language itself as an ordering mechanism and a catalyst for reciprocity between the human and nonhuman worlds:

Esta tarde  
 el poema es  
 una cadena humana  
 de trozos de poda  
 de árbol de mango” (3).

The enjambment that creates short, even lines and the polysyndeton of “de” together with the human chain that is actually made of branches of mango tree embody this link. It is the poem that makes the chain than is both human and humane, the poetic voice declares, the medium

through which the line begins to blur between the human and the ecological. Order begins at the linguistic level, and it works to re-order the separation between the human poetic voice and the nonhuman world throughout the rest of the collection.

Delgado uses these “cadenas,” which she establishes in the poem quoted above, to propose a concept of poetry that is the ordering mechanism between the human and nonhuman worlds, and one which, visually, materially, and linguistically, facilitates their growing reciprocity. The poetic voice does this by returning to her “cadena” several times across the collection, often markedly by using the same word: it appears again on page twelve: “El día es ya un eslabón perdido / en esta cadena de hallazgos memorables / Quizás venga el olvido / Quizás venga la luz” (12). This is a change from the previous poem, where the “cadena” was not made of memory or days, but of tree branches and human workers clearing them away. However, this connection still prefigures the “cadena” that the poetic voice describes here: amongst “el sereno y los amigos” (12), between human and nature, literally, the dewfall and her friends. The possibility for a double-entendre in the word “sereno” is similarly suggestive, meaning here both the dew, and someone who acts as night watchman. Her friends are walking along the road at day’s end, and she is listening to them, wondering about how to order the day itself, where it fits. She wonders if perhaps it doesn’t fit, as suggested by the use of “eslabón perdido,” a broken link in the chain of the “hallazgos memorables,” the memorable happenings after the hurricane, not all of them good. She wonders if she will forget it all, and echoes that with irony, betting against it by wondering if the electricity will come back on. Though this poem is much darker than its previous counterpart, the incorporation of “cadenas” as days, or the poetic natural days as the title suggests, suggests that poetry is at work to link the material elements of place (dewfall at twilight, the road and where it leads, human and nonhuman company in it, the reminders of

disaster like the broken electric grid that still mar the landscape), with place experience and memory.

The last three poems of the collection appear in a separate section titled “Plantas raras,” in which human beings are the rare flora in a landscape of bracken and slowly greening or browning debris; trees on the mountain, swarms of dragonflies that appear after the hurricane, piles of branches, roaming chickens and makeshift graves. The poetic voice opens in a contemplation of human existence: “Son siempre las mismas preguntas / que atormentan la existencia humana: / Qué ser / cómo amar...” (16) she continues asking how to be happy, and how to “hacer,” the only indented verb in a long line of enjambed one or two-word verses, ending on “hacer silencio.” (16). The focus on “hacer” as an *Ars poetica* gathers speed in the next two poems, the first another long list of what two “siluetas” (17) who recognize each other in the night make; silence, empty words, ending on “Tiene mil formas el verbo hacer” (17). This impulse to doing or ordering does not have to be loud or bold—the poetic voice tells us on more than one occasion that silence is something that can be made, but so can several other things, among them, “el aire respirarse en el cuerpo” (17).

The poetic voice’s insistence on the polysemy of “hacer” frames the following poem, in which she addresses an apostrophe to poetry to close the collection: “Tú y yo / construimos / altares paganos” (18), building the altar itself in the short blocks of text on the page, accumulating on top of one another. She continues building this chain, this accumulation of text as altar, finding space for “objetos encontrados / a lo largo del camino” (18), which form:

un hilo de símbolos  
 (según se te presentan)  
 que dan sentido al vínculo

entre palabra

y acción.

The poetic voice never singles out poetry itself as the “tú” of her apostrophe, but I propose that this poem forms the final argument of the ars poetica Delgado has been building throughout the collection. Its careful incorporation into Delgado’s phrasing opens the reader to imagine the answers to her questions, for example “¿qué se supone que hacemos / con esta información?” (9), and “qué podemos hacer nosotras / para habitarnos?” (1), as something active, reinforces the physical and material work of ordering involved both in cleanup labor and in language. In each of these instances, Delgado could have used “cómo” instead or rephrased the question in a different way, but their purposeful constructions with the verb “hacer” suggests that poetry itself is something to be made, a kind of work and clearing that happens at the same time as Delgado’s work clearing up debris.

In closing the collection, the poetic voice offers not one but two resurgent images of the “cadena” that had appeared earlier in the work. The “hilo de símbolos,” whether signs themselves or the flora and fauna that populate her poetic landscape, help us to make sense of the link between word and action, another chain-image that is formed from the first one. Poetry, then, creates this thread of symbols and makes the connection between human and environment material: poetry embodies this connection in being the “cadena” that materializes and weaves together differing but reciprocal ecologies. In the metaphor of the chain or “vínculo,” it becomes its own kind of matter, concrete and material, another part of Delgado’s landscape and the force that produces its renewal.

**Vibrant Matter: *Días naturales* as Material Object**



The focus on ordering time, space, and language allows the poetic voice a renewed attention to the material elements of place, which allows her to conceive of it visually in new ways. The material elements of place—the flora and fauna, debris from the storm, rocks stacked as unmarked graves, and the topography of Mayagüez—populate the collection, appearing as both characters in individual poems and as stand-alone illustrations. Delgado gestures to the importance of these material characters in the physical construction of the book itself: as a physical object, *Días naturales*' play not only with colored ink, but the color of the pages and paper itself and its illustrations visually recreate the landscape that Delgado describes in the text. The collection's cover is white with a black-ink print of a drawing of a chair in front of a tropical, leafy plant, encircled by a large pale-yellow dot, perhaps the sun, which frames the landscape. The endpaper inside the front and back cover is a deep, oceanic turquoise, in stark contrast to the white and the sand-colored orangey-pink of the thinner, printed pages. The ink, for the majority though not all of the poems, is green, evoking the island's deep-green flora and tree-covered mountains. In the physical construction of the collection itself, Delgado also recreates Puerto Rico as an island: the endnotes, as the ocean that borders the sand of the pages on all sides, and the deep green of the ink, the interior and the heart of the collection.<sup>11</sup> In creating Puerto Rico in microcosm, Delgado sets the stage and gives space and voice to the ecological characters that populate the island.

After the hurricane, the physical, and thus, affective experience of place has changed so drastically that this place material takes on new resonances: the cry of the rooster brings that much more relief, as the poetic voice says above. Similarly, the construction-standard blue tarp given out by FEMA and serving as a symbol of failed U.S. assistance, is an instant reminder to

---

<sup>11</sup> See Image 1

many Puerto Ricans of the days following the storm as it held up roofs and draped over windows. While tarp itself does not appear in the volume, there are two illustrations that take up whole pages and accompany short poems on their opposite pages: one of a red chicken, with the text “Vivir con animales / para ser más animales” (4-5), and another of rocks stacked in black ink as an unmarked grave, accompanied by “No tiene nombre tanta pérdida / y todavía hay muertos sin nombre / entre nosotros” (10-11).<sup>12</sup> The rooster is an echo of an earlier poem I quoted above, and the short text on its opposite page is short enough that it reads as open ended: being like an animal is not necessarily a bad thing in a collection that explores human connections and collaborations with the nonhuman environment. It is at once an acknowledgement of that connection as it is a remark on the unrecognizability of place now, after the hurricane: with no electricity or running water.

The stand of rocks, in black, haphazard and improvised, communicates what the text acknowledges that the poetic voice cannot: there are not enough words to describe so much loss, among them the unnamed dead. Seeing the stand of rocks is a powerful reminder of the extent of emotional pain and devastation. Placing renewed focus on the material elements of place like the examples I’ve discussed above allows Delgado to re-imagine them, and also to express using visuals what words cannot: the unnamable aspects of hurricane loss. In doing so she also shifts the idea of human-ness on its side: what does it mean now, in this new place, to coexist with a nonhuman landscape? The visuals in combination with the text stretches and bends the strength of significance of the text, allowing Delgado to explore new resonances and connections in interspecies and inter-material relationships. The combination of visual and text is apt for a project that works to re-imagine such a dynamic, multifaceted concept like place: the

---

<sup>12</sup> See Image 3

incorporation of visual and handmade elements allows her to do so in a way that builds on different facets of place, like how its new material resonances shift species subjectivity, that would otherwise be left to text alone.

Delgado's concrete poem on page six is another example of a combination of visual elements and text that in this case allow her to explore memory and affective experience and their relationship to notions of place in the present, after disaster. Spread across two pages in the shape of a mountain and made out of the names of various mountains in the Americas specific to Delgado's travels and personal experiences, it's bookended by short lines of text: "Estar con la montaña y el poema / recordando las instancias de montaña / de la vida:" (6), and at the end, at the bottom of the mountain, "(La montaña es el poema)" (7).<sup>13</sup> The word order and grammar coupled with the enjambed lines highlight three key nouns in the first stanza: montaña, poema, and vida. The triangular relationship between these concepts across the volume is demonstrated in this poem as well, contrasting the nonhuman ecology of the mountain(s) with the life of the human poetic voice, refracted and coming together through the poem itself. What follows is a mountain of the mountains in Delgado's life, with occasional markers to say when or where in time she experienced them, ending with "Cabo Rojo hoy" (7). Kearney, in her discussion on natural disaster and its effects on human relationships to place, notes that natural disasters "fracture the kinship that binds people to sites of significance" (100). In her mountain literally built of memory and experience, the poetic voice works to remember those bonds of kinship with the natural world, and with Puerto Rico, after place violence. This poem is another example of how Delgado works to reclaim place in the volume, where the combination of the linguistic and visual allow her to probe the material quality of memory, and hold it up against her present

---

<sup>13</sup> See Image 2

moment. The end of the poem, on “Cabo Rojo, hoy” (7) and “(La montaña es el poema)” (7), by implying that both the mountain of human experience as well as the geological marker and ecosystem that is the mountain itself are both poems and poetic experiences in their own right emphasizes a poetics of materiality that echoes the *Ars poetica* of Delgado’s language across the volume.

The poetic voice’s deep-dive into memory and experiences tied to place and place-material as a way toward recovering it is also another way of sitting with and reflecting on the damage caused by Hurricane Maria. Marisol LeBrón, Yarimar Bonilla, and Patricia Noboa Ortega observe that “even in the face of these unnamable experiences, it is important to list, to witness, and to create spaces of narration. Rather than promoting a frenzied rush toward ‘recovery’ without assessing what was experienced, what was lost, and what was transformed... [Art that addresses the hurricane experience] encourage[s] us to dwell in fractured narratives that emerged from Hurricane María and its aftermath, suggesting that even in their incompleteness these fragmented tales reveal powerful, if difficult, truths” (14). Delgado’s use of the place materials that I’ve discussed above, her interest in order and ordering, and her keen, clean-cut observations are a way of dwelling with what has happened and taking stock. Scattered in observations about the landscape throughout Delgado’s volume are a recognition that place means something different now, and that it might never return to how it was before. The illustration in black of a stand of rocks as a makeshift grave is one example, a marker of human lives lost, as is the double-entendre of “sereno,” both as dew and as night watchman, and the need for one. In the same way her poem on page fourteen, which describes the “estampida” (14) of dragonflies that suddenly appeared on the island after the hurricane and wonders “¿Traerán cartas de la diáspora en las alas / las libélulas?” (14) invokes the mass exodus of Puerto Ricans

whom could no longer live or make a living on the island after María, many of whom are still living in the mainland U.S. or abroad.

The last section of the collection, called “Plantas raras” seems to more directly address, finally, the question of how to exist now in a place that is often unrecognizable, which has become hostile, unfamiliar, new, and which has changed shape. Her return to “hacer,” purposefully enjambed in otherwise clean lines of text (16), or the beginning in a list of a series of infinitive verbs (17), which are just a few of the “mil formas” (17) that the verb can take, offers an answer to the existential questions she poses at the close of the collection. This rage to do, make, and create, proposes a way of being that is decidedly active: re-building houses, dragging tree branches out of the road, memorializing the dead, creating kinship with a community both human and nonhuman.

### **Multispecies Solidarity, Collective Endeavor, and Puerto Rican Futures**

*Días naturales* sits poised on several crucial ontological questions: how to exist in a place you once called home after catastrophic place violence renders it unrecognizable; how to make space for, share, and collectively “inhabit” both Puerto Rico, and the planet earth more generally, in tandem with nonhuman beings; how to imagine a future in a place that used to feel familiar; among others. For Delgado, a future after catastrophic place violence looks like reclaiming place through creative means, through community care that includes the nonhuman, ecological community, and through active, forward motion. Instead of leaning in to the affective “shock” of the hurricane experience in her collection, Delgado’s poems focus on the everyday: small moments, the cry of the rooster, rather than dwelling on damage and debris. In doing so, she is able to sidestep what Elizabeth Deloughrey calls the “individualistic terms of apocalyptic fiction” (365) in favor of a multispecies collective solidarity of kinship, respect, and mutual

endeavor. The implications of this subversion of shock-value are wide-ranging: Delgado not only devalues the shock-and-awe hurricane narrative, but in doing so argues that a future after it, in which an accompanying apocalyptic vision of global climate change looms large, must require different models of engaging with our environment. Not only is *Días naturales* one such model on a textual level, but in every facet of its development as it journeys from Delgado to the reader, prioritizing the community at every step.

In serving a multispecies community as ethos, Delgado also works to subvert politicized narratives of Puerto Ricans as helpless nonvoting citizens living in a disaster zone by insisting on the power of collectives to create change. Radical politics has long been a part of Puerto Rican political life, and it is not absent at La Impresora: some of the tools they use in their workshop physically come from the now-shuttered offices of La Impresora Nacional, a press that printed materials for the Pro-Independence Movement and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (Delgado 25). Their name is an homage to their efforts. Delgado is not the only artist to focus on community and collectives in the wake of the hurricane: many people saw that the way citizens came together to help one another after Maria deeply changed how they thought about their communities (Bonilla and LeBrón). This communal thinking came to a head a year later, when protests island-wide helped oust island governor Ricardo “Ricky” Rosselló from power. Delgado continues to create and serve her community as La Impresora: in 2019 she opened an online store where readers can purchase books that now ship worldwide. In 2021, La Impresora moved to a permanent home in Isabela after two years of fundraising. There, Delgado plans to continue growing, collaborating, sharing, and expanding her community of readers, writers, and makers.

## Chapter Two

### Affective Kinship and Multispecies Relationships in Kei Miller's *In Nearby*

#### *Bushes*

The Jamaican poet Kei Miller's 2019 collection, *In Nearby Bushes*, features what have become the (in)famous Jamaican reindeer. Escaped from a farm after their enclosure was damaged by hurricane Gilbert in 1988, they have quickly become a populous, flourishing invasive species. Farmers complain that the deer damage crops, having "taken a liking to... pumpkins and carrots, and are now developing a taste for tropical fruits such as avocados and mangoes" (Pragg, IPS 20 Dec. 1999). Fleeing to the Blue Mountains, they discovered cooler temperatures, ample escape in the foothills, and a lack of natural predators. Their numbers have surged to such an extreme that the Jamaica's National Environment and Planning Agency has plans to eradicate them from the island (NIASSAP Jamaica, 2020). In Miller's Jamaica, the reindeer's incongruity cuts deeply to the heart of a poetic geography that charts belonging and displacement along both human and nonhuman lines:

There is such a thing as the perfect storm  
 It includes an actual storm & deer  
 in weak cages and nearby bushes.  
 How wonderful to escape  
 into hills that have always been escape.  
 They are the new maroons. At dawn,  
 they descend on quiet hooves  
 to loot from estates...

Miller's portrayal of the deer as ghostly, rarefied beings who "descend on quiet hooves"—who at once don't belong, but whose strange escape into the mountains and reappearance to human eyes also seems foretold—allows them to straddle issues of belonging and displacement in a way that mirrors many other human and nonhuman voices throughout the collection. The "nearby bushes" that facilitate this escape and which allow the reindeer to become the "new maroons"—runaways fleeing from capture that also recall the island's long and brutal legacy of enslavement—speaks to how Miller constructs not just the relationship between humans and the environment in the collection, but the story of place in Jamaica. Miller's poetic practice of examining the "understory" and Jamaica as "hills that have always been an escape" writ large teases out the complex tangle of past and present and the legacy of violence both contemporary and historical, which continues to shape life on the island.

*In Nearby Bushes* begins with two epigraphs describing the definition and linguistic nuance of the Jamaican colloquial phrase that is the book's title. The first quote is written in Patwa, while the second is written in standard English, highlighting the tension between two "places" in language that the collection explores. The "nearby bushes" are defined both as "concealment, danger" (vi) and as "a place of opportunity to do what one wishes to be hidden from others—sex, dispose of waste be it bodily waste or household waste" (vi), simultaneously a place of escape and dumping ground for discarded things. In telling the story of the nearby bushes Miller is telling the "understory" (7, 8) of Jamaica, "the stories underneath," (7) as he insists in the first few poems of the collection. The understory is a human story of underneath, of these places of escape and what happens there, but it is also a multi-species story: "understory" is quite literally "the (layer of) vegetation growing beneath the level of the tallest trees in a forest" ("Understorey"). By Miller's definition, the story of place in Jamaica is not exclusive to



humankind but rather also incorporates and comprises the story of Jamaica's ecological environment—its flora and fauna and what he casts as a shared experience with their human counterparts.

Written at the intersection of Jamaica's homicide crisis and the Caribbean's growing vulnerability to the effects of climate change, *In Nearby Bushes* is Miller's portrait of a Jamaica in which these crises take place alongside and interdependently of one another. His spiraling poetics allows Miller to collapse differences in time and space and draw parallels between semantic, conceptual, and special gaps. In doing so, he is able to create an affective kinship between the human and nonhuman characters in which the poetic voice communicates profound empathy and understanding along and across species lines. In Miller's poetic landscape, human and nonhuman beings share in suffering and tragedy, are displaced into strange new environments, exist despite difficult or impossible circumstances, and find peace and meaning even amidst unspeakable violence. Their parallel emotional experiences, similar despite differences in time, context, genus, species, and the crisis in question, allow Miller to explore contemporary Jamaica as a network of deep-rooted characters and affects that make up sense of place and history and as a series of perpetual displacements that uproot that same notion of place. This spiralist approach to place, in which Jamaica's "understory" of the nearby bushes eschews conceptual certainties and embraces the possibility of *both and*, when applied to a context of contemporary crises allows Miller to create a cutting-edge poetic vision of Caribbean futures that asks important questions about how displaced humans truly are from their nonhuman environments in the era of climate change, and how to imagine a new relationship between them.

**The Nearby Bushes: Place Violence and Colonial Time in Jamaica**

A concern for place and displacement is not new to Miller's poetics, or to his other publications across genres: he is a prolific writer not just of poetry, but also essays and fiction. Perhaps this is why Miller's poetry at times takes a novelistic turn, using characters that appear and reappear across collections, and storylines that wind through multiple poems. Miller is the author of three novels, a collection of short stories, and five books of poetry, along with an edited volume of contemporary Caribbean poets. His essay collection titled *Things I Have Withheld* was published in 2021. *In Nearby Bushes* is his fifth publication. It follows his previous poetry collection, *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*, an earlier exploration of place in Jamaica that focuses as much on the national imaginary as the physical space. *In Nearby Bushes* turns its focus on how to reconcile belonging and beauty with devastating violence, and how it examines human and nonhuman experience as kindred, allied, and in solidarity with the other. In this chapter, I will explore how Miller brings collective histories of violence and displacement into parallel scrutiny with contemporary notions of place in a moment of social and environmental crisis.

Miller is deeply aware of how the historical violence of colonialism deeply shapes how colonized peoples relate to the place they call home, even centuries later. This has been discussed at length in postcolonial and decolonial studies for decades, and in part in the introduction to this dissertation, however, I would like to expand that discussion with particular attention to the environment and to a Jamaican context. In situating Miller's exploration of place and violence in his collection, I would like to once again incorporate Amanda Kearney's notions of place and "place-harm" in considering how colonialism, and its contemporary equivalents working through neoliberal networks of power and global capitalism, cause irreparable damage to place that affect human and nonhuman inhabitants alike. This is of particular relevance to

communities in the Global South that have suffered under a history of colonialism and enslavement. Christina Sharpe observes how the “disaster” of slavery in the new world and its continuing violence brings into question the linearity of time itself—the legacy of slavery, for communities of color, is to “occupy and be occupied by the continuous and changing present of slavery’s as yet unresolved unfolding” (9). The damage of place harm caused by colonialism, then, by this definition, is still happening: it replicates and perpetuates as it continues to shape social, political, economic, and cultural structures across time. Deborah Thomas thinks along similar lines when she writes about the legacy of violence in Jamaica specifically, noting the palimpsestic nature of colonial time, that is made up of “so many stories that as we repeat them, sound vaguely familiar or so many experiences that as we confront them, feel like the same old same old” (11). The violence of colonialism, then, is also a spiral—it reverberates across time and through contemporary events that bear uncanny resemblances to colonial structures of oppression.

Miller emphasizes the extent to which this place violence, and in it the circularity of colonial violence, shapes contemporary life through the interpersonal, ecological, and systemic violence present in his poetic landscape. Some of these reminders look like non-native species, like the breadfruit tree, the reindeer, and the orchids. They appear and reappear across the work to figure place and displacement in their own land, mirroring the conflicts of place and displacement of enslaved peoples in the Caribbean. Other reminders, which he focuses on particularly in his previous collection *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*, but reprises again here, are place names which glorify colonial personages or have false or imagined origins, like the “new” in “New World,” or the “Orcabessa” (34), named after the gold Columbus and his men thought they might find there. There is no more brutal and powerful reminder of the

interplay between colonial violence and the contemporary homicide crisis than the literal bodies that populate Miller's landscape in the erasure poems of newspaper articles announcing death, and in his meditations on interpersonal and state violence in the third section of the collection. Miller is keenly aware of how violence past and present's interaction with history and memory can shape the experience of place—and how its ugliness gets swept underneath, in the understory. By examining it in all its gritty details, Miller subverts the stereotype of a Caribbean tropical paradise by laying bare the deep roots of contemporary violence in Jamaica.<sup>14</sup>

Miller is neither the first person nor the first Jamaican writer to take on what Dominic Leonard calls “the invasion of space in these poems to examine the link between imperial and everyday physical violence” (Leonard, 27 March, 2020). Caribbean letters have examined this link for decades through national discourses of identity. J. Michael Dash traces the legacy of Caribbean identity politics, “essentially tied to an ideological and imaginative coming to terms with the thorny question of cultural heterogeneity and to problematizing issues like otherness and the ambiguities of hybridity” (787). By otherness and hybridity Dash means non-white and mixed-race heritage as a result of European occupation, colonialism, and sexual violence toward indigenous populations. Because of this complex heritage, a discourse of grounding identity in the actual ground, the land, flora and fauna of the Caribbean, emerges to be picked up in different ways and by different writers thereafter in an attempt to reconcile identity and origin, and distinct racial, ethnic, and linguistic histories across nations. Since uprooting is at the heart of enslavement and diaspora, it is radical to claim identity in actual Caribbean ground—however,

---

<sup>14</sup> As Michael Bucknor observes, re-evaluating the understory as “waste and the rejected weeds of our society” in order to salvage “black or Caribbean subjectivity from the sediments of imperial constructions and rehabilit[ate] our conceptual horizons of community and humanity” (33) is a not new. Miller is not alone in using a “poetics of rubbish” to build towards new horizons: Olive Senior, Derek Walcott, and Edward Baugh make similar connections. None of them, however, choose to use Jamaica's contemporary homicide crisis as a way into this discussion as Miller does.

this is exactly what Edouard Glissant does in his *Poetics of Relation*, in which a fundamental aspect of Caribbean-ness, Relation, is modeled on complex systems of mangrove root networks that connect islands and border their coasts.

I have already discussed in the introduction how including the landscape as a character and charging it with agency is not new but foundational to Caribbean literature as a way to resist, question, and oppose the tradition of over-bucolicizing landscape as a “disguised apology” and re-establishing a relationship to landscape that had been severed by Plantation life (Glissant 70). In examining the “Understory” of the Jamaican landscape, Miller participates in this tradition of using Caribbean ecology, and specifically the part that goes unnoticed or ignored, the undergrowth, as a way to continue to resist and subvert colonial fantasies of legitimacy, turning them on their side by exploring the value of a place typically seen as value-less. Black peoples of the Caribbean, many under the colonial rule of primarily white nations, like the Bahamas or the Virgin Islands, or who populate some of the poorest nations in the region, like in Haiti, have been similarly denied agency, attention, and freedom by governments, foreign aid, and scholarly focus alike. Miller’s focus on the Jamaican understory as a place of beauty and value also positions its inhabitants, black peoples of the Caribbean, as deserving of this same attentiveness, care, and consideration in high-register literary work.

Environmental violence takes many forms: natural disasters, but also resource extraction, chemical dumping, tourism, including climate change and the slow violence it enacts upon vulnerable bioregions worldwide. In Jamaica specifically, the island has long been one of the leading producers of bauxite, a mineral which, when refined, is used to create aluminum.<sup>15</sup> As Mimi Sheller observes in her book on the history of the aluminum industry, examining the rise of

---

<sup>15</sup> Ventura, Arnold. “Jamaica.” *Energy in the Transition from Rural Subsistence*. Routledge, 1982. pp. 268-289.

industrial manufacturing is also a way to trace the impact of multinational global capitalism on indigenous populations, developing nations, environmental damage, and public health in the developing world (5). Jamaica is no exception: there are many by-products of the mining and refining process, from widespread deforestation so devastating that from 1990-1995 Jamaica held the record for the highest rate of deforestation worldwide (Elliot), to endangering bird species, and various negative effects on human health.<sup>16</sup> Like many extractive industries, the burdens of these effects fall on some of the most disadvantaged sections of the population, who are in turn least able to bear the social, environmental, and financial cost of the damage.<sup>17</sup> Jamaica's second-largest industry, tourism, also has its share of documented environmental impacts, among them pervasive and likely permanent damage to coastal ecosystems including mangrove habitats. Tourism infrastructure has also damaged marine environments, wetlands, and caused the surrounding area to be one of the most overfished in the world, according to the work of Jamaican documentary filmmaker and environmental activist Esther Figueroa (Francis, 137).

Miller purposefully sets this context of environmental degradation alongside one of interpersonal and state violence. Jamaica's contemporary homicide crisis is well-documented. Weeks, Ashley, Williams, and Robinson cite that since 1997 the average homicide rate has remained above 30 per 100,000, and that "Jamaica's homicide rate has consistently ranked the highest over ten-year case periods amongst nations in the Caribbean sub-region" (233). Parts of

---

<sup>16</sup> Davis, Herlitz. "Forest disturbance has negative consequences for the persistence of Jamaica's threatened and endangered bird species in Cockpit Country." *Journal of Caribbean Ornithology*. Vol. 30 No. 1, 2017. Respiratory problems are the most common health impact from bauxite mining, via Feisal et al. "A Short Review of Bauxite and its Production: Environmental Health Impact on Children in Mining Areas." *Malaysian Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences*. Vol. 15 Supp. 3, Aug. 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Rob Nixon speaks at length about the unequal burden of impoverished communities. This is no different in Jamaica, where mining companies displaced large segments of the population to further develop it for mining and refinery work in the late 1960s, part of the wave of migration to the UK and other nations that would become known as the Windrush Generation. Communities that remain in these areas continue to bear the damage of health effects and the slow destruction of land rendered unusable by the mining process (Figueroa).

Jamaica have been designated Zones of Special Operations with the passage of the Law Reform Act in 2017, a security intervention “in selected communities characterized by rampant criminality, escalating violent crimes, gang warfare and threatens to rule of law and public order” (Weeks et al, 236). Studies like Weeks’s acknowledge that the causes of Jamaica’s homicide crisis are a result of many different factors, and it is the multitude of complex, systemic, historical, political and social causes that *In Nearby Bushes* unearths in its pages. Some experts cite the rise of neoliberal policies in the Caribbean, like the hiring of privatized security forces and the decay of urban public spaces once maintained by the state, which have led to state paralysis in the face of growing violence on the streets in Kingston. This in turn has provided an opening for dons and gangs to become more lethal and powerful (Monroe and Blake, 2016). Recent coverage by The New York Times acknowledges the extent to which Jamaica’s homicide crisis is fueled by U.S. gun laws. The “leakage” of firearms across the U.S. border not only to Jamaica, but the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America, has been fueling violent crime for years in these regions. *The New York Times* reports that of 1,600 guns seized by the A.T.F in Jamaica between 2016 and 2018, 71% came from the United States. In comparison, gun laws in Jamaica are very strict, and illegal imports of firearms have made what could be less than lethal petty feuds between gang members into multiple fatal attacks and resulting vendettas (Ahmed, Aug. 25, 2019).

Miller explicitly addresses the homicide crisis at length in *In Nearby Bushes*, including the leakage of guns across borders from the U.S.: he calls out former President Barack Obama directly in his discussion of the “rudeboys,” in Montego Bay that have fueled gang violence there (64). His explicit reference to the State of Emergency that Jamaica declared in 2019 at the very end of the collection, in concert with multiple poems on the “rudeboys,” specific place names,

and erasure poems<sup>18</sup> of newspaper clippings that report on gun violence, puts the homicide crisis and its accompanying neo-imperialist threads at center stage (65, 66). *In Nearby Bushes* was published in 2019, but written in the wake of 2017's Law Reform Act and accompanying interventions by government and police to curb the homicide rate. As such, it is part of a wave of art that addresses crime and homicide in Jamaica and its role in the national imaginary.<sup>19</sup>

### **Miller's Rotational Poetics: Toward A Spiralist Notion of Place**

The technique by which Miller brings together these ecological and social crises and communicates the inward collapse of time and space in colonial and postcolonial places is shaped by Glissant's work of the same name. Toward the end of *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant discusses how Relation might become action. This might take place, he observes, through:

...the imaginary. It works in a spiral: from one circularity to the next, it encounters new spaces and does not transform them into either depths or conquests. Nor is it confined to the binarities that have seemed to preoccupy me throughout this book: extension / filiation, transparency/opacity...The imaginary becomes complete on the margins of every new linear projection. It creates a network and constitutes volume. Binarities only serve as conveniences for approaching its weave (199).

Glissant's concept of Relation, when brought to life, works in a spiral, rotationally. Like the Spiralist authors of the French Caribbean, for whom though the concept of the spiral as an aesthetic movement resists definition, it nevertheless perpetuates, working outward (Glover 21). In doing so it is able to collapse, as Thomas and Sharpe also observe, distances in history, time,

---

<sup>18</sup> "Also called blackout poetry, erasure poetry is a form of found poetry where the poet takes a page of previously published, existing text and erases, blacks out, or otherwise obscures a large portion of the text, creating a wholly new work from what remains." (Academy of American Poets, Glossary of Poetic Terms, "Erasure").

<sup>19</sup> See more in: Jaffe, Rivke. "Representing violent crime in Jamaica through visual art: an interview with Michael Elliot." *Interventions* vol. 22 no. 1, 2020.



place, and experience. Antonio Benítez Rojo observes a similar phenomenon which he calls repetition, in which “el pasado se conectaba al futuro por diferencias de orden circular, es decir, de manera semejante a la conexión que establecen los peldaños de una escalera de caracol” (224). Glover argues that this same phenomenon, this “repetition with a difference—this altered sameness—is, of course, the spiral” (154). All this speaks to a hemispheric concern with how the echoes of colonialism in the Global South perpetuate into the present. In *In Nearby Bushes* Miller has managed to transform this spiraling imaginary, in which past is connected to the present and future by a circular order, into a poetics. Miller conceptually rotates around certain concepts—place names, language nuance, his poetic characters, and others—in a way that allows him to collapse meanings, including sense of time and space, and create unique parallels and connections both within and across poems. As a poetic device, it facilitates encounters: between dialects, species, boundaries and binaries, time, and place. Writ-large, the collection is structured as a spiral, repeating the stories, objects, and beings in the nearby bushes with a difference and examining them from all angles.

Miller makes use of slant rhymes and language play between standard English and Jamaican Patwa, ecological referents, and a combination of all of these and other techniques like refrains, rhyme and syllable stress, to communicate the “repetition with a difference” of the spiral, and conceptually rotate. His poem at the beginning of the collection, “Here Where Blossoms the Night,” is an excellent example of the spiral at work on a small scale. Speaking explicitly of the place of the “nearby bushes,” Miller uses the refrain “here where” to circle around the nuances of “here,” starting with:

Here where blossom the orchids, two hundred

& twenty in variety. Some have adapted to bone

dry places, to being purple amongst the stone.

Here where blossom Jamaican Ladies  
of the Night, I mean the flowers –  
their petals, the colour of weddings,

their perfume, the scent of parlours.

There is much that blossoms in these bushes  
& much that rots, like Jamaican ladies of the night – (11).

The physical structure of the poem, with alternating enjambed lines and lines flush with the margin, contribute to a sense of back-and-forth, a coming back around to different ideas and perspectives. He uses enjambment liberally across the work, and in this poem it allows him to bridge large representational and semantic gaps and bring them into closer proximity: the “bone” that the orchids have adapted to as both human remains and as “bone / dry” soil; the “Jamaican Ladies” as both orchids and sex workers, which he merges semantically in the final quoted line as a double entendre—both flowers and bodies. Rotating conceptually in this way, he is able to stage a comparison between the beauty and purity of the orchids, the refined settings in which they are found, and the violence done to sex workers whose bodies are rotting in the nearby bushes. The orchid’s beauty becomes ironic, which in the context of the violence of the nearby bushes now seems sinister and dangerous. It also brings together the experience of human and nonhuman entities, which I will discuss later on in this chapter.

Miller’s rotational poetics span the collection with liberal uses of repetition, refrain, and language play between English and Patwa. Later on in the same poem, he sets the pace to these

switchbacks of ideas, a back and forth that mirrors the switchback enjambed lines, rotating in a pattern of three. After observing how the “here” of the bushes is also “the broken bottles and the burnt cars” (11), the poetic voice wonders how, in fact, to pronounce the former phrase:

Should I have said: *de heap*

*of bruk bokkle & de plenty bun up cyar?*

Here that cannot be held

by the small arms of language

Here that cannot be held

by the small arms of English

Here that cannot be held by the English (12).

The repetition of “here that cannot be held” and “the small arms” allow Miller to almost quite literally rotate around language and place, first questioning whether language is sufficient to articulate place at all; then if English is insufficient in articulating a place so marked by colonialism, enslavement; and the nuance of creole language in articulating that heritage so that it could not be held by the English as a colony. In a few short lines Miller examines not just place but history, race, imperialism, and how they figure into notions of “here” as the nearby bushes, as Jamaica, and as place more generally and philosophically. In this way he does explicitly what Thomas, Sharpe, and Benitez Rojo articulate as the “spiral” of colonial time, which repeats across decades, centuries, and continents.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Charlotte Rogers observes a similar phenomenon in Gabriel García Márquez’s novel *El otoño del patriarca* (Rogers 2021).

Miller is not the first Caribbean poet or writer to use the spiral form, or the ecological environment, as a lens to examine national identity, crisis, or sense of place. Derek Walcott, in his long poem *Omeros*, uses the story of a local fishing community reliant on the surrounding sea, a landscape which becomes threatened by growing traffic from the tourism industry and eventually climate change, as an allegory for the historical transition from colonialism and slavery to industrialization and the damages that its neocolonialist tendencies have wrought on the Caribbean social and ecological landscape (Handley 339). The reoccurring spirals in the *Omeros*—the hurricane, the references to the West African *lakoshe* snail shell—similarly work to iterate and reiterate the echoes of history and memory (Senk 46). This is by no means the only example of the entanglement of environment and Caribbean history and identity in Walcott's or other Caribbean authors' work—it is only one of many. Other notable studies compare Walcott and Lorna Goodison's use of transplanted vegetation as discourse on Caribbean identity and displacement (Bergam 118). Jamaica Kincaid's *My Garden (Book)* speaks at length about the relationship between the author and the complex history of Caribbean ecology. Miller's deliberate contrasts between Patwa and the Queen's English recall Kamau Brathwaite's writing on Nation Language, and his ideas on catastrophe inform Miller's portrayal of the twin catastrophes he portrays in the collection (Brathwaite 2005). What is noteworthy in Miller's case is not his use of the spiral, but how he uses its rotation as a tool to create a deep sense of empathy and understanding across species lines in the context of contemporary social and ecological crisis. These multispecies relationships are only one way in which his subject matter reaches beyond national or racial identity. He says in an essay about his relationship with Derek Walcott that he is "interested in the outside—in the people [Walcott's generation] left out... There was always an outside—a dark and unwritten place—and language has always been there waiting for

us, waiting for its writers” (“In the Shadow,” 5). It is precisely the “outside” of Walcott’s poetic universe—the multispecies world, the queer community, the nameless, faceless victims of interpersonal and gang violence—that he addresses directly in *In Nearby Bushes*.

### **Flora and Fauna: Affective Kinship and Emotional Geographies in the Nearby Bushes**

Miller’s rotational poetics allows him to explore lexical nuance, dissolve senses of time and place, and create parallels across distinct ideas and histories. This spiraling approach to sense of place also allows him to disassemble the differences in species and organism by emphasizing the similarities between the emotional and physical experiences of human and nonhuman beings. This in turn facilitates their direct encounter and allows him to create what I call an affective kinship between human and nonhuman voices in which they experience tandem emotional states and express deep empathy for the other as a way of standing in solidarity in the face of environmental and social crisis.

Donna Haraway discusses the idea of kinship between species and her idea of “companion species” in her work on material semiotics. She observes that the concept of kin, when viewed with “stretch and re-composition” (103) is a kind of assemblage,<sup>21</sup> in which all living things, stretching back in the evolutionary timescale, share a “common ‘flesh,’ laterally, semiotically, genealogically. Ancestors turn out to be very interesting strangers; kin are unfamiliar (outside what we thought was family or gens), uncanny, haunting, active” (103). Viewing “kin” and species relationships as a continuation of an ancestral heritage that stretches back through the geological timescale, Haraway is also able to collapse time by bringing these ties into the present, in a similar way that Miller does with his rotational poetics. Haraway’s ideas are fundamental to a general understanding of the ontological possibilities of multispecies

---

<sup>21</sup> For more on assemblages, see the discussion on Jane Bennett in the introduction to this dissertation.

relationships, however, she does not make allowances for how the social, political, or historical contexts of different regions might shape relationships between human and nonhuman beings. In contrast, Miller sees clearly the “catastrophic ruptures to social and ecological systems [in the Caribbean] ... experienced through the violent processes of empire” (Deloughrey 7), and makes it a central part of his poetic efforts. While other places have developed multispecies kinship as defined by Haraway because of evolving and living in the same place for a long time, what sets Caribbean ecology apart is precisely what Miller communicates in the collection—the shared emotional experience of displacement and exploitation as a result of colonization. The kinship that Miller builds as ultimately cultivated through shared the emotional experiences of living through the twin disasters of interpersonal and ecological violence.

Miller cultivates this multispecies kinship through a rotational poetics that juxtaposes human and nonhuman experiences and emotions, putting each in the terms of the other. In doing so, he creates an emotional, affective kinship between ecological characters and human poetic voices in which they are partners in suffering, victims of this spiral of violence which perpetuates in the environmental and homicide crises. I have already demonstrated how he works the spiral at the level of individual poems, however, it also works on a larger scale collection-wide through the appearance and reappearance of native and nonnative flora and fauna to figure different notions place and displacement across the collection. Orchid species, the breadfruit tree, and the white deer appear multiple times across the work, at times to call attention to the connection between place and history, and in others to provide comfort and solidarity.

Though “Here Where Blossom the Night” is an excellent example of Miller’s rotational poetics at work on a minute scale, it also introduces the orchid as an essential element in his poetic landscape, working rotationally to figure scales of belonging and displacement. The poetic

voice begins with orchids: “Here where blossom the orchids / Two hundred and twenty in variety. Some have adapted to bone / dry places, to being purple amongst the stone” (11). The two hundred and twenty that he refers to is more or less the number of endemic or native species of orchid found in Jamaica (Kelly 60). The poetic voice invokes Nanny, Jamaica’s real 18<sup>th</sup> century national hero and the folk legends that surround her.<sup>22</sup> Latin and English plant names eventually bleed away, “strangled” (13) by creeping vines, to “improved” (13) Jamaican alternatives with their origins in folklore like “Raw Moon,” and “Sinkle Bible” (13). The poetic voice says to “seek God in the orchids / ask help of Archangels, though here / Archangels are only flowers / their petals, the colour of weddings,” naming the Archangel as one of the only flowers in the poem not native to Jamaica and drawing a parallel between European religion and Christianity that works in contrast to the kind of folk religion and spirituality practiced by Nanny and others (Lees 34). This seeking of God seems to have little to no effect at the end of the poem, which emphasizes the continuing plasticity of language and in it a suggestion of folklore in the change from “Natto,” “Nettle,” and “Night,” ending on the primacy of the Night despite whatever prayers might be offered up. Throughout the poem, Miller uses native plants like the orchid to measure the tension of hybrid Jamaican ontologies of speech and language as a kind of worlding which pushes back against those imposed by the English.

The image of the orchids in the passage above as well as the recurring native and nonnative flora are complicated by the complex legacy of natural history, botanical gardens, and horticulture in the Americas and the Caribbean. The exoticization of tropical ecology is a

---

<sup>22</sup> Jamaica declared Nanny of the Maroons a national hero in 1975, and her image adorns the \$500 bank note. While her origins remain unknown and largely speculated, she was a member of the Ashanti community in what is present day Ghana who refused to capitulate to slavery in early 18<sup>th</sup> century Jamaica. She established a Maroon community that rose up in a lengthy guerrilla war with the English, ultimately ending in their surrender and signing of a peace treaty in 1740. Legends say that her supernatural powers helped her win the war against the English. Miller references her with deliberate effect as someone who “continues to stand for the continuity of Africa in the Jamaican plantation landscape” (Zips 200).

hallmark of European occupation in the Caribbean, whose landscape was categorically and minutely described in long natural histories like the *Historia general y natural de las Indias*. Authored by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo and published in 1535, it was the first European catalogue of Spanish Caribbean ecology of its kind, and it set the stage for centuries of European, and eventually American, exploitation of tropical ecology for Western scientific inquiry (Raby). The marked difference of colonial landscapes from European locales described in these natural histories functioned as a justification that their inhabitants were also different, and shaped European cultural attitudes about race, slavery, and the supposed legitimacy of colonization that continue today.

In her book about the history of consumption, Mimi Sheller uses the example of British botanist Hans Sloane as an allegory for how the global circulation of cultural innovation, scientific knowledge, and natural resources by Western powers is made possible only by the consumption of plants, animals, food, bodies, and culture of the Caribbean and other places in the Global South. The contemporary state of tropical ecological research and its problematic role in consumer goods would not be what it is today without Sloane and his work in Jamaica.

Sloane's work fits into an entire web of knowledge that stretched around the world...Knowledge of New World environments was systematised through encyclopaedic scientific texts that named and ordered the flora and fauna, along with botanical collections in which specimens were brought back and cultivated in hothouses in Europe. 'Natural products' of the Caribbean were crucial to the developing fields of natural history, botany, medicine, and horticulture (Sheller 19).

Not only does Sloane form a foundational part of this darker history of science, his work also helped to shape European racial and cultural biases about Jamaica. His success was founded on



the exploitation of “the local knowledge of both aboriginal peoples and African slaves who passed on information on the specific medical uses of exotic plants unknown to Europeans” (Sheller 17). What undercuts this exploitation of indigenous knowledge is the European conception of the Caribbean as a region of plunder and plenty. In focusing on native ecology as well as nonnative plants Miller lays bare not just the tragedy of human displacement from Africa and to the Caribbean as a result of the slave trade, but also the displacement of native species from the Caribbean to Europe for the purposes of consumption. This dual mistreatment by colonizing powers makes for one more instance of human and nonhuman beings sharing in similar emotional experiences through the spiral of place.

The orchids and their multivalent resonances reappear in the final section of the collection. In “X,” the poetic voice addresses the dead, lamenting “That of all places, you should end up here” (67). He describes the discarded items, some of them the female body itself, in the undergrowth. The poetic voice is haunted by the implications of this devastating catalogue of violence and unsought remains:

Here where are the stories lost in the understory. Here where are the things we can’t say in front of white people. Because of the tourist dollar. Here where the unsayable blossoms like orchids, like purple amongst the stone. Here that is half past midnight. And the never-ending Monday. And the discarded weeks. Here where we are pulled into things we cannot speak (67).

Here the orchids are not figured as people as in earlier on the volume, but in the metaphor of the violence past and present that goes unspoken in Jamaica along racial lines, “because of the tourist dollar.” This particular placement of the orchids, amongst the stone of the nearby bushes rather than in (European, white) parlors as they are earlier, gestures toward a reclamation of this

plant from the “refined” locations it’s been transplanted to for the Jamaican poor and vulnerable—the victims in the nearby bushes, the formerly enslaved, for those whose stories are “lost in the understory.” The orchid, like its human counterparts, is also lost in the literal understory—it “goes almost unseen” against the stone. The repetition of “here” allows Miller to work rotationally to reclaim the orchid, but also to draw a parallel between the literal placement of the orchid, and the metaphor that he draws about the humans and human remains whose voices are never heard.

The breadfruit tree works similarly, coming up much more frequently in the collection as both a common feature of the Jamaican landscape, but with the underlying symbolism of being a non-native species to the Caribbean. It was allegedly transplanted to the Caribbean from the Philippines in the 1770s, and shortly after English landowners in Jamaica petitioned the king to import it to provide food for the enslaved population (Morton 59). For this reason, to other poets and Caribbean writers the breadfruit tree and its bounty are a deeply resonant image—the “vegetal legacy of enslavement” (Cole 36). Miller employs it deliberately to invoke this legacy. The poetic voice first mentions the breadfruit tree early on in the volume, in a poem with an epigraph which reads that “Jamaica experiences, on average, 3 earth movements per month. These are mostly never felt” (21). Through the earthquake and the breadfruit tree the poetic voice meditates on the enormity of colonial history that lurks beneath the surface, an unutterable force. The earthquakes “pass through the valleys / in waves, a thing like grief, / or groaning that can’t be uttered” (21):

Observe the breadfruit leaf,  
 How it shivers without wind—  
 this quiet that is not quiet,

this peace that is not peace,  
 this hush trembling in the landscape;  
 it is a stifled earthquake. (21)

The epigraph to the poem states that the earthquakes are never felt, and in the body of the poem itself they are also never uttered, they are “stifled,” there is a “hush” in the landscape, it is a “quiet” with an impossibility for “peace.” The breadfruit tree, transplanted from its native land just as enslaved peoples forcibly removed to the Caribbean from Africa were in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, works as a symbol for the violent human and emotional toll of Jamaica’s history of slavery and colonialism, still “stifled” and unspoken but nonetheless bubbling up from below, manifesting in other ways that shake the whole island.

The breadfruit tree re-appears later on in the third section of the collection, but this time as a self-proclaimed watchman and witness of this history of violence, and a talisman amid contemporary acts of it. The series of four prose poems in the third section invoke the breadfruit tree as an anchor for different conceptions of “here,” both on the road to death and as a witness to death itself. “I. I” addresses a girl who disappeared while walking along the road at night, “walking so simple this last stretch that will stretch into eternity” (48). The speaker laments that the girl’s thoughts are on other things, still outside of the nearby bushes, but on the road to them: “And the magnificent breadfruit tree is just an area of darkness” (48), watching and waiting, prefiguring what will happen in the poem opposite, the second in the series (“I. II”), where the girl is waylaid and dragged into the nearby bushes to her death, where the “here of the road and the breadfruit tree slips away. And ‘There which you thought a place impossible to reach, available only to others, or to the faded past of photographs, your fingers tracing the Rockefeller Tower in New York perhaps, the nostalgic whisper: *I was there*” (49). The breadfruit is an

anchor to a “here” that is outside of the “nearby bushes,” at the same time that it foreshadows what is to come, existing between the two places. It appears again in the next poem, to explore how death is perhaps not just dark and “colorless” (8) as it is in “Understory,” but something more: “On the morning after your death...a cock crows, a strangled sound that believes that it alone pushes the stars and the quiet back, calls forth the magnificent breadfruit tree that steps out of the night like a watchman returning home” (51). Death is no longer “so dark and far away” (51), but it is “revealed now as splendid and here—the here which is jungle and tree...and the million shades between. You had not imagined death as a thing so wide, so full of acres and sky” (51). The breadfruit tree is both foreshadower of violence and company among it, a watchman and a comfort in death—it too, has experienced the pain of displacement, the violent ripping away from its homeland. As watchman, it allows Miller to figure this fixture of Jamaican ecology as a partner in compassion, and communicate an affective kinship between the human body and the ecological environment: both are reckoning with violence.

The affective kinship which begins with the breadfruit tree continues in other fauna which appear and reappear across the collection: the alligator, and the Jamaican reindeer. The poetic voice notes their strange incongruity, populous in a place where it never snows. He considers how much he has in common with them:

Here, they are like echoes  
of a long story—the brutal  
history of *dis place*  
which is not to say  
they are not their own  
stories, but that they know, as we do

the tightness of ships

& how to lose whole continents (18).

Like the breadfruit tree, the reindeer are a rather more visible ecological character that allows the poetic voice to relate the “brutal / history” of Jamaica with the similarly brutal history to which these elements of the landscape have been subjected as a result of the same phenomenon. The pointed separation and italics of “dis place” highlights the separation from one’s origins and the trauma of re-locations just as it makes a play on the Patwa pronunciation of “this place:” language is a place, too. As the poem moves forward, the reindeer become a lesson in what the landscape can teach us about belonging: escaping to the hills, the poetic voice notes that they sometimes descend to loot from farms, even the indignant farmer taking their beauty and resonant symbology of a parallel history as the “price” (19) of the carrot’s they’ve eaten. They wander silently through the night, “the landscape is creaking / these bushes open themselves / to drunk men” (20), like a house that opens its door. The poetic voice sees the reindeer through the darkness, as if lit by a flashlight where they aren’t sure if the dried branches “may not be dried branches / but the majesty of antlers,” and white flowers “may not be white flowers, but the blossoming / of their tails” (20). They acquire the same mystic, folkloric quality as Nanny and the breadfruit tree, and the poetic voice ends, asking “Will you teach us / King Alphas song, & how to survive / Babylon—how to belong / where we do not belong” (20). Though Miller employs many native species in the work, it is the nonnative species which have become part of the Jamaican landscape which allow him to cultivate this kinship between human and ecological experience: there is a real empathy in this poem with the experience of displacement and the place violence of colonialism—this is hammered home by Miller’s frank recognition of how they also know “the tightness of ships / and how to lose whole continents” (18).

It is this affective kinship which allows Miller to relate the homicide crisis and damage to the ecological environment as twin violences, wreaking havoc on place. He notes that the landscape itself has suffered just as much from Jamaica's history of colonialism and human and environmental exploitation: the crocodiles, which once numbered "a thousand mile circumference... a fierce reptilian halo" (25) able to encircle the island, are now "crocodiles who are diminishing, whose swamps / have given way to cement and monument" (25). Later on, this becomes a larger, more encompassing concern:

If sometimes it is possible to hear trees breathing, can you also hear them catch their breaths before the violence of place? Because isn't place always a violence—the decimation of trees, the genocide of bees, the dislocation of birds, the cutting, the clearing, the paving, the smoothing, the raising up of cement like giant tombstones over the grave of all that was before (37).

The landscape's violence is put in human terms: "decimation," "genocide," and "dislocation." The poetic voice addresses the problem of place directly for perhaps the only time in the work, listing examples of place violence in an accelerating series, with active verbs in the progressive that emphasize the ongoing destruction of place not just in Jamaica, but habitat loss and the catastrophic effects of climate change globally. This is the same death, he implies, the same destruction, which, like the human remains, amounts to a "giant tombstone," a "grave over all that was before." This erasure in the last line also evokes an erasure of history, and a recognition of the ecological elements like the breadfruit tree, the orchids, birds and trees on the island as little-recognized witnesses and stewards of the unspoken history that Miller speaks with his collection.

**"A Kinder Page:" Place Violence and Inter-Species Futures**

Miller is not just interested in Jamaica and place socially and environmentally, but also philosophically. Choosing poetry as a form for this discussion when he is also invested in other genres belies an interest in language more generally as a tool to articulate place—one which Miller enjoys to its fullest extent. In more than one place in the collection, and in interviews, he has admitted that “place is language” (Watchel 2018). His use of the spiral as a poetics is an exploration of the limits of language to figure place as much as it is a pointed technique that allows him to chart the affective geographies of the nearby bushes. Towards the end of the collection, the poetic voice seems more resigned to the “common” (74) violence of the nearby bushes, willing his interlocutor to wake up “In another book, on a kinder / page” (76). The linguistic rendering of place, for Miller, is perhaps the most violent because of its articulative power, which unearths stories that were buried and brings violence into the light.

In portraying violence as ecological, spiritual, historical, and so many “shades in between,” Miller is able to articulate poetically the many threads and interactions that tie into Kearney’s notion of “place violence.” She notes the complex interactions between these different actors exist in a “relational sphere that is populated by a vast number of co-presences, each with the capacity for agency and sentiency. These co-presences, when understood as kin, enter into our axiological frame and emotional geography in ways that cannot be ignored. Neither agency nor sentiency are positioned as uniquely human qualities, instead they are faculties possessed by place itself, and place elements” (193). Miller’s poetic landscape, which charts the emotional kinship between human and ecological actors, and the nearby bushes writ large, recognizes this “emotional geography” as fundamental to place. The power of his collection comes from an insistence that these emotional entanglements between human and nonhuman elements in place are so deep and interrelated in the contemporary moment, that they truly cannot be ignored. In a

Caribbean context, in which the life of all species is threatened by the consequences of rising sea levels and increased frequency of powerful storms due to climate change, a sense of place which incorporates these inter-species kinships is fundamental to imagining a collective future in the face of disaster. In imagining relationships with the wider species world, Miller also imagines a spiral of place which collapses species differences and facilitates encounters within the wider collective of historical consciousness, stretching as much into the future as it does into the past.



### Chapter Three

#### “Pirated” Copies: Laser Cats, Recombinant Forms, and the Poetry of Possibility in Thais

##### Espaillet Ureña’s *¿Tienes quién te cuide la mula?*

The title of Dominican poet Thais Espaillet Ureña’s collection *¿Tienes quién te cuide la mula?* (2020) begins with a question that implies collective care, albeit in a way that is unexpected: do you have someone to look after your mule? It launches a collection that playfully, ironically, and strangely interrogates how to imagine new relationships between humans and the nonhuman and between the real and the digital, in an apocalyptic, multifaceted present. The first poem, “Un día vamos a saberlo todo (y no nos va a gustar),” frames Espaillet’s vision of place as an amalgam of the real, the virtual, the imaginary, and the possible:

En un cuartico  
 de las oficinas de Google  
 en Mountain View, California  
 código postal 1600  
 hay un hombre  
 barbudo  
 sentado frente a una computadora  
 gigante  
 intentando saberlo todo,  
 saberlo todo,  
 con su computadora conectada  
 a todos los cables existentes.

The man's beard, which is "cada vez más larga / cada vez más blanca" (7), continues to grow, like a "serpiente enroscada en madriguera" (7), that grows more poisonous with all the knowledge of the universe in its fangs. The text repeats, the man's beard growing longer and longer and the serpent "ahogando / con su propia cola," (8) until finally, before expiring, it declares "Las arañas de Genghis Khan / volverán a dominar el mundo" (9). The snake's reference to the Mongol conqueror who was said to have issued impenetrable spider-silk shirts to his warriors is as much a warning about the sinister expansion of personal data collection and surveillance in the digital age as it is an observation about interconnectedness of seemingly disparate things that create strange new relationships and connections—what Espaillat elsewhere calls "una selva de hipervínculos"—in the age of the internet ("Taller de poesía experimental").

Like the previous two works I have discussed in this dissertation, Espaillat's collection is also deeply concerned with how to exist presently, and to move forward, in a world that is falling apart on many levels: *¿Tienes quién te cuide la mula?* refers directly, in multiple places, to the threat of the global climate crisis and how it threatens Santo Domingo with flooding and displacement. The poem above introduces a collection-wide concern with the perils of living so much of life online or through digital means and the ways it is eroding our connection to ourselves, to each other, and to the wider nonhuman environment.<sup>23</sup> What Espaillat does differently than the other poets I have discussed in this project is precisely the fusion of the virtual and the real: through a kind of aesthetics of the internet, taken from social media, from gifs and memes that make the everyday into the strange or fantastical characters out of housecats or cockroaches, Espaillat explores the ways in which social media and internet culture mediates

---

<sup>23</sup> Dominican novelist Rita Indiana focuses on similar concerns in her novel *La mucama de Omicunlé*, as Rogers observes in "Rita Indiana's Queer Interspecies Caribbean and the Hispanic Literary Tradition." *Small Axe* vol. 34, 2020.

the experience of place, and how they allow us to imagine and create new ways to interact with local landscapes and the nonhuman environment. While there is an undeniable dark side to the digital world, Espaillat nonetheless views their aesthetics of strangeness and surprise as a way out of a patriarchal, neocolonial, capitalist status quo imposed by those in Mountain View, CA, who largely control this world wide web. Working as a representational, self-proclaimed “pirated” copy, these cyborg characters and recombinant forms create a poetry that allows them to work outside of these strictures and to imagine verdant, collective local futures founded on the possibility of new relationships with the ecological environment and nonhuman beings.

### **Laser Cats, Memes, Gifs: Escaping the Totality of the Simulacrum**

Espaillat’s collection looks and reads rather conventionally: published by Ediciones Liliputienses, a small-press publisher out of Spain, it’s a standard small-batch, softcover, slim, 100-page volume. Visually, it’s not as eye-catching as Delgado’s handmade editions, or as graphically intertextual as Miller’s use of newspaper clippings and blackout poetry. The contexts for individual poems, however, are more strange than anything found in the first two collections in this project: the man growing a Rip Van Winkle beard in front of his computer in the first poem; cats who shoot laser beams out of their eyes in a war with cockroaches, who are keeping the ocean trapped in the sewers; city parks that are supermarkets, full of fruit; cybernetic birds and herons who sing Brian Eno at sunset; thieves who steal into houses to ferment watermelons. Espaillat’s poems are full of pop culture references, intertext, irony, and surprise. In many ways, they purposefully eschew a high-register literary aesthetic and embrace colloquial expression, offhandedness, and unexpected encounters.

If Espaillat’s collection begins with a concern about the internet and those who control it, then I propose that the strange encounters like the ones I mention above are also inspired by the

unexpected, weird, kitsch, and often random nature of life online. The virtual world complicates and arguably severs representational norms by enabling infinite copies, personal and professional masquerade and catfishing, virtual reality, and the possibility for imaginary spaces to become real and for those distinctions themselves wear thin. Its aesthetic hallmarks are grainy pixels; gifs, endlessly repeating images which are also different each time; memes, which are removed from the context in which they were created, but also require a very specific context for full comprehension.

In order to define and understand how Espaillat purposefully plays with and challenges representational norms inspired by the aesthetics and nature of the internet, I turn to Jean Baudrillard's discussion on representation and reality in *The Precession of Simulacra*. Baudrillard describes the many ways in which experiences, places, and objects of postmodern society are manufactured again and again in identical ways, only appear exactly the same as the original. The "simulacra" that Baudrillard refers to are identical copies, replicas, things that can be bought and immediately replaced with something that looks, feels, and functions in exactly the same way—a microwave, a pen or a pencil—or even the rides at Disney world that Baudrillard refers to, which reproduce the same experience again and again for different patrons (1741). On the surface, the internet by and large participates in the same manufacture of images, objects, texts, and experiences that Baudrillard describes, creating an endless stream of simulacra for consumption. The existence of internet material as replicable and thus consumable is a guiding principle for those in the Global North who design and control the operations and reach of the web. This is perhaps the real takeaway from Espaillat's first poem: this precession of simulacra enforces the same capitalist, hegemonic, misogynistic status quo of a very small group of people in Mountain View and elsewhere, which further perpetuates as the internet grows in

users. Zara Dinnen calls this the “Digital Banal,” in which the sovereignty of computer code works to perpetuate the agenda of media companies, who rely on its complexity to obfuscate and even lull users into complacency (12). As many have observed, the physical infrastructure of the internet itself—the networks of fiber optic cables that stretch across oceans, for example—often retrace global flows of money and power that date back to the colonial period (Bridle, Cockayne and Richardson). For Espailat, this is further complicated by the long colonial legacy of Santo Domingo, once the epicenter of European power in the Antilles. There is, seemingly, no escape from representational norms that continue to preserve the existing order.

Nevertheless, I would like to write against of idea of the internet as inescapable, all-consuming simulacra by arguing that Espailat’s strange encounters and re-imaginings present a way to circumvent the reality I’ve described above by hacking representation. Creating “plagiarized” copies, programs with bugs in the system, or strange re-combinations as a way of resisting representational and ideological totalitarianism has long been a hallmark of cyberpunk aesthetics and of visual arts that address the digital world. The collective Critical Art Ensemble and artist Zach Blas asked as early in the internet era as 1994 “how can existing tools and knowledge be recombined in order to begin to resist the creeping totalitarianism of the internet, or otherwise imagine alternatives to network forms?” (Leckie, *Zack Blas’ Contra Internet Inversion Practice #1*). Espailat, a poet as well as a visual artist interested in internet-mediated literature,<sup>24</sup> understands the power that recombinant forms have to fracture the totalitarianism of simulacra: the book she published after *¿Tienes quién te cuide la mula?*, titled *¿Viste los pinguinos?* (2021) is available only as an ebook, featuring gifs, soundscapes, and wildly dancing guinea pigs. Purposely surprising and strange, Espailat ideologically as well as affectively hacks

---

<sup>24</sup> Espailat shares their visual art on [Tumblr](#); they are also writing a novel [on Twitter](#).

the “digital banal” by presenting the reader with something unexpected and totally new in both collections. This is what they call a “pirated” copy of reality, free from the strictures of conventional representation, which offers the opportunity to create new hybrid visions that challenge the way things are and creatively envision how they could be.<sup>25</sup> Hacking the status quo by creating “pirated” copies is further complicated by reading practices in the Caribbean, where texts often circulate in pirated pdfs or photocopies that spread by word of mouth and circles of interpersonal relationships. This is similar to what Espaillat’s poetic copies seek to achieve: circumvent the hegemony of the larger publishing industry which privileges institutional connections and canonical texts.

In understanding the nature of virtuality in relation to Espaillat’s collection and the possibilities that the internet can offer, I turn to artist and scholar James Bridle. The internet is the “built environment of the imagination,” (*On the Virtual*) in which reality and the virtual collide:

Today, we believe too much in the real, when the real insists at all times on its own virtuality. The highest quality of the virtual is its immanence; the immediate real of infinite possibility, of wild speculation constantly becoming in the real. The theorist and ethicist Karen Barad, using the language of experimental physics, talks about immanence as diffraction—the interference patterns caused by the entanglement of matter and meaning. Just as the electron... produces different patterns on a screen depending on whether it is observed, so are we capable of manipulating the world through our

---

<sup>25</sup> The concept of a “pirated” copy as it relates to Espaillat’s poetry is their own term. They ask: “Una mirada pirata del mundo implica pensar que la representación del mundo siempre es una especie de copia pirata. Esta copia pirata es leída como un error por el sistema por lo que contiene el potencial de escapar de él” (Espaillat, “Taller de poesía experimental”).

intercessions in the virtual. The real exists, the virtual exists, and we can propose in both, and speculate, and wildly surmise, and pray and asks questions in both. Art—image-making, coding, writing, telling—is the processes of thinking through which we immanentise the virtual; it is the thought that makes the world” (*On the Virtual*)

The virtual as a concept, as a way to imagine places, experiences, beings remotely from our physical location pre-dates much of modern technology. However, the internet at its best, argues Bridle, is a place where we can go to do the kind of thinking and imagining that we would do in a “virtual” space of the imagination. It makes the place of imagination into a physical space no less real than our physical bodies or the laptops we access it from. I find Bridle’s thinking helpful in defining the ways in which Espaillat distinguishes the real and the virtual, and how elements of the imagination can and do intercede into our real lives. In many ways, Espaillat’s collection is a playing out of exactly what Bridle proposes above, where the “immediate real of infinite possibility” of the virtual plays out in real life, as the strange, imaginative encounters inspired by the internet impose on or interrupt mundane contexts. This, I propose, is Espaillat’s intervention into imagining a future in places where climate change poses an existential threat: a poetry in which the surprising aesthetics of the internet open the door to an intercession of the virtual into the real, and to “infinite possibility.” In undermining the status quo of representational, aesthetic, and ideological norms, they make it possible to imagine an abundant, verdant future co-created with nonhuman beings, even knowing that one day the consequences of climate change will likely destroy the place they call home.

### **“No siento nada:” Trapped in an Apocalyptic Present**

Espaillat’s poetic universe is by and large representationally normative, full of mundane and recognizable phenomena like orange peels, sunsets, texting friends, scrolling through social

media, listening to the sound of someone's car speaker blaring while waiting in the street. Espailat's poetic voice, however, is by turns deeply concerned at the sociopolitical state of the world, asphyxiated by social media and media in general, paralyzed by the idea of climate change and the ever-present possibility of apocalypse, and increasingly unable to recognize the place they call home. Immediately following the first poem of the man in Mountain View, CA is another called "Nos destruirán a todos, nos destruirán a todos," in which the poetic voice begins by mentioning that they were listening to Yoko Ono and Portugal. The Man's "Soul Got Out of the Box," where Ono repeats "Hello Doomsday, could you be my friend?" which the poetic voice uses as a refrain throughout the poem. They continue: "Tengo más de dos semanas seguidas / pensando en el Apocalipsis / o no en el Apocalipsis porque no he leído la Biblia / pero en el inminente declive total de la situación planetaria" (10). This apocalypse is one specifically caused by the ramifications of climate change as the consequences of human behavior—glaciers melting and sea level rise, marking a departure from earlier writings that saw environmental damage as divine retribution (Schwartz). The poetic voice mentions offhandedly that they had just met someone from Curaçao, and that "no puedo dejar de pensar / que ese país sería tragado complete cuando los mares / comiencen su venganza" (10). It's not only Curaçao, but Santo Domingo, that is threatened by sea level rise: "Que todos los lugares que me vieron crecer / ... desaparecerían / sin ninguna gloria" (10-11). The poetic voice continues, repeating that "Estoy pensando en el fin del mundo" (11), but that they would prefer not to, listing all of the things that they would prefer not to think about: the exportation of avocados, dead cows, people suffering from hunger, "en el idiota / que le dio libre albedrío a estas cosas / tan capaces de maldad" (11). After an apology to the children being born while writing this, the poetic voice ends the poem with a vision of a dystopian future for Santo Domingo in which:



el mar va subiendo  
 hasta el parque de La Lira  
 y la gente de apellido en sus torres  
 en su ascensor hasta el helipuerto  
 para ver dónde van a construir  
 sus nuevas casas de playa (12).

The rich and privileged ascend to their high-rises and heliports to watch the end of the world, planning where to build their new beach houses. Espaillat's use of Ono's lyrics, combined with the title that reads like another refrain and the repetition of "no pensar" in what aren't thinking about, allows them to spin the devastating consequences of climate change as ironically offhanded, as normal as hearing a song on the radio. This in turn casts the "gente de apellido" watching the world burn as just another day.

The conclusion of this poem pointedly references the very real inequality in Santo Domingo exacerbated by changing coastlines and the effects of climate change. The Ozama river, which flows through the city center and into the Caribbean Sea, has long been a flashpoint for artists and activists seeking change because of the roughly 400,000 of Santo Domingo's poorest residents who live along its banks (Paravisini Gebert 3). These communities are some of the most vulnerable in the city due to persistent flooding, environmental hazards due to improper toxic and solid waste disposal, and the looming threat of weather events related to climate change. Many of them have been displaced, pushed to the river's bank by rapid urbanization as the city government "protect[s] the interests of the middle and upper classes at the expense of the welfare of the vulnerable populations of the rural immigrants to the city" (Paravisini Gebert 4).

Espaillet's ending, then, is not just a dystopian vision of the rising sea, but disturbingly real: a continuation of what is already happening in Santo Domingo.

Espaillet's meditation on the inevitable consequences of climate change isn't just a tongue-in-cheek wakeup call. Along with underlining all of the aspects of place and place memory that the rising tide will engulf—the places that saw them grow up, visceral memories of their grandmother's house as a child—this and the following poems highlight the often contradictory and difficult emotional toll that looming environmental collapse brings to the everyday lived experience. Espaillet's poetic voice in this poem and others across the collection display a kind of solastalgia, Glenn Albrecht's term for "the homesickness you have when you are still at home," (*The Age of Solastalgia*) caused by local environmental collapse, which has catapulted to international usage thanks to the new and enduring relevance of environmental collapse on a planetary level. While this combination of desolation and nostalgia is relevant in how they recount childhood memories in this poem, no one person's emotional experience is linear or two-dimensional. Espaillet's poetic voice often feels helpless, reminding themselves that "tú no tienes el control / de nada" (65), or convinced of the futility of most things in life, including their writing: "no sirven de nada / son memes de perros / con lentes de sol / en medio / de la tercera guerra mundial" (62). They often wish to not feel or think, paralyzed the state of the world, or wish that they could be something else, "lo que sea / menos ser persona en este sistema / del que me rehúso a ser engranaje" (44). Things can get quite dark: they wonder about drinking chloroform (44), or about driving their car into the sea (43). Such is their sense of futility: that nothing, including themselves, matters anymore when apocalypse is so certain.

Furthermore, environmental collapse and its accompanying recombinant crises and inherent inequality are not the only reasons that the poetic voice finds themselves paralyzed by

the present state of affairs: social media, the internet, and the ways that they further a disconnect from self and place as well as propagate meaninglessness frequently leaves the poetic voice emotionally empty. In the poem “Telegrama” which begins, “Pequeña lista de imágenes de orden aleatorio:” (67), the poetic voice writes a list of images as they would appear in an Instagram post with the carousel feature enabled, or else on Tumblr where artsy photos completely devoid of or with very little context are the norm, swiping right from one to the next, carefully curated:

Una fuente que se desborda  
 en un parque con luces naranjas

una funda roja huyendo de los carros  
 en medio de la Carretera

(nota al margen: parece un ramo de rosas) (67).

Several other written images appear, until the very last stanza: “una mano que agarra un papel que dice: / ‘esto todavía me hace sentir sola’” (68). Espailat not only highlights the problematic effects of social media which sells togetherness but actually causes loneliness, as the recent Facebook whistleblower controversy has proven, but the dominant aesthetics of the internet: curated, highly stylized images whose airbrushed, studied nonchalance masks what Kyle Chayka calls an “aesthetic homogeneity” that has begun to seep from Silicon Valley into real life (*Welcome to Airspace*). Rather than providing an outlet or a relief for the poetic voice, they only serve to make them feel more alone, augmenting their sense of hopelessness and helplessness in the face of environmental crisis. Trapped in an asphyxiating and often meaningless apocalyptic present, these emotions feed off of each other, until, I argue, the intervention of Espailat’s

cyborg characters, who affectively as well as aesthetically subvert the creeping totalitarianism of Espaillat's poetic universe.

### **“Pirated” Copies and Cyborg Characters**

As a way to break the present emotional paralysis of the poetic voice, Espaillat inserts what I call cyborg characters. I would like to define the “cyborg” characters Espaillat employs using Donna Haraway's widely acclaimed manifesto on posthuman relationships. Haraway remarks on the increasingly thin boundary between human, nonhuman organisms, and cyborgs: “The cyborg appears...precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed. Far from signaling a walling off of people from other living beings, cyborgs signal disturbingly and pleasurably tight coupling. Bestiality has a new status in this cycle of marriage exchange” (11). Haraway's concept of cyborg exists at the confluence of human and nonhuman beings, facilitating a new kind of existence, and a new kind of relationship. I propose that this is exactly what Espaillat's cyborg characters accomplish: they allow the poetic voice to see and experiment with new ways to relate to the nonhuman environment, and to cultivate a lively sense of connection between themselves and the plants and animals around them. This in turn allows the poetic voice to break with the suffocating sense of dread and futility they experience in other poems—the “pirated” copies that these cyborg characters represent allow Espaillat to circumvent the aesthetic order of Silicon Valley and its affective consequences. They provide a means of escape and a new network of relationships.

In “Este poema tiene nombre de gato,” the poetic voice recounts an action-packed drama of kidnappings and dark alleyways. The setting is as follows:

Las cucarachas han secuestrado al mar  
lo puedo oír pidiendo ayuda

debajo de la calle de mi casa  
mientras me parqueo.

Se han aliado con todos los gatos de la cuadra,  
me parece.

Protegen la basura  
y la tapa de la alcantarilla  
con sus bigotes filosos  
y su pelo-estornudo (23).

The poetic voice continues that they must smell like an enemy, because the cats shoot laser rays at them out of their eyes every time they arrive in the middle of their meetings. The setting could be in any coastal urban area: the alleyway where people take out their trash, populated by cockroaches and the odd stray cat, the ocean a few blocks away, roaring under the sewers. There is a normality to the insertion of these cyborg characters and the extra-ordinary interactions the poetic voice has with other environmental characters in this poem, like the moon, who they try to recruit to free the ocean trapped in the sewers. The moon “tampoco me responde / por Whatsapp / por Facebook Messenger, / por email” (26), or to smoke signals, nor do they answer the phone (25). The cockroaches, who seem to be conducting a vaguely Slavic, slippery kind of nuclear warfare, have communicated “con sus primas ucranias / para que con sus poderes nucleares / amenazaran a la luna con llenar sus cráteres / de blue cheese y manchego” (26). On a smaller scale, Espailat perhaps satirizes the negotiations and pacts of nation states in responding to commitments to combat climate change—backchanneling in coming to agreements, or posturing should one demand an unwanted edict of another.

The poetic voice eventually makes an ally out of one of the cats who they say has “cara de Armando” (26) and refers to him as such for the rest of the poem. They have conversations: he tells them to be careful, since “hay ojos y orejas / en todas las hojas / los murciélagos usan sus radares / para espiarte a cambio de fruta” (25). They envision preparing for battle armed with a can of insecticide, and promise Armando fresh tuna imported from Hawaii. Making an appeal to the cat, they say: “Tú sabes que el mar extraña su casa / sus botes / sus atardeceres de pintura flotante / los peces que podrían hacerte cosquillas en la barriga” (27). Eventually, everything culminates in a battle where the poetic voice, in rain boots and pajamas, comes running at Armando’s signal: he is shooting his laser rays at “un cementerio de cucarachas calcinadas” (28), and together the cats and the poetic voice lift up the sewer grate and watch as “la calle se va llenando de vapor / que sube / y sube / y sube tan alto / que la luna se sonroja” (28). Having freed the ocean from the sewers, it’s reunited with the moon, together at last.

Espailat’s poetics are literally, purposefully, weird. The lasers are not a metaphor, and the cockroaches are not an allegory. This is not to say that in reading the laser cats as literal laser cats they become one dimensional, but that taken literally, they allow Espailat to do more. When taken at face value, Armando and his cohort play into a purposeful campiness that Espailat has been cultivating throughout the collection. Nicole Seymour’s thinking on “bad” environmentalisms and contrarian responses to crisis asks the question “How might reclaiming gaiety and other contrarian modes enable us to create new modes of resistance, new forms of community, and new opportunities for inquiry into environmental crisis” (24). Learning into the intersection of queer theory, affect theory, and ecocriticism, Seymour provides a context for understanding the strangeness (or indeed, queerness) of Espailat’s cyborg characters, noting that constructs of humanity in environmental contexts are produced in much the same way as gender

and race (119). The Dominican writer and pop star Rita Indiana, outspoken about her own sexuality, involves queer and speculative forms into her writing that provide a context for Espaillat's experimentation with dystopian futures and unique assemblages. Queer modes like camp, which Seymour relies on Sontag to define as "a valuing [of] style over content...a love of exaggeration and artifice...and a failed seriousness" (Sontag, quoted in Seymour 114), function in art and literature as a way to flip the script on established modes of order. As Ann Pellegrini notes, "Camp engages in a creative recycling of the past as a way to produce a different relation to the present and the future" (184). Espaillat's cyborg characters in many ways provide an answer to Seymour's initial question: they act in a way that not only breaks the aesthetic but emotional homogeneity of Espaillat's poetic universe, making the mundane into the strange and unexpected, and giving the poetic voice urgency, purpose, and belonging in a time of crisis. Moments of tenderness and meaningful interaction are few and far between for the poetic voice throughout the collection, and it's here that they find it. Above all, the cyborg characters allow the poetic voice to cultivate imaginative new relationships with nonhuman beings; making strange alliances, working together.

### **"Gracias parque, gracias ciudad:" Re-imagining Place in Santo Domingo**

The same campy, internet-inspired formulations allow Espaillat to imagine new possibilities for place and local community even amidst apocalypse and its accompanying affective consequences. Similar to the poetic voice's emotional paralysis in the face of multifaceted crises, the poetic voice is also increasingly unable to recognize the city they call home: "no reconozco / el lugar / donde vivo" (85), they say after stating that a local liquor store had been replaced with a government office. In another poem, they observe that "este no es mi hogar / este no es mi casa" (91). While there are no cyborg characters that allow the poetic voice

to imagine new relationships to place, Espailat nevertheless borrows from internet aesthetics that pixelate and fracture images into pieces and allow them to become separate parts, or reconstituted into new combinations and functions to create new versions of place in *¿Tienes quién te cuide la mula?*

In “Una propuesta formal (o una carta de amor),” the poetic voice lays out a formal complaint about Santo Domingo’s parks along with an increasingly abundant, hopeful, and collective vision of how they could be. The epigraph makes the poem more of a love letter than a formal complaint: it’s “para Santo Domingo” (74). The poetic voice begins by asking “Para que sirven los parques de esta ciudad?” (74), beginning to catalogue their complaints:

No son un pulmón  
 ni una vía de escape,  
 tampoco un pequeño laberinto  
 con muchas pocas salidas  
 a alguna calle siempre familiar (74),

they are impersonal, unfamiliar, dirty—“una repetición de tronco / o ruedas / o ruedas apiladas como troncos.” (74). They’re littered with dead plants: “cadáveres de cajuil / o guayabas partidas por la mitad” (74) which is the “sangre de alguien lejano / que viene todas las tardes / para morir en la grama (75). The poetic voice asks how many parks there are in the city, not able to think of more than two or three, because “tienen dueño” (75). Some parks and public spaces in Santo Domingo don’t belong to the municipality itself, but to groups of property holders (Laureano, 7 June, 2020). The poetic voice derides these forgettable and not really public spaces, asking to propose something more communal: shared green spaces where real community is possible. “Quería proponer / algún octavo, noveno, decimo parque / para poder saludar a la gente” (75).



The poetic voice describes what community in these new spaces might look like, in hyphenated text that imitates the quick exchanges and give and take of casual conversation between strangers: “Hola-cómo estás-mira-ayer-esta-flor-no-estaba-la-trajiste-tú / Hola-viste-hay-un-nido-gigante-en-ese-árbol-pequeño- / no-no-he-visto-huevos-aquí-no-vive-nadie” (75). These exchanges propose not only physical space for the ecological environment in Santo Domingo’s landscape, but a space of attention and consideration—where people are involved in changes to the environment as important and with nonhuman beings as a part of their extended community. This is especially telling in the choice of “nadie” in the birds’ nest, as opposed to “ningún pájaro.”

The poetic voice continues to imagine this abundant network of parks, in which representational pieces fracture, act strangely, and recombine to become something new. It should be a “parque lleno de frutas” (76), they say, that anyone can gently, easily grab from the tree and then:

chorrea el jugo en la grama  
 y un ave recoge el jugo.  
 Gracias por el dulce,  
 nos diría  
 y el sonido rebotaría  
 en nuestras caras llenas de mango,  
 de chinola,  
 dedos de aguacate,  
 pies llenos de zanahoria  
 y lechuga

y yuca.

The bodies of the bird and of the poetic voice, or the collective bodies of this abundant community, seemed to have switched places—the bird can speak and lift fruit from the ground, as the recombinant parts of the poetic voice have transformed into the selfsame garden; feet full of carrots, lettuce, yuca, faces of mango and passion fruit, fingers of avocado. They place each fruit at the level at which it grows—lower down for root vegetables, and eye level for fruit trees. This embodiment of the garden, and of collective abundance and multispecies relationships continues through the end of the stanza, with the poetic voice describing that there’s no more need for carts in the supermarket, because there are long lines outside the park: “Ya no hay más papas, vengan mañana. / Y el aluminio diría / Está bien, / vuelvo, / y las manos dirían / gracias parque, / gracias ciudad” (76). This fracturing of parts—of people, of capabilities, of species, pixelated into mouths and feet that speak in a poetic cubism—allows Espaillat to eliminate any hierarchy and place all recombinant parts on the same level. Each one participates in the collective space they have imagined, and their gratefulness for the abundance is one of the most tender moments of Espaillat’s collection. The park that the poetic voice has imagined “ya no tenga dueño, que nunca sea mío / ni tuyo / ni de él / ni de ella / ni de los árboles / los pájaros / los aviones / las palabras que ya están sobrando” (78), but for everyone and everything. This local food sovereignty is radical in the context of Santo Domingo, once the administrative seat of the Spanish empire in the Antilles, and the first center of imperial power in the Caribbean (Bolton and Marshall). Those in the Caribbean “have a relationship to agriculture that cannot please them at all” because many of their ancestors were forcibly removed and enslaved to work in the fields (Kincaid 139). Espaillat’s vision of the possibilities for parks in Santo Domingo reclaims a

legacy of imperial power by making agricultural abundance co-created, communal and—as Kincaid says—“dignified and useful” (140).

### **“*Sigue habiendo verde*:” Radical Possibility at the End of the World**

Espailat’s shattering of representational norms, their fracturing and irony and camp with the internet as a muse and an opening act, offers not just a way to imagine new relationships with the ecological environment in place but perhaps the only possible answer to the real question that the title of their collection is asking: how do we exist, what should we do and be and act, at the end of the world? The answer is, perhaps, in the title itself: collective care, for each other, and for the nonhuman environment. For Espailat, there is an implicit value in the beauty and connections they make with the ecological world, whether that’s through imagining the elaborate lives of the plants in the garden or the cockroaches in the alleyway or the ripe possibility of disappointing public spaces. In their concluding poems, the poetic voice observes “A pesar / de todo lo que viene ahora / sigue habiendo verde / tanto, / más que nunca” (85). They name bougainvilleas. They thank “las montañas / tan verdes” (93) for reminding them of how small they are. The relationships both conventional and unconventional with the nonhuman world offer an escape from the suffocating sense of doom and the climate anxiety they demonstrate in other places in the collection. This is not to say that for Espailat nature is a sort of balm. Rather, I think that the new relationships they create with cyborg characters, their lively curiosity about the emotional lives of urban flora, and the imaginatively ripe visions of Santo Domingo they propose are a de-centering of human beings in the global landscape that constitutes a new kind of affective response to crisis. Through resistance, it enables them able to envision radical possibilities even in the midst of environmental collapse.

Espaillet's larger project, of "pirated" copies and undermining the power dynamics at play in media and the internet is another way to answer the question I've posed above: keep resisting, make some noise, some weirdness, some action, especially since many of those in Silicon Valley are complicit in the extractive practices that help to fuel climate events. When the time comes, Espaillet's poetic voice says in the final lines of the collection, don't come looking for them: "cuando me vaya me iré yo sola / agarrándome la mano con la otra / mirando un punto rojo en el cielo / que saldrá directo / desde mi rayo laser" (96). The poetic voice has become their very own pirated copy, a cyborg version of themselves equipped with laser eyes. They join hands with their other half, already having won the aesthetic war. They have found a way out, and are waiting to meet whatever might come.

## Conclusion

In the introduction to this dissertation I stated that this project aimed to develop a series of affective articulations from which to draw upon in discerning how the climate crisis is affecting the Caribbean across linguistic boundaries. I have demonstrated how each of these poets, in engaging with their surroundings in new ways, are able to re-establish ties to place that allow them to resist and confront place violence, historical or contemporary: Delgado, in re-framing place to include the multispecies world, and Miller, in recognizing the kinship that binds the plant and animal world to a human one. Espaillat perhaps moves beyond both of these poets in looking outward, straight at the moment of collapse, actively re-making relationships with the wider species world that re-program how we think and feel about our surroundings. Despite geographical and linguistic differences, all three of them think along similar lines in positing that the only way to face the place violence of climate change is an empathetic turning toward, a creative re-imagining that begins with our individual emotional lives to charge our surroundings with agency and consider them in ways we are unaccustomed. This includes rethinking how we imagine ourselves in relation to other beings on this planet, but also how we tell the story of the past—history is not just a human history, it is as intertwined with the nonhuman environments that have shaped our lives as our joint future must be.

At the intersection of affect and place studies, political ecology and new materialisms, environmental humanities and its many conceptual offshoots, this project offers new horizons in comparative Caribbean studies that reach across linguistic and national lines. Recognizing the role of affect and the complex tangle of place relationships in the Caribbean is key to understanding cultural production in the region that addresses a warming climate. Possible topics for future study could include how these poets and others bring together landscape, affect, and

embodiment, as Miller does in his erasure poems, to recover new notions of the self as a response to crisis. They could also turn in the direction of Espaillat's aesthetic revolution, investigating digital modes and representational innovation as a novel way to shift notions of anthropocentric supremacy.

This project intersects with a unique moment for thinking about cultural responses to crisis. I began writing the first chapter of this dissertation during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. While it is probably too soon to make any conclusions about responses to that particular crisis, two years on I think it has made the average person more aware of the multifaceted costs of any threat to global stability. As we lived through mass death and collective grief, shutdowns, supply chain disruptions, economic turmoil, and political instability among others, it was disturbingly easy to see how we failed a dress rehearsal for climate emergency: the world as we knew it quickly and easily fell apart.

This is all to say that I believe that the poets I discuss in this project are only the beginning of a wave of art and culture that is increasingly more aware of the climate crisis and how its acceleration widens and compounds gaps of historical inequity. Their imaginative capacity, however, shows us that it is possible to bring that awareness to bear on the current moment even when it feels like all is lost—they offer new ways of living and thinking differently that show a deep empathy, respect, and a sense of justice for all beings regardless of kingdom, species, race, or nationality. This re-framing of how we live and think is essential to any imaginable human future as the climate crisis worsens: our survival as a species is dependent on the survival of our environments. For this reason, it is imperative for us to study and to heed authors and artists in the Caribbean and other at-risk areas of the globe who offer cultural and

philosophical solutions in a turbulent time. They push for action and for an enormous, necessary cultural shift: re-thinking the human-centered planet.

## Works Cited

- Ahmed, Azam, and Tyler Hicks. "How American Gun Laws Are Fueling Jamaica's Homicide Crisis." *The New York Times*, August 25, 2019, sec. World.  
[www.nytimes.com/2019/08/25/world/americas/one-handgun-9-murders-how-american-firearms-cause-carnage-abroad.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/25/world/americas/one-handgun-9-murders-how-american-firearms-cause-carnage-abroad.html)
- Albrecht et al. "Solastalgia: The Distress Caused by Environmental Change." *Australas Psychiatry*, vol 15, suppl 1, pp. S95-98.
- . "The Age of Solastalgia." *The Conversation*, 7 Aug. 2012.
- Anderson, Mark D. *Disaster Writing: The Cultural Politics of Catastrophe in Latin America*. University of Virginia Press, 2011.
- Aradau, Claudia, and Rens Van Munster. *Politics of Catastrophe: Genealogies of the Unknown*. Routledge, 2011.
- Azul de bolsillo. *Instagram*. [www.instagram.com/azuldebolsillo/?hl=en](http://www.instagram.com/azuldebolsillo/?hl=en).
- Baudrillard, Jean. "The Precession of Simulacra." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Leitch, Vincent B., ed. Norton, 2001, pp. 1729-1741.
- Benítez Rojo, Antonio. *La isla que se repite: El caribe y la perspectiva posmoderna*. Ediciones del Norte, 1989.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, 2009.
- Bergam, Marija. "Transplantations: Vegetation imagery in the poetry of Derek Walcott and Lorna Goodison." *European Journal of English Studies* vol. 16, no. 2, 2012, pp. 113–24.
- Bladow and Ladino, eds. *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*. University of Nebraska Press, 2018.
- Bolton, Herbert, and Thomas Maitland Marshall. *The Colonization of North American 1492 to*



1783. The Macmillan Company, 1920.

Brathwaite, Kamau. Interviewed by Joyelle McSweeney. *Rain Taxi Review: Online Edition*, 2005. [www.raintaxi.com/poetics-revelations-and-catastrophes-an-interview-with-kamau-brathwaite/](http://www.raintaxi.com/poetics-revelations-and-catastrophes-an-interview-with-kamau-brathwaite/).

Bridle, James. *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future*. Verso, 2018.

—. *On the Virtual*. National Gallery of Victoria Voices Series. 2017.

Bucknor, Michael A. "Conceptual Residues of Imperialist Ruination: Waste, Weeds, and the Poetics of Rubbish in Edward Baugh's Black Sand and Olive Senior's Gardening in the Tropics." *Journal of West Indian Literature* vol. 28 no. 1, 2020, pp. 33-45, 97-98.

Can Can Press. [cancanpress.com/#home](http://cancanpress.com/#home).

Carrigan, Anthony. "Towards a Postcolonial Disaster Studies." *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches*. Edited by Elizabeth Deloughrey, Jill Didur, Anthony Carrigan. Routledge, 2015, pp. 117-139.

Carrión, Ulises. "El arte nuevo de hacer libros." *Plural* no. 41, 1975.

"Cartoneras: A documentary on cardboard publishing in Latin America." Directed by Isadora Brant. *Youtube*, uploaded by Cartonera Publishing, 28 Jan. 2019. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzZESHygabI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzZESHygabI).

"Catastrophe, n," *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*. [www.oed.com/view/Entry/28794](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/28794).

Chappell, Bill. "Puerto Rico Struggles To Deliver Aid To Millions Of Stricken Americans." *NPR*, 26 Sept., 2017. [www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/09/26/553722128/puerto-rico-struggles-to-deliver-aid-to-millions-of-stricken-americans](http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/09/26/553722128/puerto-rico-struggles-to-deliver-aid-to-millions-of-stricken-americans).

Chayka, Kyle. "Welcome to Airspace: How Silicon Valley Helps Spread the Same Sterile Aesthetic across the World." *The Verge*, 3 Aug. 2016.

[www.theverge.com/2016/8/3/12325104/airbnb-aesthetic-global-minimalism-startup-gentrification](http://www.theverge.com/2016/8/3/12325104/airbnb-aesthetic-global-minimalism-startup-gentrification).

Clark, Timothy. *The Value of Ecocriticism*. Oxford University Press, 2019.

Claudia Aradau and Rens Van Munster, eds. *Politics of Catastrophe: Genealogies of the Unknown*. Routledge, 2011.

“Coasts in Crisis: Art and Conversation After Recent Hurricanes.” *Convergences: Arts, Science, and the Humanities in Conversation*. 19 September 2019, University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Public lecture, exhibit, performance, reading, and panel discussion.

Cockayne, Daniel, and Lizzie Richardson. “The Queer Times of Internet Infrastructure and Digital Systems.” *The Geographies of Digital Sexuality*, edited by Catherine J. Nash and Andrew Gorman-Murray, Springer, 2019, pp. 11–27.

Cole, Hannah Rachel. “Breadfruit in the Wake: Imagining Vegetal Mutiny in Derek Walcott’s ‘The Bounty.’” *Latin American Literary Review*, vol. 48 no. 96, 2021, pp. 35-39.

@\_Concha\_Nacar\_. *Twitter*. [twitter.com/\\_Concha\\_Nacar\\_](https://twitter.com/_Concha_Nacar_).

Dash, J. Michael. “Postcolonial Caribbean Identities.” *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*. Editors F. Abiola Irele, Simon Gikandi. Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 785-796.

Davis, Herlitz. “Forest disturbance has negative consequences for the persistence of Jamaica’s threatened and endangered bird species in Cockpit Country.” *Journal of Caribbean Ornithology*, vol. 30 no. 1, 2017, pp. 57-68.

Delgado, Nicole Cecilia. *Días naturales*. La Impresora, 2018.

—. “A Mano / By Hand.” Translated by Carina del Valle Schorske. Ugly Duckling Press, 2021.

- , interview by Nicolás López Pérez, *Cine y literatura: el primer diario digital de crítica cultural en Sudamérica*, 13 Mar. 2020, [www.cineyliteratura.cl/poeta-nicole-cecilia-delgado-en-chile-la-mayor-parte-del-tiempo-me-senti-como-una-extranjera-no-tan-bienvenida](http://www.cineyliteratura.cl/poeta-nicole-cecilia-delgado-en-chile-la-mayor-parte-del-tiempo-me-senti-como-una-extranjera-no-tan-bienvenida).
- Deloughrey, Elizabeth. *Allegories of the Anthropocene*. Duke University Press, 2019.
- Dinnen, Zara. *The Digital Banal: New Media and American Literature and Culture*. Colombia University Press, 2021.
- Drucker, Johanna. *A Century of Artist Books*. Granary Books, 2004.
- Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley, editors. *Between Nature and Culture: Caribbean Literature and the Environment*. University of Virginia Press, 2005.
- . *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*. Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Elliot, Scott B. *Coppicing in a Maroon Community of Jamaica*. University of Washington, 2020.
- “Erasure.” *Academy of American Poets Glossary of Poetic Terms*. poets.org/glossary/erasure.
- Españat Ureña, Thais. *¿Tienes quién te cuide la mula?* Ediciones Liliputienses, 2020.
- . “Pirateando el mundo: Taller de poesía experimental.” *Facebook*, posted 1 Sept. 2021. [www.facebook.com/thais.espaillat](http://www.facebook.com/thais.espaillat).
- . *Tumblr*. [aveceshagocosas.tumblr.com/](http://aveceshagocosas.tumblr.com/).
- . *¿Viste los pingüinos?* Editorial Matrerita, 2021. Ebook.
- Farrier, David. *Anthropocene Poetics: Deep Time, Sacrifice Zones, and Extinction*. University of Minnesota Press, 2019.
- Feisal et al. “A Short Review of Bauxite and its Production: Environmental Health Impact on Children in Mining Areas.” *Malaysian Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences*. vol. 15, no. 3, 2019, pp. 120-123.

- Frances, Terri. "Urgent Media and Nontheatrical Ecologies: Jamaican Filmmaker Esther Figueroa in Conversation." *Feminist Media Histories* vol. 6 no. 2, pp. 120-147.
- Furness, Dylan. "The Artists Representing Puerto Rico After Hurricane María." *Vice News* 18 Jan. 2018. [www.vice.com/en/article/gywmb3/the-artists-representing-puerto-rico-after-hurricane-maria](http://www.vice.com/en/article/gywmb3/the-artists-representing-puerto-rico-after-hurricane-maria).
- Ghosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing. University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Glover, Kaiama. *Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Colonial Canon*. Liverpool University Press, 2010.
- Griffiths, Matthew. *The New Poetics of Climate Change: Modernist Aesthetics for a Warming World*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.
- Handley, George B. "Climate Change, Cosmology, and Poetry: The Case of Derek Walcott's *Omeros*." *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities*. Edited by Elizabeth Deloughrey, Jill Didur, and Anthony Carrigan. Routledge, 2015, pp. 333-351).
- Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Make Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press, 2016.
- . *Manifestly Haraway*. University of Minnesota Press, 2016.
- Heise, Ursula. *Imagining Extinction: The Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.
- Hoyos, Hector. *Things With a History*. Columbia University Press, 2019.
- Imprenta Rescate. 2022. [rescate.mitiendanube.com/](http://rescate.mitiendanube.com/).

- Jaffe, Rivke. “Representing violent crime in Jamaica through visual art: an interview with Michael Elliot.” *Interventions* vol. 22 no. 1, 2020, pp. 116-128.
- Kearney, Amanda. *Violence in Place: Cultural and Environmental Wounding*. Routledge, 2016.
- Kelly, Daniel L. “The Threatened Flowering Plants of Jamaica.” *Biological Conservation* no. 46, 1988, pp. 201-216.
- Kindberg Press. <https://kindberg.cl/>.
- Kincaid, Jamaica. *My Garden (Book)*. Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1999.
- Kishore et al. “Mortality in Puerto Rico After Hurricane María.” *The New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 379, no. 2, 2018, pp. 162-170.
- Kressner, Ilka, Ana María Mutis, and Elizabeth Pettinaroli, editors. *Ecofictions, Ecorealities, and Slow Violence in Latin America and the Latinx World*. Routledge, 2020.
- La Impresora. March 2021. [cargocollective.com/laimpresora](http://cargocollective.com/laimpresora).
- Lalo, Eduardo. “Narrating the Unnameable.” *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm*. Edited by Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol LeBrón. Haymarket Book, 2019, pp. 124-126.
- Laureano, Máximo. “Ex alcalde Montecristi afirma terreno parque Juan Bosch tiene 21 dueños.” *Acento*, 27 junio, 2020. sec. Actualidad. [acento.com.do/actualidad/ex-alcalde-montecristi-afirma-terreno-parque-juan-bosch-tiene-21-duenos-8833895.html](http://acento.com.do/actualidad/ex-alcalde-montecristi-afirma-terreno-parque-juan-bosch-tiene-21-duenos-8833895.html).
- Leatherman, Stephen P., and Nancy Beller-Simms. “Sea-Level Rise and Small Island States: An Overview.” *Journal of Coastal Research*, Coastal Education & Research Foundation, Inc., 1997, pp. 1–16.

Leckie, Robert. "Get Off the Internet!: Zach Blas's Contra-Internet Inversion Practice #1."

*Rhizome*, 21 Nov. 2018. [rhizome.org/editorial/2018/nov/21/get-off-the-internet-zach-blass-contra-internet-inversion-practice-1/](http://rhizome.org/editorial/2018/nov/21/get-off-the-internet-zach-blass-contra-internet-inversion-practice-1/).

Lees, Edwin. *Worcester, Hereford, and Gloucester; with a succinct account of their geology, physical geography, climate & the most precise stations of their rare plants and most interesting localities*. H. Lamb and Son, 1852.

Libros de Guayama. 2022. <https://www.librosdeguayama.com/nosotros/>.

Llenín Figueroa, Beatriz. "This was meant to be a hurricane diary." *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm*. Edited by Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol LeBrón. Haymarket Book, 2019, pp. 130-134.

Leonard, Dominic. "Nameless Places: A Review of *In Nearby Bushes*." *The Times Literary Supplement*, Mar. 27, 2020, sec. Reviews. [www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/in-nearby-bushes-kei-miller-in-brief-review-dominic-leonard/](http://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/in-nearby-bushes-kei-miller-in-brief-review-dominic-leonard/).

Lugo, Ariel E. *Social-Ecological-Technological Effects of Hurricane María on Puerto Rico: Planning for Resilience under Extreme Events*. Springer, 2018.

Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Afterward: Critique and Decoloniality in the Face of Crisis, Disaster, and Catastrophe." *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm*. Edited by Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol LeBrón. Haymarket Book, 2019, pp. 401-414.

Mazzei, Patricia, and Alejandra Rosa. "Hurricane Maria, 2 Years Later: 'We Want Another Puerto Rico.'" *The New York Times*, Sept. 20, 2019, sec. U.S. A17.

Miller et al. "Persistent Hydrological Consequences of Hurricane María in Puerto Rico." *Geophysical Research Letters* vol. 46 no. 3, 2019, pp. 1413-1422.

- Miller, Kei. *In Nearby Bushes*. Carcanet Press, 2019.
- . Interview by Eleanor Watchel. *Brick: A Literary Journal*. 16 October 2018.
- . “In the Shadow of Derek Walcott.” *PN Review*, vol. 43 no. 5, 2017.
- Monroe, Michelle, and Damion Blake. “Governance and Disorder: Neoliberalism and Violence Change in Jamaica.” *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 38 no. 3, pp. 580-603.
- Morton, Julia. “Breadfruit.” *Fruits of Warm Climates*. Echo Point Books, 1987, pp. 50-58.
- Newkirk, Vann R. “A Year After Hurricane María, Puerto Rico Finally Knows How Many People Died.” *The Atlantic*, Aug. 18, 2018.  
[www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/08/puerto-rico-death-toll-hurricane-maria/568822/](http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/08/puerto-rico-death-toll-hurricane-maria/568822/).
- Nixon, Robert. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Paravisini Gebert, Lizabeth. “Deforestation and Yearning for Lost Landscapes in Caribbean Literatures.” *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literature of the Environment*. Edited by Elizabeth and George B. Handley. Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 99-116.
- . “The Port of Santo Domingo: Tidal Debris, Metal, Pollution, and the Perils of Poverty where the Caribbean Meets the Ozama.” *Anthurium* vol. 16 no. 2, pp. 1-15.
- Pellegrini, Ann. “After Sontag: Future Notes on Camp.” *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, and Queer Studies*, edited by George E. Haggerty and Molly McGarry. Wiley and Sons, 2007, pp. 168-193.
- Pragg, Sam. “Environment Bulletin Jamaica: Battling the Deer Invasion.” *Inter Press Service News*, Dec. 20, 1998. sec. Environment. <http://www.ipsnews.net/1998/12/environment-bulletin-jamaica-battling-the-deer-invasion/>.

- Raby, Megan. *American Tropics: The Caribbean Roots of Biodiversity*. University of North Carolina Press, 2017.
- Reaser, Jaime, editor. Jamaica. *National Invasive Alien Species Strategy and Action Plan (NIASSAP) for Jamaica 2014-2020*. National Environment and Planning Agency, 2013.
- Rogers, Charlotte. "Eco-Magical Realism: An Ecocritical Interpretation of the Hurricane in Gabriel García Márquez's *The Autumn of the Patriarch*." *Isle: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment*, vol. 28 no. 4, 2021, pp. 1579-1598.
- . "Rita Indiana's Queer Interspecies Caribbean and the Hispanic Literary Tradition." *Small Axe Salon* vol. 34, 2020.
- Schmitt-Kilb, Christian. "Poetry's a Line of Defense:" Ecopoetry and Politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." *From Ego to Eco: Mapping Shifts from Anthropocentrism to Ecocentrism*. Sabine Lenore Muller and Tina-Karen Pusse, editors. Rodopi, 2018, pp. 135-157.
- Schwartz, Stuart B. *Sea of Storms: A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean from Columbus to Katrina*. Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Senk, Sarah. "Mourning's Spiral: Trauma, Time, and Memory in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*." *Symbolism: An International Annual of Critical Aesthetics*. De Gruyter, 2016, pp. 335-52.
- Seymour, Nicole. *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age*. University of Minnesota Press, 2018.
- Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Duke University Press, 2016.
- Sheller, Mimi. *Aluminum Dreams: The Making of Light Modernity*. MIT Press, 2014.
- . *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies*. Routledge, 2003.
- Slovic, Scott et al, editors. *Ecocriticism of the Global South*. Lexington Books, 2015.



Taillie et al. "Widespread mangrove damage resulting from the 2017 Atlantic mega hurricane season." *Environmental Research Letters* vol. 15. no. 6, 2020.

Taller de Ediciones Económicas. 2021. [www.t-e-e.org/index.php/sobre-el-tee/](http://www.t-e-e.org/index.php/sobre-el-tee/).

"Understorey, n." *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*. [www.oed.com/view/Entry/212113](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/212113).

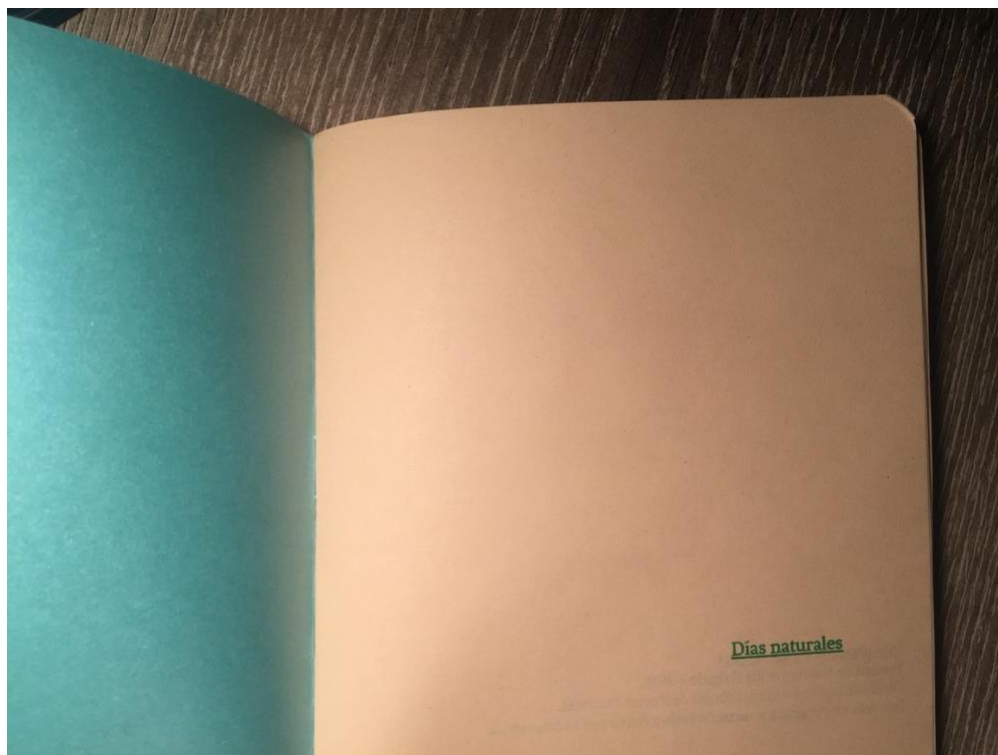
Ventura, Arnold. "Jamaica." *Energy in the Transition from Rural Subsistence*. Routledge, 1982. pp. 268-289.

Webber, Tim. "Why It's So Hard To Turn The Lights Back On In Puerto Rico." *NPR*, Oct. 20, 2017. sec. National. [www.npr.org/2017/10/20/558743790/why-its-so-hard-to-turn-the-lights-back-on-in-puerto](http://www.npr.org/2017/10/20/558743790/why-its-so-hard-to-turn-the-lights-back-on-in-puerto).

Weeks et al. "Communities, Crime Control and Policy Change for Safer Spaces in Jamaica." *Connections: Safe Spaces for Women and Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Consejo Latinoamericano de ciencias sociales. 2019.

Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol LeBrón, editors. *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm*. Haymarket Books, 2019.

Zips, Werner. *Nanny's Asafo Warriors: the Jamaican Maroons' African Experience*. Ian Randle Publishers, 2011.



*Image 1*

Estar con la montaña y el poema  
recordando las instancias de montaña  
de la vida:

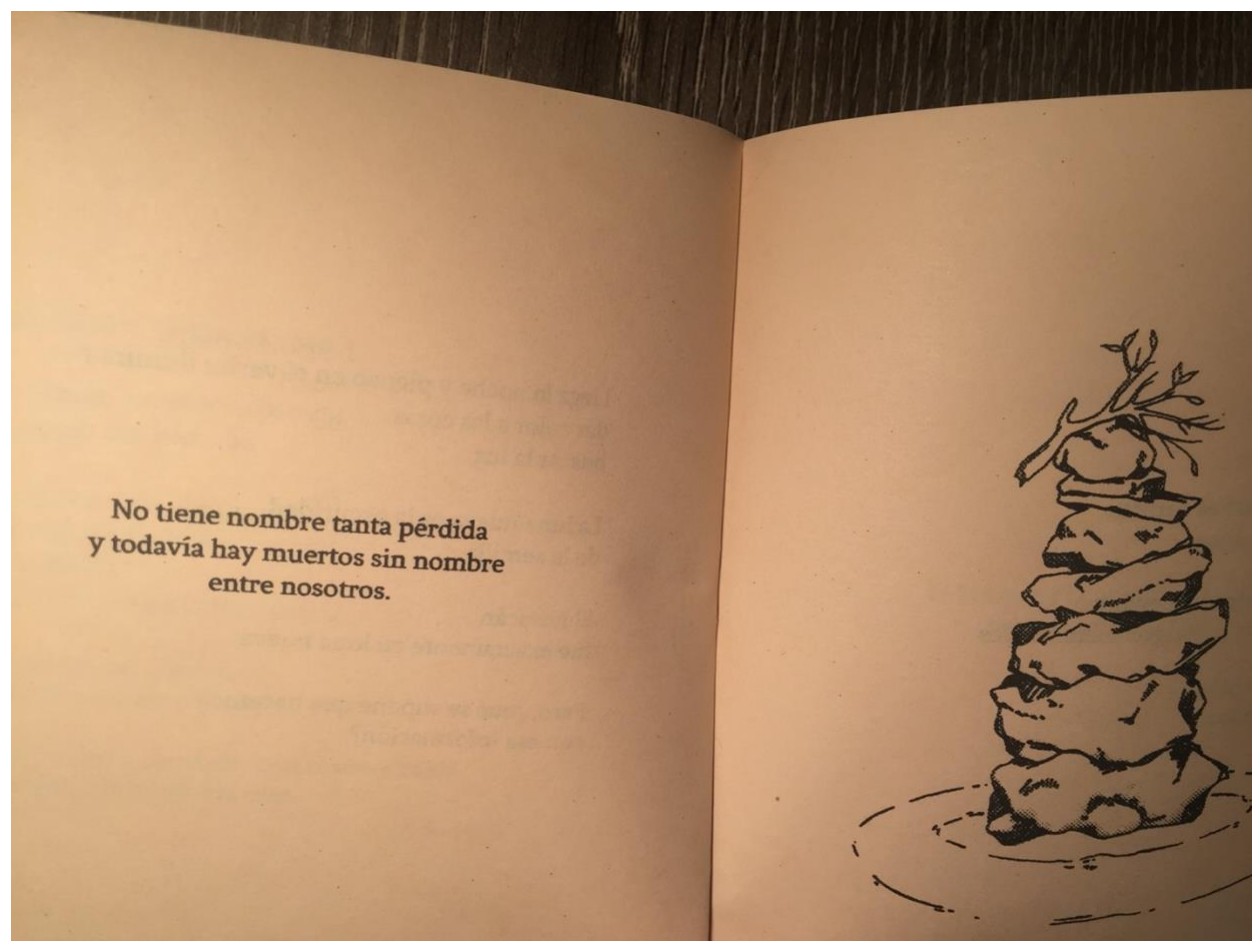
Monte del Estado  
Yunque primero  
Los Andes  
Pastoruri Huaraz  
Miradero  
El Quemado  
Cerro las Mesas  
Bosque Susúa  
Toro Negro y Cerro Maravilla  
Catskills Adirondacks  
Santa Elena  
Utuado Jayuya  
El otro lado del Yunque

Popocatepetl  
Iztaccihuatl  
Volcán Orizaba  
Nevado de Toluca  
Sierra Mixteca

Sierra Norte de Puebla  
Huasteca Potosina  
Cerrito de Guadalupe  
La Garita  
Cerro Sagrado del Huitepec  
Todos los volcanes activos de Guatemala  
y los cráteres de San Salvador  
El Verde  
Peñuelas y Patillas  
Mameyes  
Roncador  
Inabón y Jurutungo  
Indiera Fria  
Monte Carmelo  
Los mogotes del karso  
Sierra Bermeja  
Cabo Rojo hoy

(La montaña es el poema).

Image 2



*Image 3*